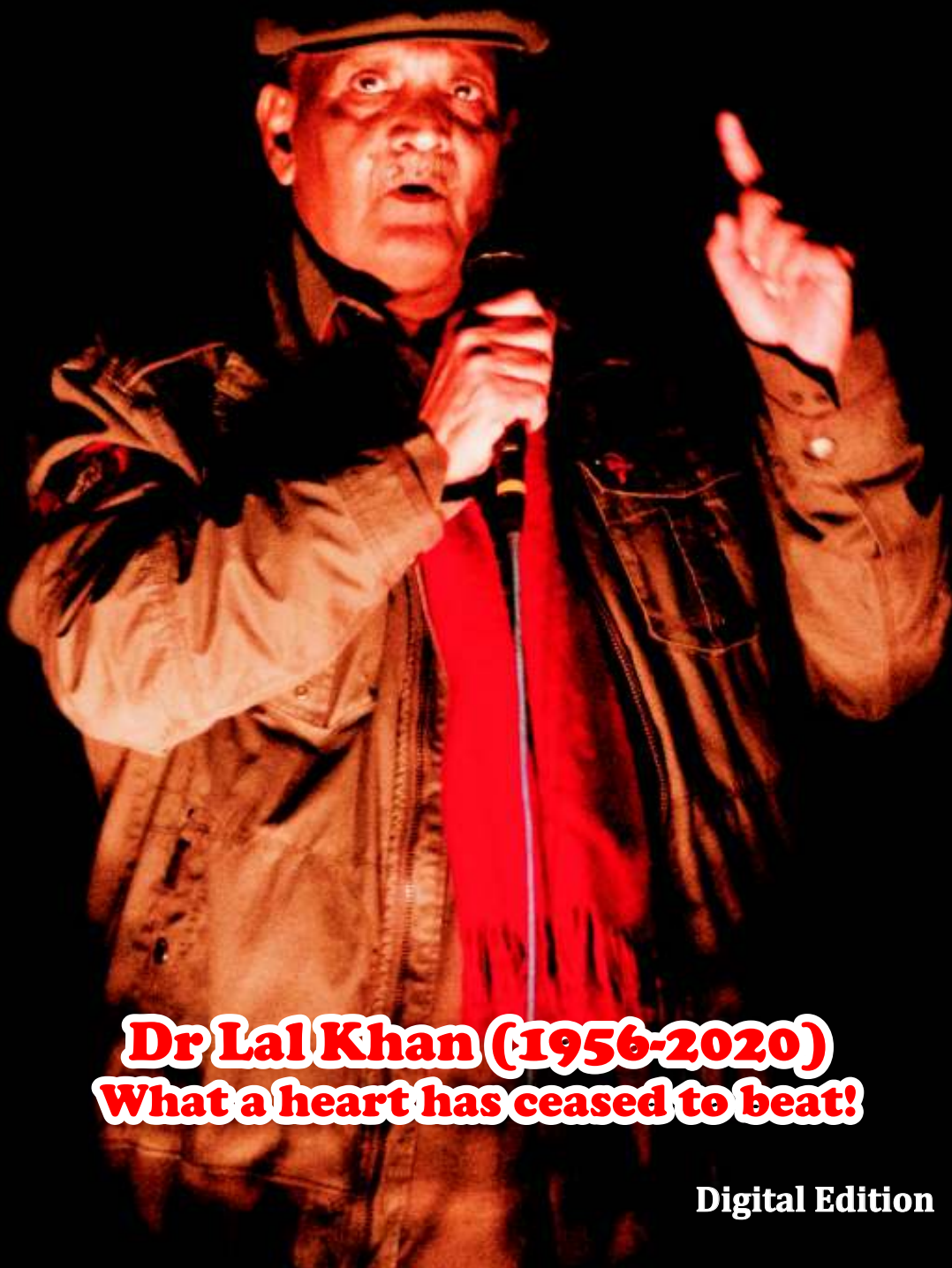


ASIAN MARXIST REVIEW



Dr Lal Khan (1956-2020)
What a heart has ceased to beat!

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struggle.pk

Editor

Lal Khan

editor@marxistreview.asia

Executive Editor

Awais Qarni

Lahore, Pakistan

qarni@marxistreview.asia

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Do not grieve

Do not grieve
This pain will cease
Friends will return
Wounds will heal

Do not grieve.
Do not grieve.

Day will dawn
Night will end
Clouds will burst

Do not grieve.
Do not grieve.

Times will change
Birds will sing
Spring will come

Do not grieve.
Do not grieve.

(Faiz Ahmad Faiz)

Translated by Daud Kamal

Editor's Note

Dr Lal Khan, whose name needs no introduction in the revolutionary politics of not only Pakistan but the world over, breathed his last on 21st February at 7:02 PM in Lahore. He had been fighting cancer for the last one and a half year. He was 64.

He was one of the founders of '*The Struggle*', a Marxist organization known by its fortnightly Urdu language organ with the same name, chief editor of Asian Marxist Review and international secretary of Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (PTUDC). Lal Khan started his lifelong revolutionary struggle as a student leader at Nishtar Medical College Multan in the late 1970s and soon got interested in the ideas of Marxism and revolutionary socialism. During the despotic Zia-Ul-Haq regime, he endured floggings and incarceration and later went into exile for many years when martial law courts sentenced him to death for not abandoning his political activities.

For more than four decades he fought under the banner of revolutionary socialism for the historical interests of the working class. In the dark period unfolding with the collapse of Soviet Union, he not only laid the foundations of a Marxist Bolshevik organization in South Asia but ruthlessly defended, through dozens of his writings, the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky against the imperialist propaganda onslaught of so-called failure of Socialism as a social system. His confidence and belief in the communist future of mankind didn't shake till his last breath.

This spring 2020 issue of Asian Marxist Review is dedicated to its chief editor, Dr Lal Khan. This issue contains memorial articles from his comrades around the globe from America to Turkey and the United Kingdom to France, and Pakistan. It also contains obituaries and condolence statements of different left-wing parties and organizations working in different regions of the world and also reports of the condolence references.

The journey of comrade Lal Khan's life may have come to an end but he will live long in the struggle for the emancipation of mankind from capitalist exploitation and tyranny in Pakistan, South Asia and the whole world. His legacy would inspire many generations to come who have to keep the red flag flying high. We would like to pay tribute to him in the words of comrade Lenin:

*What a torch of reason ceased to burn,
What a heart has ceased to beat!*

Farewell Comrade Lal Khan... your memory would always be honoured.

Memories of Comrade Lal Khan

◀ **Awais Qarni**



Comrade Lal Khan born as Yasrab Tanvir Gondal in a family of soldiers. The only male child in the family with three sisters. In the patriarchal society like Pakistan, and that in a remote village of Bhaun, the only son is no less than a godsend and there were high hopes with him for the future of the family. With a relatively affluent background he could have achieved a lot in terms of material wealth but he chose another family as his own, the working class of the world, and fought for its emancipation and revolution his entire life, until his last breath.

I feel myself a privileged to have been his revolutionary companion spent time with him, although I feel that it was brief, nonetheless a very close bond. Almost ten years ago I met him for the first time, and the two of us spent more than 3 hours together in Abpara, Islamabad. He was on his way to Rawalakot in Kashmir for a

revolutionary meeting and had made a stop in Islamabad. In those three hours he left such a great impression on me that I wanted to be by his side all the time.

He asked if I read his articles in the daily newspapers. I said yes comrade, I read Urdu articles but can't read English ones, as his language wasn't easy for me to read. He smiled and politely replied after a brief pause *"Look, I write the old-fashioned English that I learnt decades ago, perhaps it is easier for you to learn my archaic diction, than it is for me to learn the short hand style of your generation"*.

I was still in my teen years but I felt very safe, friendly and comfortable in his company. This was one of the greatest traits of his personality that he could develop such friendship with someone 36 years younger.

A few years later, after my graduation I moved to Lahore to struggle for revolution as a whole timer. We almost lived together in this period and they are the best years of my life. He taught me, advised me and encouraged me in the building of revolutionary forces not only in Pakistan but Internationally.

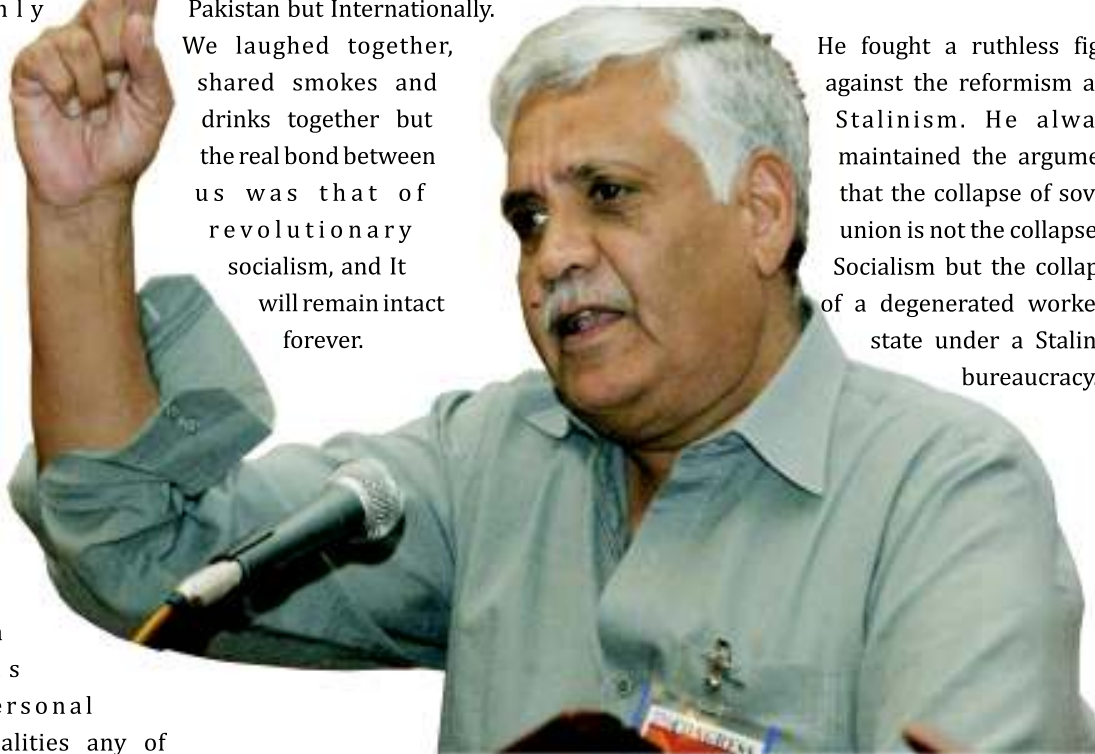
We laughed together, shared smokes and drinks together but the real bond between us was that of revolutionary socialism, and It will remain intact forever.

