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Where to for the Tamil struggle?

Arc Up Anarchist Communists

19/05/2024

15 years ago the national liberation war came to an end, with the destruction of the de-facto Tamil Eelam state and the mass slaughter of at least 169,796 Tamils by the genocidal Sri Lankan government. Now, even commemorating the Tamil dead, both civilian and soldier alike, is met with police repression. The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) is still in effect, with daily arrests and imprisonments without charge, brutal torture, sexual assault and murder. Thousands seek accountability for their disappeared loved ones.

During the genocide, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) established themselves as an uncompromising guerilla army to fight against the settler-colonial occupier. The LTTE were as successful as could be expected against an enemy backed by major world powers including Australia, the US, India, China, and the UK. As we remember the martyrs for their bravery, we must not treat the LTTE as infallible, lest we fail to learn lessons for future struggles.

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The LTTE established a short-lived capitalist state to protect the ethnic and cultural identity of Tamils from annihilation. For what shared identity brings a people, it cannot negate the antagonistic class divisions inherent to Capitalism. Like colonisers want land that belongs to the colonised, capitalists want profit that belongs to the worker, and the state maintains the system by taking freedoms that belong to the individual. Often the capitalist class will falsely claim their own economic interests are within a peoples shared 'national interests'. In this way shared identity becomes a tool of control. Anarchists believe all antagonistic class divisions must be abolished before a society will find peace.

Like many guerilla armies around the world, the LTTE's compromises and brutality lost it support, both domestic and international. The military as a means to a political solution became an end in itself with the conscription of child soldiers. Waning popular support for the LTTE, exacerbated by the 'War on Terror', became the leverage a powerfully allied Sri Lankan state needed to massacre thousands with impunity.

Where the global capitalist class united to crush Tamil liberation, similar global unity is needed in opposition. That unity isn't built through an increasingly isolated and desperate guerilla army, but via a strong, international workers movement. From every country that backs the Sri Lankan repression of Tamils, there needs to be workers action at strategic points of production, ready to deny crucial work or resources to the regime or to cost capitalists more than they serve to benefit from backing settler-colonial violence. Workers power, realised locally and internationally, doesn't just have the potential to win justice for Tamils, but for all exploited and oppressed peoples around the world.

As Anarchist Communists, our organisational focus is on rebuilding the workers movement so that it might be a power capable of overthrowing colonial regimes to return all land back to its rightful custodians; Tamil and First Nations people alike.