On his personal qualities any of

his comrades can write dozen of books, but Comrade Lal Khan can never be reduced to just his personality. He had very firm grip on the Marxism and method of dialectical and historical materialism. His writings are asset for the working class around the globe and inspiration and guiding lines for the young revolutionaries who are fighting the crony capitalism in Pakistan and anywhere in the world. He was amongst the few individuals who developed the perspective of the decline of Soviet Union prior to its collapse in one of his books, *"Bolshevik Revolution 1917 and Today's Russia"* in 1989. And after the collapse of Soviet Union when many of left-wing activists and workers committed suicides or chose to support capitalism accepting the "end of history", he and few of his comrades held high the banner of revolutionary socialism. He wrote dozens of

articles and a book named, *"China: Long March Towards Capitalism"* on the capitalist retreat of so-called Communist Party of China. He used to say that the Communist Party of China is in reality, neither *"Communist"* nor a *"Party"*, it is the elite that rules and plunders the Chinese masses.

He fought a ruthless fight against the reformism and Stalinism. He always maintained the argument that the collapse of soviet union is not the collapse of Socialism but the collapse of a degenerated workers' state under a Stalinist bureaucracy.



He was among the even fewer who introduced the ideas of scientific Socialism and Permanent Revolution to this region. Before coming to Pakistan after his exile, he spent years in India for the building of the revolutionary forces. He wrote numerous articles and books on the bloody Partition of the Indian sub-continent including his masterpiece *"Crisis in the Indian Subcontinent, Partition: Can it be Undone?"* He considered partition as a festering wound left by British Raj for its imperialist motives, he once wrote *"It was a criminal division perpetrated by the British imperialists in connivance with the native elite classes and politicians. Colonial rule in India by the British Raj had lasted for more than two hundred years. Once forced by their historical decline to withdraw, the British imperialists executed the policy of divide and rule, they had learned from the*

ancient Roman Caesars. The British imperialists were determined not to leave behind a united India. The role of the Hindu and Muslim aristocracy and capitalist comprador elites grafted together as the 'national bourgeois' by their British masters was no less treacherous".

He used to say that there is no more Hindustan, now there is Pakistan, Bangladesh and Bharat... only a socialist revolution in any of these countries can bring this region back to prosperity in the shape of a Socialist Federation of South Asia which can be the founding stone for the world Socialist Revolution and Communism. Among many other topics his writings on the social behaviours and decline of society and alienation of the individual under capitalism are worth reading. The ruling elite did everything to erase the memories of 1968-69 revolution of Pakistan, but Dr Lal Khan was probably the only voice that echoes the revolutionary spirit of 1968-69 revolution. He wrote a masterpiece "*Pakistan's Other Story; The 1968-9 Revolution*" on

the history that has never been taught in Pakistan. He used to say and write that Pakistan's oppressed working class has the history of only 139 days, from November 7th, 1968 till the fall of the formidable dictatorship of Ayub Khan on March 26th, 1969, rest is the history of ruling elite.

He was permanent writer and member of the editorial board of fortnightly *The Struggle*, that has been publishing for 38 years. It's been almost a decade that he was writing Urdu articles for *Daily Dunya News* and more than that period that he was writing weekly english article for *Daily Times*. Apart from these, he was regularly writing

for *Struggle.pk* and *Marxistreview.asia* (Asian Marxist Review) in addition to the editorial work. Every year he used to write the documents for annual congress of *The Struggle* for the last 38 years. His last writing was the document of Pakistan Perspectives 2020-21 for the 38th congress of *The Struggle*, which is scheduled in mid-March 2020. He wrote that just two months before his sad demise. Even a few hours before his departure he was waving his hands in writing motion. He wanted to write books on the Socialist Transformation of Society, the Rise and Fall of Ottoman Empire, the Asiatic Mode of Production in Subcontinent India and many other topics.

**He was not a man for himself.
In all his actions and interactions,
his foremost consideration
was always the organization, *The Struggle*,
and how it will strengthen the
forces of revolutionary socialism.
He always thought of himself as *The Struggle*,
acted as *The Struggle*
and has left us with *The Struggle*.**

Some of the draft blue prints are still pending in his personal computer. But the fatal cancer didn't grant him enough time. He fought with cancer like he fought throughout his life. Once he said in an informal sitting that we will fight this cancer like we fought against dictator Zia Ul Haq, who issued shoot at sight warrant against Comrade Lal Khan. The cancer proved to be as

deadly as the capitalist system that he was fighting. He lost the battle against the disease but we shall carry on his fight against the cancer of Capitalism.

Comrade Lal Khan was a permanent revolutionary and an Internationalist. His whole life was the struggle for socialist revolution. He was betrayed many times but he never gave up. His trust broken time and again but he kept moving forward and kept on trusting his comrades. Today many will say many things but not a single individual can doubt his dedication to the Socialist Revolution and building of a Bolshevik Leninist organization. Those who

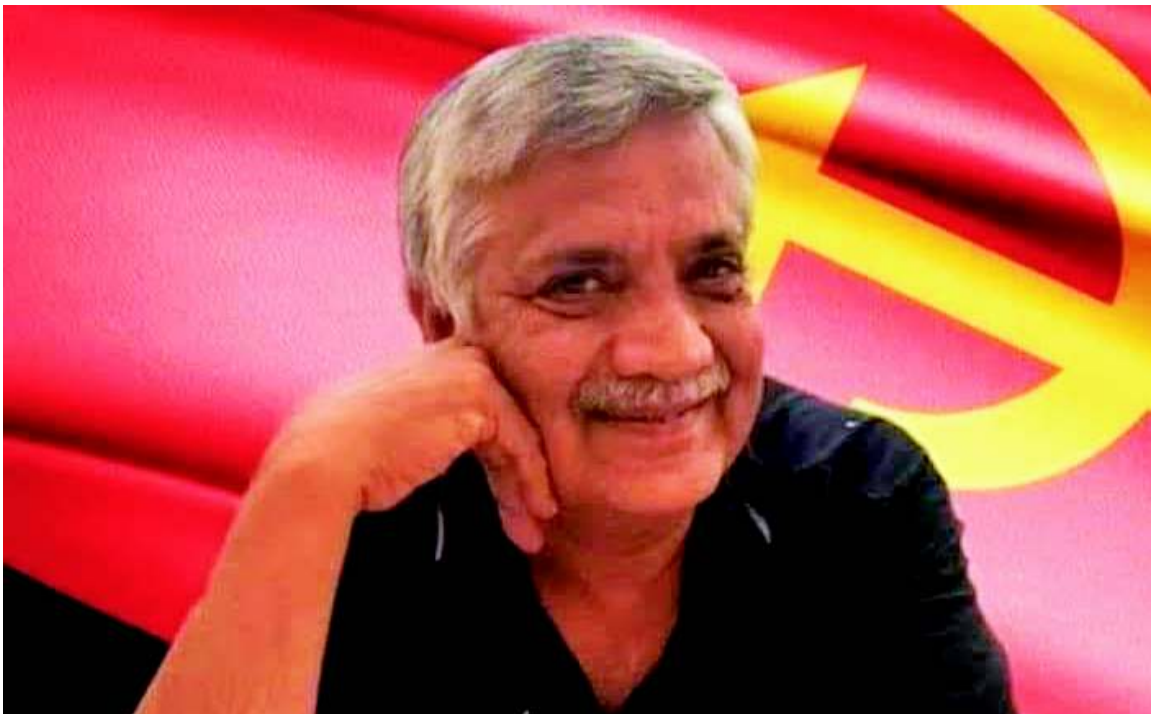
chose to become his opponents during his life take pride in once being in his company. They will write panegyric to him, but many of them stabbed his soul.

Comrade Lal Khan's whole life was a political journey for Socialism, his every relation was based on the building of the revolutionary organization, *The Struggle*, that he built on his blood and sweat. How can one pay tribute to Lal Khan while denouncing his ideology and the organization that he built? He was not a man for himself. In all his actions and interactions, his foremost consideration was always the organization, *The Struggle*, and how it will strengthen the forces of revolutionary socialism. He always thought of himself as *The Struggle*, acted as *The Struggle* and has left us with *The Struggle*.

Comrade Lal Khan left his home as child to pursue education and returned to soil as the greatest revolutionary this land as ever

produced. On hearing the news of his death, comrades from every corner of the country reached his remote village in very brief time. In any other situation this would have been impossible. From Baluchistan to Kashmir and Karachi to Swat revolutionaries came to farewell their comrade. With such heavy heart a mile of his funeral procession felt like a parsec and every second a decade.

The little village of his has seen many funerals and coffins of soldiers taken by the men in uniform but the final rituals of Comrade Lal Khan was historic when the women comrades lifted his coffin on their shoulders along with their male comrades under the red flags engraved with hammers and sickles, chanting slogans of Socialist Revolution and vowing to carry forward the mission of Comrade Lal Khan, and building *The Struggle*. They said their goodbyes to their comrade by singing the Workers' Internationale. That was the farewell that he deserved. His ideas, his legacy and his revolutionary spirit lives on in *The Struggle*!



**Dr Lal Khan's ideas, legacy and revolutionary spirit lives on in
The Struggle!**

The Political Legacy of Tanvir Gondal

◀ **Greg Oxley**



Future historians of revolutionary thought and action in the Indian subcontinent will surely find it impossible to ignore the brilliant and outstanding contribution of Tanvir Gondal, known to many as Dr Lal Khan. The working class movement has produced many determined and self-sacrificing figures over the decades. Many of them have paid for their commitment to the revolutionary cause with their lives. Many of them have shown great skill in the explanation of ideas and slogans, in their ability to arouse the fighting spirit of the oppressed. Many have shown remarkable talent as organisers. But none, to my knowledge, have combined these qualities and, at the same time, proved themselves to be a profound thinker and theoretician of the cause, as much as Tanvir Gondal.

But as we know, history is written by the victors, and it will surely be that the true place in history of this man will only be fully and widely acknowledged when the classes that he defended and strove to arouse will finally overthrow imperialism and capitalism, and go on to establish a new and truly democratic society, free of oppression and exploitation, that is to say a socialist society.

Revolutionaries grow greater in accordance with the greatness of their tasks. In Western Europe, "*Marxist ideas*" can be somewhat easily acquired and applied to the problems of the day. And so it is that we have thousands of glib and self-sufficient "*revolutionaries*" here, repeating basic notions drawn from the works of the great founders of scientific socialism and convinced that they provide a very obvious and self-evident answer to

contemporary social, economic and political problems. By contrast, in a country such as Pakistan – as it was in Tsarist Russia – the ideological framework and programmatic premises drawn up by these founders need to be worked on and enriched in a skillful and creative manner, so that they take into account the peculiar complexity of class relations within society. Tanvir was fully conscious of the importance and the immensity of this task, which, despite the theoretical heritage of Lenin and Trotsky in relation to the backwardness Russia, was still a largely new and unexplored field of study and analysis from a Marxist point of view. And so, as he struggled with this vital undertaking, Tanvir grew in stature, as a revolutionary thinker and theoretician, rising to a level higher than any other revolutionary theoretician of our epoch, only equalled by his mentor and inspirer, Ted Grant.

underdeveloped countries still under imperialist domination, was that in such countries the national capitalist class was too dependent on foreign imperialism and too fearful of the emerging working class to play a revolutionary role. Therefore, the historic tasks generally associated with the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Europe – emergence of a coherent “*nation*” and nation-state, democracy, land reform, complete eradication of pre-capitalist social relations, the rights and freedoms of national and cultural minorities – could only be accomplished by the coming to power of the working class, and that for this new power to survive, the revolution would have to spread to other, more developed countries. Trotsky spoke of “*combined and uneven development*” that is, the coexistence of ancient pre-capitalist and modern capitalist elements in society, which forms the premises for a “*permanent revolution*”.

“The people of Waziristan suffer from the worst forms of combined and uneven development. Satellite telephones came here before the installation of land lines, just as aeroplanes were here before good roads. The most advanced weapons, such as drones, carry out missile strikes on the most primitive of landscapes. Television and computers came before running water. The drug trade has created a mafia-led economy before more productive – and surely less profitable – enterprises could be established. All of this has broken the old medieval culture and traditions of the region. The fabric of society has been destroyed by the arrival of this technology, and by dirty money and the black market. Tribal loyalties, honour and ancient traditional values have become saleable goods. And yet all this modernisation has not brought the region out of its underdevelopment. Rather it has twisted and perverted the old social and economic relations.”

(Tanvir on the uneven and combined development in Waziristan, Pakistan)

If we take, for example, the way Tanvir applied and enriched the so-called “*theory of permanent revolution*”, initially worked out by Parvus and Trotsky at the time of the revolution of 1905. The term “*permanent revolution*” figured in the works of Marx, in relation to the lessons of 1848. The basic idea put forward by Trotsky in relation to Russia, and by extension to numerous other

And now let us look at how Tanvir was able to weave this idea into clear and understandable terms in relation to the concrete realities of Pakistan. There are many examples that could be given of his skill in this, but when I came to Pakistan in 2013, I saw an article he had written about the situation in Waziristan which made a very stark impression upon me. (Today, I only

have a French translation of this text, and so in translating it back into English, some of the original wording may be altered.) He wrote: *"The people of Waziristan suffer from the worst forms of combined and uneven development. Satellite telephones came here before the installation of land lines, just as aeroplanes were here before good roads. The most advanced weapons, such as drones, carry out missile strikes on the most primitive of landscapes. Television and computers came before running water. The drug trade has created a mafia-led economy before more productive – and surely less profitable – enterprises could be established. All of this has broken the old medieval culture and traditions of the region. The fabric of society has been destroyed by the arrival of this technology, and by dirty money and the black market. Tribal loyalties, honour and ancient traditional values have become saleable goods. And yet all this modernisation has not brought the region out of its underdevelopment. Rather it has twisted and perverted the old social and economic relations."*

This is very graphic prose which brilliantly puts

flesh and blood into a reality which is all too often "summed up" in a theoretical phraseology. This particular talent of Tanvir is really one of the great hallmarks of his political writings. The theory of "permanent revolution" points to socialist revolution as the only means of sweeping away the oppressive contradictions he so admirably describes in the extract I have given here, and stand in total opposition to the artificial constructions of the so-called "theory of stages" of the Stalinist school, which seeks – and never finds – a progressive wing of the national capitalist class to lead a first stage of the revolution, and postpones the second, socialist, stage to some later date. With this treacherous "theory of stages", this second never comes. The time is never right for the overthrow of capitalism. All through his life, Tanvir fought against this despicable theoretical trick. He saw that the interests of foreign imperialism and those of the Pakistani state and the ruling class were so completely intertwined and interdependent – economically, militarily, strategically – that they must necessarily stand



Greg Oxley delivering speech on the "History of Revolutions in France" in Islamabad, Pakistan. While Farhad Kayani translating for him.

together and fall together, and that the only way they would fall would be as a result of a decisive blow delivered by a revolutionary movement of the working class and the rural poor.

understood to be the product of Marxism will continue to blunt and distort their political outlook. The struggle against Stalinism was therefore a vital and integral part of the political

Tanvir never demanded praise or recognition. He simply showed, in theory and in practice, what he was capable of. Recognition was passively earned in this way. It was not the result of intrigue. Tanvir never varied in his unshakeable revolutionary convictions, never deserted the working class, never placed his own interests above the cause he served. He was an implacable internationalist. His whole being was consumed by his task. He personified the spirit of resistance and struggle without which the prospect of revolution is inconceivable. Historians of revolutionary thought and action in the Indian subcontinent will surely find it impossible to ignore the brilliant and outstanding contribution of Tanvir Gondal, (aka. Lal Khan)

From the days of his youth, from the very beginnings of his political activity, Tanvir could see that the struggle at hand would mean confronting both capitalism and “Stalinism”. In his writings and speeches, he explained the circumstances which led to the overthrow of the Soviet democracy under Lenin and Trotsky and the slide towards bureaucratic and counter-revolutionary dictatorship. Whereas in many parts of the world, in years leading up to World War II and right up until the 1980s, there were enormous illusions in the USSR and the various regimes of a similar nature which had taken shape, such as in Eastern Europe and in China.

But Tanvir saw under understood the reality of these regimes and could also see the disastrous consequences of the policies pursued by their “communist” acolytes in other parts of the world, including, of course, the Indian subcontinent. The collapse and disappearance of the URSS and of almost the entire “communist” bloc dissipated many of these illusions, but the problem of their legacy in the conscience of the masses remains. Unless the phenomena of Stalinism can be explained and understood by the working people – or at least by their most conscious and politically active elements, the failure of what was

task to which Tanvir devoted his life. And so it must be for those who wish to pursue this task in the future.

The latter years of the life of this great revolutionary were marked by his conflict with an so-called “International”. The resultant break with this structure is not, within the general context of the struggle for socialism, of any notable importance. However, because it tells us something of the moral and political integrity of Tanvir, it is worth saying a few words about this episode. For many years, Tanvir was – as were many of us, including myself – a loyal and hardworking advocate of that tendency. But then, under the cover of “political differences”, the London-based leading committee organised a plot to push Tanvir aside. Why was this? It was because, as numerous operations of a similar nature show, the leadership of that tendency has a deep-rooted fear of any of their national sections which begin to sink roots among working people and within which arise a confident, autonomous leadership of revolutionaries who do not feel they need ideas to be handed down to them from self-appointed political masters abroad. The moral and political authority of Tanvir did not stand or fall on the whim of a London-based committee. It

stood on his own achievements, which, incidentally, outweighed those of all the other national sections put together. The methods used in every case were always the same. They involved the creation of a secret fraction which would work to prepare the ground for the installation of subservient leaders who feel they owe their promotion to London. At the chosen moment, a campaign of vilification is launched. Tanvir was branded as a dishonest opportunist, a bureaucrat, a “nationalist” – in a word, as a traitor to the revolutionary cause.

never placed his own interests above the cause he served. He was an implacable internationalist. His whole being was consumed by his task. He personified the spirit of resistance and struggle without which the prospect of revolution is inconceivable. Tanvir Gondal was a revolutionary from head to foot. So he lived and so he died.

The death of Tanvir is a blow to us all. But to those who succeed him, in Pakistan and elsewhere, his political legacy and his moral integrity will serve as an example and an

Tanvir Gondal was a revolutionary from head to foot. So he lived and so he died.

But here we see the measure of the man who was the main target of the operation. It would have been an easy step for Tanvir to bow to pressure and to step aside. But there was much more at stake here than his personal destiny. The cynical bureaucratic methods, the flagrant lies and calumny, dragging the names and the reputations of comrades into the gutter, he would not allow the organisation he had struggled to build over decades to be subjected to such methods. He fought back, and he won. The operation backfired, and the so-called tendency deservedly lost the overwhelming majority of the membership.

Tanvir never demanded praise or recognition. He simply showed, in theory and in practice, what he was capable of. Recognition was passively earned in this way. It was not the result of intrigue. He had no need of obsequious “yes-men”, offering him blind obedience and submission. Of course, he made mistakes, errors of judgement, like we all do from time to time. But he never varied in his unshakeable revolutionary convictions, never deserted the working class,

inspiration. Revolutionaries in Pakistan face many difficulties. But these will only serve to sharpen their consciousness and their will to struggle. It is no accident that in the early years of the last century, the most consistent and outstanding revolutionaries of the international working class came not from Western Europe, but from the homeland of tsarist despotism and oppression.



In Pakistan and throughout the world, let us face the future with courage and determination, and go forward. Our departed comrade would ask for nothing more than this.

Lal Khan's Memory Will Be Honoured!

◀ **Roger Silverman**



The untimely death of Lal Khan (Tanvir Gondal, as I knew him) has struck a bitter blow, not only to the ongoing struggle and future hopes of the working class in Pakistan and internationally, but also to me personally. Ever since we first met almost forty years ago, I counted him an ally and a comrade, and also a loyal friend.

As often in Tanvir's life, his personal circumstances were inextricably entangled with the sweep of history. It seems appropriate, then,

that when our paths first crossed in 1982 he was in the midst of a drama that could have come straight out of the pages of a political thriller. Along with his friend Farooq Tariq and sixteen other Pakistani comrades based in exile in the Netherlands, Tanvir had been conducting relentless agitation against the brutal Zia military dictatorship, publishing the revolutionary underground journal Jeddo-Jahed (The Struggle). As it happened, at that time an international hockey match had just been played in Amsterdam between teams from the Netherlands and

Pakistan. In full view of live television cameras, the comrades had daringly raised a huge protest banner denouncing the regime, images of which had thus been beamed directly back to countless thousands of viewers back home. Enraged by this audacious challenge, the Zia regime was hell-bent on revenge, and proceeded to deploy its top intelligence personnel to target all eighteen comrades, framing them up on the preposterous charge of plotting the hi-jack of a Pakistan Airlines plane. The comrades were duly arrested. Facing the imminent threat of extradition, deportation, jail, torture and probable execution, they launched a campaign throughout the labour movement for support and solidarity. That is how they came into contact with the influential British Marxist paper *Militant* and the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), of which I was at that time the secretary. The charges were soon exposed as a vicious frame-up. The comrades were released and offered a public apology by the Dutch authorities. Their entire group soon affiliated to the CWI.

The terrible news of Lal Khan's demise was ominously foreshadowed at last congress. When had been admitted to hospital; as a result he was absent from the conference hall. But the most eloquent testimony to the legacy of Lal Khan's contribution over the previous four decades was the fact that his absence did not leave the huge gap that might have been expected, such was the quality of the many other leading comrades that he had helped to nurture.

Over the following decade, the CWI was building significant nuclei throughout the Indian sub-continent. With the fall of the Zia dictatorship in 1988, Lal Khan and Farooq set about building a solid home base, and over the years they won substantial support within trade unions and peasant organisations and among students and radical academics. During that period I was working on the spot with comrades throughout the sub-continent, including Sri Lanka and all the main regional centres of India, and I thus had the honour of visiting the comrades in Pakistan many times and participating closely in their day-to-day

work. In those days I stayed many times both at Farooq's and at Lal Khan's apartments in Lahore, and I remember one occasion when Lal Khan invited me to his ancestral family home, where he introduced me to the joys of hunting.

In 1991 the CWI split apart. This precipitated a damaging international rift in the forces of Marxism, and within Pakistan a temporary political divergence between Lal Khan and Farooq. Lal Khan joined the group headed by Ted Grant and soon became a leading international figure within it, while his group in Pakistan

operated first as a Marxist tendency within the Pakistan People's Party and later independently. Under Lal Khan's political inspiration, a lasting theoretical base was established in Pakistan for Trotskyism, culminating in the monumental achievement of publishing a new Urdu translation of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* in time for the centenary of that seminal event. Meanwhile, Farooq was continuing to work within Peter Taaffe's CWI majority, while

maintaining principled and growing differences with its leadership.

My own political trajectory ran along similar lines. I had opposed the split, which I considered pointless, and very briefly remained by default a token member, albeit a very critical one, of the CWI's "majority faction". By the turn of the millennium, a number of disaffected former CWI members had joined me in founding the Workers' International Network.

Personal relations rarely survive political

differences within the left. It is therefore a remarkable tribute to Lal Khan's integrity and principle that throughout this period of political separation he showed not a trace of rancour or rivalry; on the contrary, he maintained constant ties of mutual friendship and respect both with Farooq and with me, and these relations remained intact. To take one example: I still recall the warmth with which Lal Khan greeted me in 2008, midway through this period of mutual separation, when we met at the otherwise sombre occasion of the funeral of our common teacher, the veteran Marxist theoretician Ted Grant.

exile, and I visited his family in their temporary accommodation in London. In November 2018 I had the honour to accept an invitation to make my first visit to Pakistan since 1991 and participate in the congress of *The Struggle*. The congress was eloquent testimony to Lal Khan's gigantic contribution over his lifetime.

Pakistan is plagued as much as ever by communal bigotry, the monstrous legacy bequeathed by British imperialism and nourished at the time of partition by the cynical manipulations of both Congress and the Muslim League. In the days



Roger Silverman speaking on the World Perspectives in 37th Congress of *The Struggle*, 2018 while Imran Kamyana translating for him.

It gave me real pleasure, then, both politically and personally, when Lal Khan took the initiative to resume contact with me at the beginning of 2017. In the three years since then, Lal Khan and I remained in constant communication, by phone, e-mail and mutual visits. Lal Khan came to London on two occasions during that time and we spent many evenings together in deep discussion. I introduced him to militant activists from my local Labour Party and to an Iranian Marxist living in

leading up to the weekend of the congress, the entire country was paralysed by the agitation of fundamentalist mobs. For days on end, main roads were blocked, phone signals were cut, and Pakistan had ground to a near-standstill. Despite these daunting political and logistical obstacles, a massive 1500 comrades from all over Pakistan attended; all the more credit to their persistence and dedication. And that is largely due to comrade Lal Khan.

The influence of his personality flowed through that congress; in the banners, wall posters, logos, portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky that festooned the hall; in its location in the biggest and most expensive hall in Lahore; in the superb efficiency of the chairing, security, stewarding and catering; in the discipline, the enthusiasm, the songs and poems; in the determination of its participants to brave the communal mobs and the road blocks to get there; in its overwhelmingly proletarian composition; in the fact that nearly all the comrades who spoke were unmistakably leaders in their own areas; in the number of

ominously foreshadowed at that very congress. I was staying with Lal Khan and his family at the time, and it was clear that he was already suffering a serious health problem. He had been scheduled to sum up the session on Pakistani perspectives, but during the previous night he had been admitted to hospital; as a result he was absent from the conference hall. But the most eloquent testimony to the legacy of Lal Khan's contribution over the previous four decades was the fact that his absence did not leave the huge gap that might have been expected, such was the quality of the many other leading comrades that he had helped to nurture.



Comrade Lal Khan speaking during 37th Congress of *The Struggle*, 2018.

women, young people and even children present; in the punctuation of the debates with revolutionary songs and poems; in the number of comrades who contributed; above all, in the high political level of debate, the passionate oratory, the revolutionary spirit. As I said at the congress in my closing remarks (and I meant every word of it!): there were times when I felt as if I'd walked into the pages of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, or slipped through a hole in space-time and found myself attending a congress of the Bolshevik party.

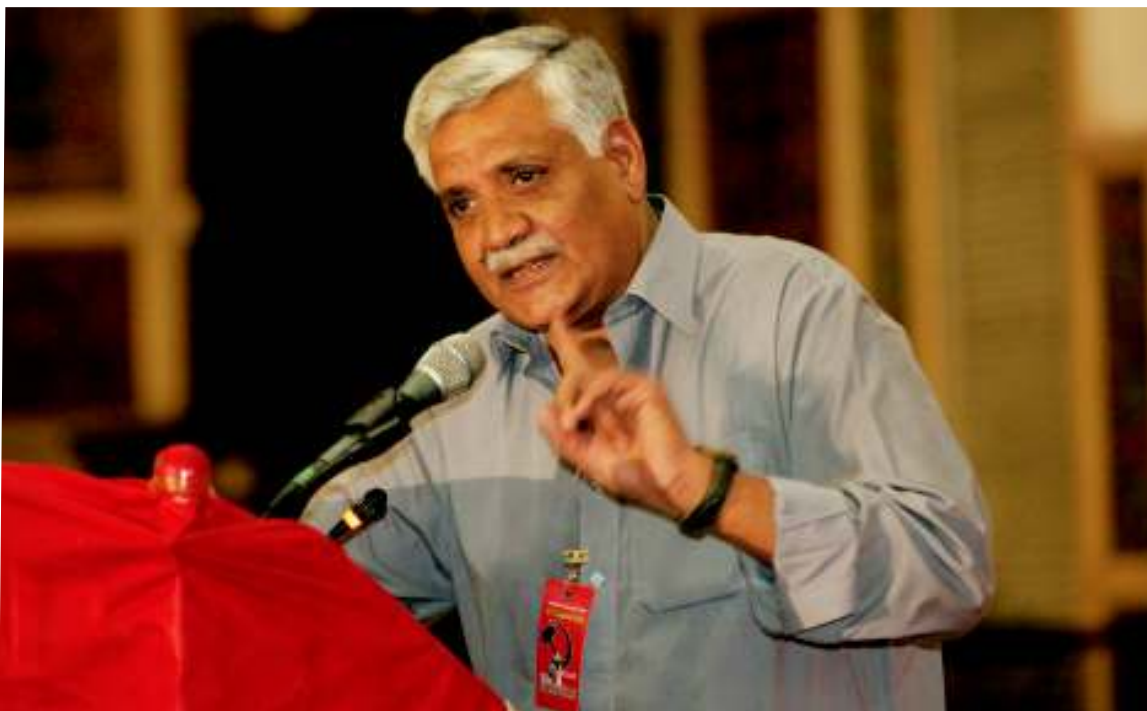
The terrible news of Lal Khan's death was

Great man though he was, Lal Khan was no marble icon. He was a warm human being, with abundant charm, charisma, humour, and an all-too-human liking for the good life – a factor which may tragically have hastened his end.

On the floor of St Paul's Cathedral in London, its architect Christopher Wren has left an inscription: "*Si monumentum requiris circumspice*" (If you want to see my monument, look around you.). That too could be Lal Khan's epitaph. It is in the flesh and blood of the revolutionary movement he inspired that Lal Khan's memory will be honoured.

Lal Khan – His Political Ideas

◀ **Andreas Bülow**



It is with deep sadness that we have received the news of Tanvir Gondal's (also known by the cover name Lal Khan) death. Tanvir was a close friend of the Socialist Association and was one of Pakistan's most important exponents of Marxism, author of a number of books on Asia and the man who had educated several generations of revolutionaries.

I

first met Tanvir in 2003 at a Marxist summer meeting in Barcelona, Spain. Back then, I was only eighteen years old, but our friendship was to last until his untimely death, today, February 21, 2020.

Tanvir was born in Bhaun, Pakistan in 1956. It was a few years after the bloody crackdown on Pakistan and India, a subject he discusses several times in his writing. As a nineteen year old, Tanvir began studying medicine at Nishtar Medical

College in Multan. It was here that he began to become active in student politics and in 1978 he became chairman of the student council as a counter candidate to the reactionary fundamentalists.

Arrested Under General Zia-ul-Huq

For the same reason, the following year he was arrested by Zia-ul-Haq's military dictatorship. After his release, he was forced to move to another college in Rawalpindi, but due to his continued student activism, he was wanted and his execution ordered. He managed to escape to Amsterdam in the Netherlands in May 1980. Here he completed his studies as a doctor. But as he once explained to me, he *"simply gave up all human wounds and devoted himself to the whole wounds of society"*.

In Amsterdam, Tanvir came into contact with

South African Marxist, Ted Grant (who lived in London). Ted was at that time the leader of the British Militant tendency, which had gained considerable support for Marxist ideas in the Labour Party in Britain. Tanvir organized an exile group from Amsterdam under the name The Struggle and he remained in exile until 1988.

Tanvir returned to Pakistan and began to build a Marxist current. Instead of proclaiming a new party, he chose to focus on long-term work in the PPP, the Pakistan Peoples' Party, which was founded in 1967 but gained mass support as a result of the 1968 revolution and was linked to the tradition of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Pakistan's left-wing populist prime minister overthrown by a state coup in 1977 and later executed). It did not mean that he and his comrades gave political concessions to left-wing populism, but it did mean that they understood that the Pakistani masses are orientating themselves around that party, not least as a partial bulwark against fundamentalism.

In Lal Khan's excellent book *Pakistan's other story* he discusses the PPP, its origins and development. He describes Bhutto's leadership as a left populist variant of Bonapartism and explains how the party developed from a party to more of a movement, a tradition and a banner where the masses can pass through when they move into political action.

Their perspective was confirmed as millions walked the streets in protest of the December 2007 killing of Bhutto's daughter, Benazir.

Party Building

From a very small exile group in the 1980s, The Struggle grew to have around 2,000 members in Pakistan in the mid-2000s, publishing newspapers in a wide variety of languages, including an English-language magazine (*Asian Marxist Review*) that was printed in India.



Andreas Bülow and Dr Lal Khan during a public meeting titled “Imperialism, Fundamentalism and the Situation in Pakistan” held by Socialisten in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Tanvir wrote several books, both about the 1968 revolution, about the partition between Pakistan and India, and about Afghanistan. In Kashmir, his organization managed to bring students together for battle across the dividing line between Pakistani and Indian-controlled regions. In areas where the fundamentalists are strong, such as in Waziristan, his organization has played a crucial

role in challenging them, which resulted in the election of Marxist Ali Wazir to the national parliament, despite massive electoral fraud.

The amazing thing about this organization – and of Tanvir's work in general – was that it developed in a country with extremely harsh conditions, with 55 million people living below the poverty line, with the Taliban and fundamentalists having close ties to the state machinery and regularly terrorizing the civilian population.

This is a country that is further divided with many national minorities, each with their own language, yet the comrades around *The Struggle* are able on every May Day, to organise workers demonstrations, including workers of all nationalities and languages, in unified marches in dozens of towns and cities across Pakistan.

“The two new states were born amidst the slaughter and bloodshed that Ghandi wanted to avoid. Thousands of years of religious, ethnic and communal harmony was shattered in a matter of days, as families were uprooted from their ancestral towns and villages and whole trainloads of people killed in the carnage. Partition of the Indian subcontinent was probably one of the most horrific episodes of the twentieth century. The dawn of 14th August 1947 was red not with revolution but with the blood of millions of innocent oppressed people...blood spilled by the reactionary madness of religious bigotry. The magnitude of the carnage stunned even those who had been the main advocates of Partition. The atrocities committed have become horror stories for future generations. The most brutalised regions were Punjab and Bengal. The irony is that the first two papers of the Communist Party of

The amazing thing about this organization – and of Tanvir's work in general – was that it developed in a country with extremely harsh conditions, with 55 million people living below the poverty line, with the Taliban and fundamentalists having close ties to the state machinery and regularly terrorizing the civilian population. This is a country that is further divided with many national minorities, each with their own language, yet the comrades around *The Struggle* are able on every May Day, to organise workers demonstrations, including workers of all nationalities and languages, in unified marches in dozens of towns and cities across Pakistan.

The Scourge of Division

A special mention must be reserved for Lal Khan's book on the bloody partition of the Indian subcontinent. Partition can it be undone is a Marxist classic in its own right which deserves to be read widely, also in Europe and the U.S..

Lal Khan's basic tenet is that partition was a crime brought about by the imperialists in order to derail the magnificent post-war workers' movement in India. He explains how this resulted in a sectarian division on religious lines as opposed to class unity:

India came out in Punjabi (Kirti (Worker) from Amritsar) and Bengali (Langal (Plough) from Calcutta). Yet the workers and peasants of Bengal and Punjab suffered the biggest massacre of Partition. The stiletto of Partition drenched in the poison of communal hatred had pierced two nationalities right through the heart. “

Internationalist Outlook

Personally, I met Tanvir a number of times, in Belgium, Spain, France and Italy, because he kept traveling and never had a narrow national perspective.

In 2010, he went to Venezuela, where I was then living, and for just over two weeks I was one of his hosts. We went around and visited the occupied factories which were under workers' control and participated in demonstrations in the streets of Caracas.

One of the things that struck me most about his visit was how well he understood the political situation in Venezuela, even though he did not speak a word of Spanish. But as he said to me, "*all the underdeveloped countries looked a little like each other*" and he pointed out some similarities between Pakistan and Venezuela towards me.

For Tanvir, it was capitalism that kept these countries in a state of technological backwardness – and the only way out was a permanent revolution in which the resolution of the national-democratic tasks had to go together with the resolution of the socialist tasks.

Wide knowledge International Issues

In June 2017, Tanvir visited Denmark to meet with

our comrades around, Socialisten. We also held a public meeting in Copenhagen, where there was good discussion and questions from the attendees.

Although the title of the meeting was "*the fight against fundamentalism*", the debate also revolved around Lebanon, Palestine and Afghanistan and Tanvir's wide knowledge was revealed in this discussion. Later Tanvir also visited the Unity List's International Committee and informed them of the situation in Pakistan.

But already, even at that time, Tanvir was sick. Slowly but surely, cancer began to spread in his body. Chemotherapy could not curb the disease. Although he was increasingly weakened, he did not give up political activity and was a regular attendee at meetings and was in daily contact with his comrades.

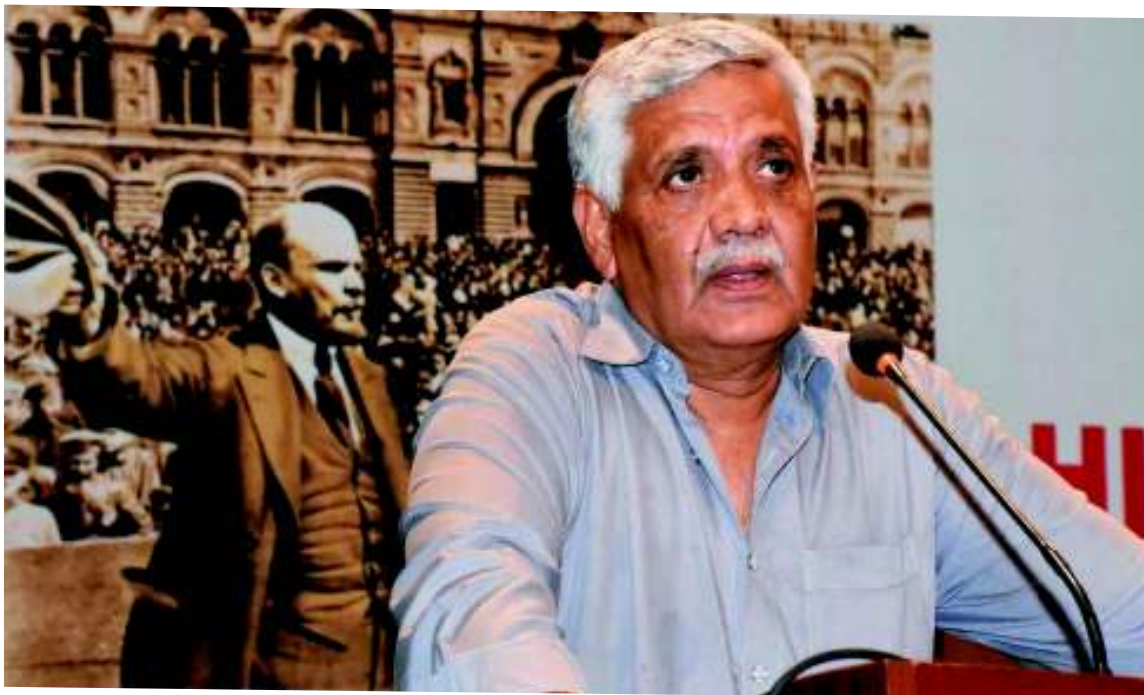
Comrade Tanvir, rest in peace. We promise to continue the fight against injustice, hunger, and misery - the fight against capitalism and for socialism.



Dr Lal Khan meeting with the activists in Caracas, Venezuela (2010)

A Tribute to Comrade Lal Khan

◀ **Farhad**



During the Congress of *The Struggle* in November 2018, I got the news that comrade Lal Khan had to be hospitalized and could not attend the second day's sessions of the congress. At that time everyone thought it was a deficiency of electrolytes and would soon be replenished. It was in the aftermath that gradually the gravity of his ailment started to unravel.

Those days were full of disbelief and anxiety. Like his other personal problems, he wouldn't discuss that in detail. On the phone he told me "*Living and dying is not that important*" and that still echoes in my head.

The year and a few months since then he spent fighting with cancer but he did not allow it define his life. The revolution was always his top agenda until his last breath.

I don't exactly remember the very first time that I met him, though I have been in *The Struggle* since 2005 the first meaningful interaction that I had with him was in 2008, at Jammu Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSF) convention in Rawalpindi while we waited at the book stall for the rally to arrive at the Press Club. Later, he asked me to translate a document on 2008 financial crash.

This was the beginning of a long collaboration between us where I would translate a number of his English articles to Urdu. The last of which was in January 2020 when he asked me to translate the world perspectives document.

This was around the time of launching of his book "*Pakistan's Other Story- The Revolution of 1968-69*" in which he discussed along other subjects the rise and subsequent history of Pakistan People's

Party (PPP). This was right after a split on the question of work inside PPP and I remember him saying once that a new book is the best way to move the organization forward after a split.

anything but revolutionary.

During the PPP government, it was constantly under attacks from the right wing and the state. Lal

Dr Lal Khan was the probably the only one in Pakistani left to explain that Military and Civilian rule were only two sides of the same coin and a military dictatorship only creates illusions and false hopes in bourgeois democracy.

There were book launch meetings across the country. For one such meeting I went to invite one of the most renowned book critics of Pakistan and though he disagreed with the political positions, he took great pride in saying, *"Lal Khan always invites me to his book lunch meetings"*. Such was his persona that even those who opposed him ideologically took pride in their association with him.

Khan tactfully attacked its policies from the left on the issues of basic economic necessities while keep promoting the founding document of the party which its leadership tried their best to downplay.

He was the probably the only one in Pakistani left to explain that Military and Civilian rule were only two sides of the same coin and a military dictatorship only creates illusions and false hopes in bourgeois democracy.

When PPP government accounted the public private partnership program inspired by Margaret Thatcher, to give some shares to the workers of state own enterprises he had the political courage to take the unpopular stance of explaining that it was a step towards privatization, at the time when the workers were hoping to get some money from those shares. Also, during the Lawyers movement against Musharraf, all the left jumped on the bandwagon but Lal Khan pointed out that a movement is defined by its economic goals those of the lawyers movement were anything but revolutionary.

Many have written about his life and politics by now so I'd limit myself to my own political and personal experiences with him.

He had a tremendous ability to form political relationships often utilizing his personal charm, and a great number of progressive politicians were cordial with him.

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He was a tireless traveler and was often on the road for revolution. I had the privilege of accompanying him on his many journeys for political meetings. That also gave some time to listen to his favorite music on the way, including Hemant Kumar, Manna Day and Lata but his favorite at that time was Punjabi songs by Noor Jahan. He would often Quote dialogues from Bollywood movies in his articles and speeches. When we drove past his Alma-Mater he used to tell me that as a student in Hasan Abdal cadet college

he and his classmates would ride horses in the dried riverbed thinking themselves to be characters of *"Mackenna's Gold"*. He was lover of poetry and I particularly remember one of the

What he inculcated in his comrades was a sense of Internationalism and audacity. He would often quote the Revolutionary leader Georges Jacques Danton *"audacity, audacity, audacity"*. He truly

**He would often quote the Revolutionary leader Georges Jacques Danton
"audacity, audacity, audacity".**

Congress documents that he wrote on Pakistan Perspectives, had every chapter starting with a verse from renowned Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib. He had a great sense of history and saw the process of revolution in that perspective. Once he told me that when he was in seventh grade, he read the *"The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich"*.

was a citizen of the world, his political and personal outlook shaped by experiences of working in both East and the West.

His personal warmth, generosity and love for his comrades was one of his defining qualities. Once he said to me at a meeting:

*"Had we not been revolutionaries, how could
have we met such beautiful people".*

One of his greatest organizational skills was to connect mass politics with disciplined organization. He was very non-sectarian in his politics and would embrace people rather than pushing them away. His ability to stand up again after a hard blow was extraordinary. During very difficult times he was always a morale booster for everyone.

I can say that my greatest privilege in life is to be a revolutionary and a comrade and friend of Lal Khan.



He was a tireless traveler and was often on the road for revolution. I had the privilege of accompanying him on his many journeys for political meetings.

Lal Khan: Great Man of Inferior Times

◀ **Haider Abbas Gardezi**

◀ **Translation by Hassan Jan**



My personal relationship with Lal Khan or its depth does not matter here. The thing that matters is how Lal Khan's untimely death affects our politics and society in general.

Comrade Lal Khan will be remembered as a prominent and epoch-making person in Indian subcontinent. Dr. Ali Shariati, who was killed during the Iranian revolution, once said, *"It is not important at what age a person dies. The thing which really matters is how important a role the person is playing in his social and political struggle at the time of his death and what is the level of his historical indispensability."* In this regard Lal Khan will be remembered as one of those giants of

subcontinent who bore everlasting imprints in the course of history in their periods.

Lal Khan was a great ideological theoretician and preacher of socialist revolution in Pakistan. He arduously dedicated every single moment of his conscious life for his ideological commitment. He was the flame that burnt till the end with the fervent of its struggle and revolutionary zeal. Hence, he would enlighten the dark and perilous path of future generations of revolutionary legions.

At a time when left wing was engulfed in its darkest hours and revolutionary movements were ebbing on a world scale, Lal Khan kept the flag flying. He inherited a barren historical period

of counter revolution. It was a time when Soviet Union was disintegrating, the Berlin Wall falling and ideas of “*End of history*” were being acclaimed. It was a time when world capitalism, worst imperialist aggression, religious terrorism and ideological back-stepping were at their peak. Lal

Stalinist tradition of Soviet Union. The second generation of revolutionists were inspired by Maoism and opted for armed struggle. All of them retreated. Hence, the 50 years of history of Pakistani left was a history of retreat which was bequeathed to comrade Lal Khan.

Lal Khan was confronting the worst period of history. At a time when the revolution of 1968 was ebbing, he started his conscious struggle. He inherited the defeats of two last generations before him. The 50 years of history of Pakistani left was a history of retreat which was bequeathed to comrade Lal Khan. At a time when left wing was engulfed in its darkest hours and revolutionary movements were ebbing on a world scale, Lal Khan kept the flag flying.

Khan was confronting the worst period of history. While departing, however, like every revolutionary wave in history, he dealt such a fatal blow to the foundations of this reactionary system that it paves the way for the future battles, like the young Narodniks in Tzarist Russia who braved a reactionary and harsh period and their sacrifices ended up in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Nothing goes unrewarded in history. No action disintegrates in the air without leaving its imprints. History keeps a ledger of all instants, and surely, there will be an instant among millions that would unleash the tide of that revolution which has been the dreams and aspirations of the oppressed masses for centuries.

In the leftwing history of Pakistan, comrade Lal Khan belonged to the third generation of leftists. The preceding two generations mostly, knitting those cherished dreams of revolutionary ideals. The first generation mostly included revolutionists from educated, enlightened and privileged strata of elite classes. Inspired by recent Russian Revolution they dreamed of getting rid of British Imperialism and building a socialist society. They mostly comprised of poets, writers, intellectuals, journalists, professors, students and enlightened individuals from feudal aristocracy, namely, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, Sayyad Sajjad Zaheer, Qaswar Gardezi, Sibte Hassan and several other notables. They were mostly followers of

At a time when the revolution of 1968 was ebbing, he started his conscious struggle. He inherited the defeats of two last generations before him. The way the 1968 revolutionary upsurge was derailed by the incompetence and opportunism of world and national communist parties, it further cemented Lal Khan's ideological maturity. It is not an accident that when the ideological basis of revolution were crumbling on a world scale, Lal Khan was delving into its reasons and wrote an outstanding book “*Pakistan's Other Story*” which is an excellent book regarding the history of left in Pakistan. Comrade Lal Khan, while employing great ideological ingenuity and deep historical insight, sought the reasons of the failure of left in Pakistan which is of great importance.

In his analysis of the dynamics of socialist revolution in Pakistan, comrade Lal Khan made some remarkable historical additions and pointed out some inconsistencies which have been impeding the movements over the years. For example, he devised a policy of support and criticism of the mainstream traditional party of Pakistan, depending on the recurrent issues. Although this tactic was employed previously too, but Lal Khan employed it as a political weapon for the first time.

The second inconsistency was the evolutionary stage-ism of revolutionary process which

stipulated that socialist revolution would go through two stages. First stage would be of bourgeois democratic revolution and second would be of socialist revolution. Lal Khan rejected this Stalinist position. He was probably the first leftist leader in Pakistan who criticized the Stalinist model of Soviet Union and exposed the betrayal of revolution. He acknowledged the “holy excesses” perpetrated in Soviet Union which had been repudiated till date in the name of dogmatism. For the first time in Pakistan, he openly condemned Stalinist dictatorship as a betrayal of Bolshevik Revolution.

Lal Khan was basically an internationalist. He was opposed to analyzing the political conditions of a single country in isolation from world politics. He was of the view that Socialist Revolution was a complicated phenomenon intimately linked with national and international perspectives. Moreover, he had very creative and radical concepts regarding the structure and building of revolutionary parties. He said that revolutionary parties could not be built by mutual appeasement and holding press conferences in drawing rooms; rather, they are born in the throes of spontaneous upsurges in historical processes. Dialectically,

revolutionary parties are the product of material conditions, just as Peoples Party came to being as a result of a long strike of railway workers in 1967.

Dr. Lal Khan had a charismatic personality and possessed ideological ingenuity. He was definitely a genius in leftist history of Pakistan. It takes ages for one such individual to emerge. Despite his revolutionary view, he was a beautiful amalgamation of traditional and modern. He was such an epoch-making person who brought continuity in Pakistan's leftist history and adapted it to modern conditions. Lal Khan bore many similarities with his ideological hero Leon Trotsky, despite both having different historical and social conditions. As Trotsky brought new dimensions in Bolshevik revolution, Lal Khan, too, didn't follow the path of socialist revolution blindly, rather he consciously observed and chose his path. Through this incomplete piece of writing I offer my condolences to all admirers of comrade Lal Khan, including myself, and dedicate a verse of Faiz Ahmed Faiz to his remarkable struggle and his tragic death:

*Whatever befell me, I endured but at least on the
night of separation,
My tears adorned your future.*



Comrade Lal khan: A Dream With Open Eyes

◀ **Zaffar Ullah**



On February 21 Comrade Lal khan died battling cancer. During his illness we were very concerned but there was always a glimmer of hope that he will survive. In fact we had never imagined that there would be time when there will be no Lal Khan to lead us in the struggle for revolution and it is going to be his legacy that we will carry forward. His **unshakable belief in a socialist transformation of the society and his four decades long struggle to inspire the revolutionaries in Pakistan with all his energy is a testament to that. His life and death will leave a lasting mark for years to come on the workers movement in Pakistan.**

I joined his revolutionary caravan 20 years ago, 16 of which I spent working very close with him.

Much has been written about his life, his personality and his struggle, but first and foremost he was a soldier of struggle for revolutionary socialism until his last breath. A Marxist intellectual, an author and a columnist, these identities were secondary. These were the different fronts on which he had to fight simultaneously. He used to say that in order to educate the comrades writing revolutionary literature is very important but equally difficult. He returned from exile to Pakistan in the last years of 1980s, that was a period of decline and extreme demoralization for the international socialist movement. Within few years Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall collapsed. The impacts were far more horrific in third world countries like Pakistan. Moscow and Beijing were the Meccas of Pakistani communists and they thought that the only way to

a Socialist Revolution in Pakistan was with the help of the Soviet Union. The collapse of USSR obliterated the left, the honest and genuine comrades got demoralized, and the opportunists became profiteers.

numerical growth at that time. And thanks to that now we have an ideologically unbeatable organization. This achievement is enough to make Lal Khan a distinguished star on the horizon of workers movement.

The role of the individual in history is very important and sometimes it is exaggerated and individuals become the central figures of history and movements.

During his exile and interaction with the International workers movement, Lal Khan was introduced to the ideas of Trotskyism. For the pro soviet left of Pakistan these were counter revolutionary ideas. The Stalinist propaganda against the theory of permanent revolution was deep rooted in Pakistan. Apart from a weak and brief introduction in the 60s, Dr Lal Khan was the only individual who built a one of the largest and strongest revolutionary organizations in Pakistan based on the ideas of Leon Trotsky. And that in a period when Socialism was a laughing stock. This was an extraordinary task and there is no doubt that it was only possible because of the extraordinary and dynamic leadership of Lal Khan and his pioneering comrades. The role of the individual in history is very important and sometimes it is exaggerated and individuals become the central figures of history and movements. It was a struggle against the tide of history and Lal Khan and his fellows were a lone voice in the wilderness, and today a dominant trend in revolutionary socialism in Pakistan.

Lal Khan was an individual of great personal abilities which were polished and sharpened by the international workers movement during his exile. That's what gave him the strength to fight the reactionary period. He also fought against the two stage theory prevalent in the working class and the oppressed nationalities of Pakistan. This was a period of relentless ideological battles. Building solid foundations of the organization upon Revolutionary Socialism and Permanent Revolution was more important than

It is the irony of history that he was struggling in a period that was not fertile for a revolutionary change. The character of the epoch plays a crucial role. Giants like Karl Marx find themselves helpless in an epoch of decline. If we analyse their roles within the confinements of their epochs, their struggles are nothing less than successful revolutions. His tremendous subjective energy for carrying out a revolution remained untapped in the counter revolutionary period that he lived in. Such was the force of history that he was against.

Spreading the ideas of Revolutionary Socialism in a backward and semi reactionary country like Pakistan was a huge achievement in itself. He built a revolutionary force comprised of individuals from numerous nationalities, diverse cultures and traditions. This is a testament to his organization genius. Other than the popular phenomenon of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, there is no individual in Pakistan who was this popular in so many layers and nationalities of the country. This was due to his revolutionary character, sacrifices and flexible methodology. In countries like Pakistan, development of cult of personality is a persistent problem, and Lal Khan had to constantly fight against this trend. Comrades who worked closely with him know how much he detested reverence to individual. He knew that this was fatal to a revolutionary organization. He had the extraordinary ability of moulding and adjusting himself according to the attitudes, habits and styles of the individuals associated with him. Perhaps he thought it was necessary for building an organization in a country like Pakistan.

Sacrifice, humility and selflessness were hallmarks of his personality. The organization that Lal Khan built may not be a numerically significant force in a country of 200 million, but he was considered as saviour of the working class and the oppressed. Reflections of those who contacted me on his death made me realize that he was the symbol of revolutionary change for so many more than we thought.

Comrade Khan spread the message of revolution not just on the basis of Ideology. He often said that only ideas are not enough, courage, determination and persistence are more important to take the ideas to the masses and specially in a counter revolutionary and reactionary period. He was found of Lenin's quotation that thoroughness, persistence and patience are vital for building a revolutionary organization.

Comrade Lal Khan made complex ideas easy and introduced elements of passion and romanticism to it. The success of annual congresses of *The Struggle* proved his methodology. He would inspire the comrades, young and old, and energize them so much that not only they could sustain the struggle during a reactionary epoch but also turned the organization into a formidable force. In my view without this method it would not have been possible to build such a big left-wing organization in Pakistan. Those who split with him criticized the congress after they left but they used to be ardent supporters at one time.

He was a human and like everyone else he had his qualities and his flaws. All his life he was controversial for various reasons. He was controversial within the left and in general because of his revolutionary ideas. During building of the organization, he had many

differences with numerous comrades but those differences were primarily political and organizational. He was a towering personality. I observed that he laid great emphasis on organizational bodies and their decisions. At numerous occasions, he was in the minority. He would try to convince others but vehemently implement the decisions of the majority. For him the correctness of democratically made



Lal Khan a selfless flagbearer of revolutionary socialism.

decisions was not a question of morality and he would strive to move the organization ahead back into the struggle from a state of confusion. Those who left him criticized him because of this. But everyone was sad on his death. With all his qualities and flaws, he was a selfless flagbearer of revolutionary socialism.

Comrade Lal Khan gave our generation a dream, a dream of a Socialist Society. It is dream of open eyes and shines bright in every comrade. That dream was kindled long before the probability of a Socialist Revolution, and it was necessary to light the path during the long night of reaction, that was his task and he did it. He used to say that we are no longer a lone voice in the wilderness and our time is coming. We have the legacy of his forty years of struggle in the form of the organization to complete his mission. A socialist society in the Subcontinent and beyond will be his living memorial. That is the way to pay tribute to him.

Red Till the End

◀ Nabeel Anwar



Funerals are not unusual in Bhoun, the fourth largest village of Chakwal district having a population of 18,822. But on February 22, the villagers witnessed a rather unusual funeral procession being taken out amidst revolutionary slogans and red flags. They were even more surprised to see young women carrying the coffin along with male mourners. This was the extraordinary funeral of Yasrab Tanvir Gondal, 64, better known as Dr Lal Khan, a Marxist political theorist and a political activist.

Khan's mourners fondly remember him as the red star of Pakistan's left. He breathed his last on February 21 at a hospital in Lahore. Khan was diagnosed about one and a half year ago with lung cancer. Born in 1956 in Bhoun, Khan was the son of Colonel Sher Zaman who wanted his son to follow in his footsteps.

Hundreds of people, including MNA Ali Wazir, journalist Imtiaz Alam, Qazi Saeed, singer Jawad Ahmed, and Farooq Tariq attended his funeral. As the coffin was carried away for burial, the streets of Bhoun echoed with revolutionary slogans. After the burial, people joined Jawad Ahmed in singing the revolutionary left-wing anthem '*The Internationale*.' According to Jawad, Khan had asked his comrades to sing the anthem at his grave.

Throughout his life, Khan waged a war against capitalism in his own way and dreamt of a socialist revolution which, according to him, was the sole panacea for the sufferings of the proletariat.

Khan started his political activism when he was a student at Nishtar Medical College, Multan. He contested the student union elections in 1978 against the Islami Jamiat-i-Tulaba and won, despite his opponents being supported by the

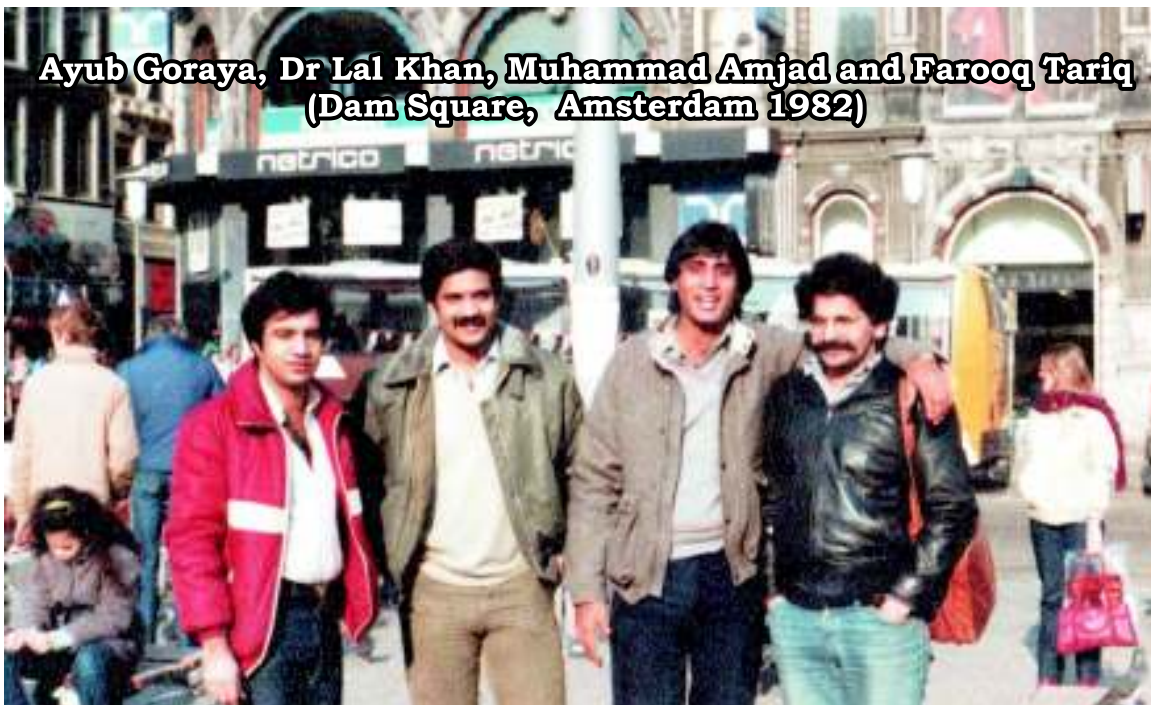
then military regime. When Gen Zia hanged Z.A. Bhutto in 1979, it was Khan and his group who first arranged Bhutto's funeral on the premises of Nishtar Medical College, thus inviting the wrath of Gen Zia's dictatorial military regime. Consequently, Khan was jailed for a year and received 15 lashes along with a fine of 20,000 rupees. Later, along with his friends, he was forcibly sent to Rawalpindi Medical College where they all re-launched another campaign against Gen Zia.

In the TV show Meri Jiddojehad, on Aaj TV, Khan once said that because of the anti-Zia campaign launched under his leadership, it had become difficult for Zia's daughter and son to come to the college. After he recited a famous poem 'Paishaawar Qatilo' [Professional Killers] by Ahmed Faraz on the occasion of the Z. A. Bhutto's first death anniversary, and a military court awarded him a death sentence with clear orders of shooting him on sight. This forced him into self-exile and, along with some of his comrades, he took refuge in the Netherlands which had become a home for Pakistani revolutionaries who had fled Gen Zia's regime.

Torture, tyranny and exile only made him launch a bigger campaign for his socialist ideas. With his comrades Farooq Tariq, Muhammad Amjad, Ayub Goraya and others, Khan launched a monthly magazine Tabqati Jiddojehad [Class Struggle] which served as a platform for many revolutionary writers. *"Gauging the impact of the anti-Zia articles we published, we decided to use pen names instead of our real names as it would have created trouble for our family members in Pakistan,"* says Farooq Tariq. *"Qaisar Jamal was my pen name while Tanvir Gondal chose Lal Khan as his pen name."*

Tariq motivated Khan to complete his education from a university in Netherlands. *"Every day, we would stage a protest against Gen Zia in front of the Pakistan Embassy in Netherlands but the protest that shook the despotic regime was a brief display of defiance shown during a match between Pakistan and Holland on June 13, 1982,"* recalls Tariq, the convener of Lahore Left Front.

Tariq, Khan, Amjad and Goraya had entered the stadium carrying a banner, chanting anti-Zia slogans. Their protest was telecast live at a time



**Ayub Goraya, Dr Lal Khan, Muhammad Amjad and Farooq Tariq
(Dam Square, Amsterdam 1982)**

when even the mention of Z. A. Bhutto's name could throw anyone in jail.

"After this protest, the Pakistani government gave false information to the government of Netherlands and our protest was called a terrorist activity," continues Tariq. "Eighteen of us, including Khan and I, were arrested by the Dutch police but we were released after investigations. We filed a case against the Netherlands Government for arresting us on false charges, which we won and the Dutch Government apologised to us," he adds.

When Gen Zia died in 1988, the Pakistani revolutionaries in Netherlands began to return to Pakistan. *"When we returned to Pakistan after eight years, I quit my pen name but Lal Khan continued to use his,"* says Tariq.

Lal Khan devoted his life to his revolutionary ideas, inspired by the ideologies of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. He reorganised his comrades and remained the editor of Tabqati Jiddojehad and also of the Asian Marxist Review. He authored over a dozen of books including Pakistan's Other Story: The 1968-69 Revolution and Kashmir's Ordeal — A Revolutionary Way Out, as well as Partition — Can it be Undone? He was a regular contributor to the op-ed pages of Daily Times and Urdu daily Dunya.

His passing is a blow to the country's repressed and fragmented left. Rashed Rehman, the former editor of Daily Times, says that Lal Khan was a true Marxist who devoted his entire life to his ideology. *"I first met him in 1979 and our first meeting led to a profound friendship,"* he says adding that, when he became the editor of Daily Times, he invited Khan to write a column for the daily. *"His death is a huge loss to the already divided and weakened left. It is yet to be seen who will fill the vacuum left by him,"* laments Rehman.

Author and columnist Dr Arif Azad termed Khan as one of the rare breed of Marxist scholars and activists who embodied the ideals of resistance

and capitalism. *"Deeply versed in European Marxism, Dr Lal Khan was committed to the various local struggles for trade union rights and resistance to undemocratic regimes,"* says Azad. *"He was the first Marxist in the country to introduce Trotskyism. Before him, Pakistan had only cultural Marxists but he established himself as a scientific Marxist who would always come up with authentic statistics to prove his point. Dr Lal was a heroic figure in student opposition to Zia's regime. The leftist movement is poorer without him. He will be missed here and beyond."*

Khan would often lament on the plight of PPP and would constantly remind its leadership that it had drifted away from the party's manifesto which was mainly based on socialism.

Khan had a vast knowledge of world history and political and social movements. His memory was so sharp that he could quote the PPP manifesto, speeches by Lenin and from the books of Z. A. Bhutto and Leon Trotsky at length from memory.

Three years ago, in Islamabad, Khan appeared optimistic at the launch of the Urdu translation of 'History of The Russian Revolution' by Leon Trotsky. He called the Urdu translation by comrade Imran Kamyana, a beacon of light.

"I grew up reading Comrade [Lal Khan] and learnt a lot from him," says Rehana Akhtar, an MPhil student who came from Rawalpindi to attend the funeral along with other women activists. *"He was not only a great intellectual but also a great human who would absorb every negative thing courageously".* She adds: *"We shared a bond with Comrade Lal Khan which was stronger than a blood relation. Just as everyone is certain that the sun will rise in the morning, we believe that the socialist revolution will come one day. The miseries and pains of the working class can only be addressed through a socialist revolution."*

Courtesy Dawn News

Lal Khan: A comrade, A Friend, A Past, A Present ...

◀ **Pierre Rousset**



I was fortunate to meet Comrade Lal Khan in Lahore in November 2018, while *The Struggle* was holding its congress, against all odds. The situation was then particularly difficult, the TLP making itself known by blocking the roads after the Supreme Court declared Asia Bibi innocent. My friend Farooq Tariq picked me up when I reached Lahore and we had a hard time getting out of the airport!

We visited Lal Khan together. He had warmly welcomed me. For my part, I immediately felt a community of history and commitment, a very natural personal closeness. We were comrades – and I was under the spell. His loss is, for me, that of a friend, even if we did not often have the opportunity to be together.

I was able to appreciate his personal courage, in the face of both disease and repression, and I got to know his history, which is a precious part of the

history of the Pakistani left. I was able to enrich the website of Europe solidaire sans frontières (ESSF) with his writings. I was able to measure his ability to turn the page on past controversies, to be better able to shoulder all the responsibilities of a “senior” activist in backing the emergence of a new radical Left generation, radically asserting solidarities – as well as his internationalist commitment and that of *The Struggle*, manifested, in particular, by their engagement with the Fourth International.

Lal Khan struggled till the end, perceiving new potential in the light of a rich experience. He is one of those who, in our militant generation, have not only kept their convictions, but have not locked themselves in the past either.

I see how great this loss is, for his family, relatives and friends, for his comrades, for the Pakistani and international left.

With all my solidarity!

In honour of Comrade Lal Khan

◀ **Executive Bureau of the Fourth International**



It was with great sorrow that we learned that our comrade Lal Khan was no more. His involvement, and that of The Struggle, with the Fourth International was recent and, for us, particularly precious. He helped to open up our movement even more than was already the case to rich, varied, revolutionary and unitary militant traditions, in cooperation with the LPP current.

A veteran of the revolutionary struggle in Pakistan, South Asia, and internationally, Lal Khan and his comrades of that generation embody for us a legacy of exhilarating struggles, such as those of the years 1968-1969, of resistance to the repression of military regimes, of exile, and of returning home in conditions that were always unpredictable and dangerous, to continue tenaciously the task of building a revolutionary movement and putting forward a clearly socialist and anti-capitalist perspective.

A veteran, Lal Khan is one of those who, like our comrade Farooq Tariq, have put their experience at the service of a new militant, radical generation, fighting against all discrimination and inequality in a progressive perspective. Until his last breath, he kept his initial commitment alive.

We pay tribute to him.

We share the grief of his loved ones, his comrades of *The Struggle*, his fellow fighters. Together we will continue his internationalist struggle.

We Lost the Pakistani Revolutionary Marxist Leader Lal Khan

◀ **By Socialist Labourer Party - SEP (Turkey)**



We are deeply upset, as the builders of revolutionary Marxism in Turkey, by the death news of the Pakistani Revolutionary Marxist Leader Lal Khan. While Lal Khan was studying at the faculty of medicine in the 1970s, he was at the forefront of the revolutionary youth movements and carried out tough struggles with extreme right-wing fanatic religious circles in Pakistan. The methods we know of the September 12 junta in Turkey, organized worsely in Pakistan, by Zia ul-Haq junta. Dictator Zia ul-Haq forced comrade Lal Khan to go into exile to Europe.

Lal Khan, who met revolutionary Marxist milieus in the Netherlands, fought under the banner of permanent revolution, tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, until his last breath. When the conditions softened in Pakistan, Lal Khan did not hesitate to return to the country, leaving his profession as a doctor and started as professional revolutionary for the construction of The Struggle. During the decline of Stalinist and Maoist traditions in Pakistan, Lal Khan organized The Struggle that helped change the face of the Pakistani left. Of course, this growth was not easy, it was possible with intense efforts and revolutionary concentration against all kinds of difficulties.

Today, *The Struggle* is still a leading revolutionary socialist organization in Pakistan. Lal Khan's untimely loss has not been a huge loss not only for Pakistani workers and youth, his lack will also be felt from Afghanistan to India and all over South Asia. The tasks of growing The Struggle and the class struggle are now on the shoulders of the students and comrades of Lal Khan. As SEP, we will continue fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with *The Struggle* for the world revolution.

Condolence Note | Lal Khan

◀ **By Socialism and Liberty Party - PSOL (Brazil)**

With the heavy heart we received a news regarding the death of Pakistani Marxist theorist and leader, Dr Lal Khan. He was editor of the Asian Marxist Review, although he graduated in medicine, he never exercised his profession and ended up becoming one of the most militant Pakistani Marxist leader. He regularly wrote articles for the Pakistani newspapers Daily Times and Dunya and was the main leader of the Marxist organization "*The Struggle*".

Lal Khan's whole life is an intense political activity, as a student he joined the fight against the dictator General Zia ul Haq, whose dictatorship came after a military coup that assassinated President-elect Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was imprisoned for a year and after being released he went into exile in Holland where he finished medical school.

With a handful of young people, he formed an organization "*The Struggle*". He returned to Pakistan in 1988 and continued the building of an organization under the difficult conditions of the country, and been able to elect national deputies. *The struggle* is preparing for it's 38th Congress, to bring about 2,000 delegates from all over Pakistan, quite an achievement in the harsh conditions of that country.

Lal Khan wrote dozens of articles and many books on crucial national and international topics. The sad demise of Lal Khan is an irreparable loss for those fighting under the banner of Marxism.

PSOL joins the comrades and companions in Pakistan and other countries who have experienced the struggle of Lal Khan, and also to his family. We send them the deepest



Excerpts from Lal Khan's Wwork

On Imperialism

The reality is that while the US imperialism is in historical decline, the rise of China is also brittle and dangerously credit financed in this epoch of a decaying world capitalist system. China's capitalism is neither conventional nor healthy in its foundation. The relations between China and the United States are fraught with contradictions.

On China

China experienced three revolutions in the 20th century. The first was the bourgeois democratic revolution of 1910-11. The second revolution was that of 1925-27, which was proletarian in its nature, led by Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the founder of the Communist Party of China (CCP) who remained its General Secretary till 1927. The third Chinese revolution of 1949 was led by Mao Zedong. It was a peasant revolt led by the Red Army. This was a bureaucratic caricature of a democratic socialist regime set up by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution. Still the Chinese Revolution of 1949 was one of the greatest events of human history.

The turn toward capitalist restoration started in 1978 under the right wing of the CCP led by Deng Zhao Ping. They called it 'market socialism'. Today, The CCP is neither 'communist' nor a 'party'. It is a bureaucratic elite where billionaires are leeching the system and awarding themselves a heredity status in private property and ownership.

On Saudia - Iran Conflict

The competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia, for the imposition of their hegemonic designs and dominance in the region is being covered in the

guise of Islamic sectarian hatred. Both regimes are theocracies, Iran claiming to represent the world's Shia and Saudi Arabia, basically a rigid Wahabi regime, claiming to represent all Sunnis so this makes the religious division much more hostile, violent and fraught. The Iranian and the Saudi regimes also use these sectarian conflicts for domestic consumption, to pacify and crush mass revolts in their own countries.

On Arab Spring

The mighty power of revolution was demonstrated with the resignation of Mubarak. However, the Egyptian revolution has not finished. In order to solve the problems of society, it is necessary to break with capitalism, expropriate industry, banks, finance capital and the imperialist assets and stop their plunder. Unless a revolutionary party manages to put itself at the head of the revolution, this marvellous revolutionary uprising in the long run will sooner or later recede.

On US - Taliban Talks and Hoax of Peace

It is a myth that the Taliban are a homogeneous and centrally-organised body. There are numerous groups led by different warlords representing warring factions of black capital, who have been tearing each other apart for control of this ill-gotten booty. They all represent black reaction and are aligned to the regional and international imperialist powers that are involved in this new great game to exploit and control mineral resources, gas pipelines and the strategic location of Afghanistan.

The imperialists and the Taliban are both based on

finance capital, hence they are two sides of the same coin. The menace of fundamentalism can only be defeated and smashed when its base, finance capital, is destroyed. This system has to be overthrown.

On Political Economy of Terrorism

It all started with the imperialist counter-revolutionary insurgency in the region where drugs and other criminal networks were systematically set up to finance their dollar jihads. This terrorism has a formidable economic base and has morphed into an enormously lucrative enterprise. Suicide bombings and terrorist attacks are extremely expensive affairs. Those investing in them must be extracting exorbitant profits. No capitalist would ever invest so heavily for reasons of piety alone.

The black economy is three times the size of Pakistan's formal economy. The so-called 'non-state actors' are the cancerous outgrowth of this non-state Mafiosi economy. Sections of the state are involved in this black capital with vested interests and terrorism is often instigated to protect these interests.

On Indo-Pak War and Peace Puzzle

In the South Asian subcontinent, the threat of war and the process of peace is also used as a device of deception for domestic consumption. The elites of India and Pakistan have used the turbulent relationship between them, blowing hot and cold, mainly to divert social revolts in their countries. When this campaign loses steam and begins to exhaust itself, they switch over to the facade of peace and friendship. Meanwhile, in each and every situation, they continue to arm and spend extravagantly on a military build up. They have fought three and a half wars and have started peace processes more than a dozen times. But the reality of the recent period is that they can neither afford to go to war nor can they sustain durable peace.

On Kashmir

Kashmir was torn apart and occupied by the forces of both India and Pakistan. The Indian and Pakistani ruling classes have wreaked havoc on the masses in Kashmir as elsewhere in the subcontinent. This wound, consciously inflicted by the British imperialists at the time of partition, continues to bleed and fester. The liberation of Kashmir is linked to the fate of the oppressed classes and nationalities throughout the subcontinent.

On Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Even the minor FDI's that trickle into Pakistan came at exorbitantly high costs for the workers and oppressed masses of the country. Employment and poverty alleviation from this FDI is a chimera. In the last decades, every dollar in FDI's extorted 14 dollars from the country. Now this ratio has almost doubled.

On Technology

Instead of improving and developing human life and society's living conditions, Capitalism's technological revolutions have ultimately ended up causing unprecedented disparity, unchecked exploitation and harrowing poverty. Instead of ending the human exploitation and bringing the masses prosperity, the private ownership of these advanced technologies and instruments begets misery and deprivation.

On Art

Film, music, poetry and art play a tremendous role in a revolutionary process. Not only they raise the consciousness and a vengeance against class exploitation and oppression, but also instil optimism and hope in the success of a socialist revolution. The fine arts can inspire and enthuse the will, determination and daring to carry out this historic task.

On May Day

The sole purpose of designating May Day as the day of unity of the workers of the world by the Paris International Socialist Congress was to prepare, unite and organise them into a single international proletarian movement. Its goal was and is the emancipation of the oppressed through a victory of revolutionary socialism. Its essence is profound: "An injury to one is an injury to all."

On "Democracy"

Democracy means accepting the right of the rich, the privileged, the mighty, the propertied classes and the upstarts that rise through the social layers of society with their robbery, blackmail, plunder, and extortionist crimes to enter the echelons of the parliaments and right to rulership. Democracy is a tricky creature. It can propel fascists like Adolf Hitler and fundamentalist bigots such as Modi and mullahs to power that impose black reaction upon societies. The reality is that there can be no genuine democracy in an economy and society that is vexed with inequality, exploitation and drudgery. Only by putting an end to this disparity and wealth-based social statures, the society can achieve a democracy that is genuinely of the people, for the people and by the people.

On Reformism

Reformism, however, left radical it might be, cannot sustain the progress in the socioeconomic conditions of the masses for long. Class struggle has to be fought to the finish. Historically, there have been many regrets by those who missed precious opportunities to complete emergent revolutions. Most met with tragic consequences.

On Society

The general consciousness of the masses in any society is neither static nor eternal. It is in a state of constant change, flux and motion. Betrayals and

defeats push it back but with the new resurgence of the class struggle, it rises to new heights. However, the temperament and moods of different classes in society can vary according to the conditions and the epoch through which it is passing. The toiling classes can endure hardships for long periods of time. There can be decades of lull and yet the masses can explode into volcanic eruptions overnight that change the course of history through revolutionary insurrections. Such periods are historical exceptions.

On "Civil Society"

The social psychology of the middle classes or the petit bourgeoisie is empirical and suffers from bouts of impatience. This, in times of crisis, puts it in a state of permanent insecurity, discontent and unrest, swinging from one extreme to the other — trying to ape the bourgeoisie in ordinary times and jumping into the proletarian bandwagon in revolutionary situations.

On Revolution!

In ordinary times, the social, political, cultural and psychological conditions of society are shaped by the reactionary ethics and sociocultural norms of the ruling classes. However, revolutions smash this social order, transform societies and the course of history.

Revolution, as opposed to evolution as a way forward for the socio-economic development of human society, was in fact discovered by Marx and Engels in their intense quest to develop the social sciences for the emancipation of the human race and to put an end to misery in a world that could produce plenty to fulfil human need after the Industrial Revolution. Marx called revolutions "the locomotives of history". The theory of scientific socialism was similar to what Darwin had discovered in the natural sciences with his celebrated work, *On the Origin of Species*.

***Farewell Comrade Lal Khan...
The Struggle shall go on...
Till Socialist Victory!!!***

