

MURDER IN PARIS

SABARATNAM SABALINGAM BRUTALLY MURDERED IN PARIS

DISSENT CANNOT BE SUPPRESSED THROUGH MURDER

Sabaratnam Sabalingam, a pioneer of the Tamil liberation struggle, strong advocate of Tamil youth movements in the 1970's and renowned Tamil writer and publisher was brutally killed on May 1, 1994 in his own home in Paris, France.

He was shot at point-blank range in the presence of his wife and child. The killers left after threatening the family and cutting the telephone wires in the house. In a long personal history of political activism, Sabalingam was one of many Tamil youths who were arrested for "terrorism" in the 1970's by the Sri Lankan government, when they became engaged in the liberation struggle. He was placed under arrest for bombing a bridge and managed to escape from prison, breaking a hip in the attempt. He went into hiding and successfully evaded a Sri Lankan government manhunt for five years, eventually arriving in France.

Residing in Paris, Sabalingam was an ardent supporter of the Tamil struggle for self-determination as well as a publisher of Sri Lankan literature. Through the Tamil publisher, *Asia*, he was responsible for publishing the work of contemporary poets, V.I.S Jeyapalan, Cheran, Arunthathy, Selvam and Cholaikkili as well as *Eluding Peace* by Tharabi, a series of writings on the Tamil Liberation struggle. In addition, he was undertook the re-publication of "The history of the Muslims of Puttalam", "Puthiyathor Ulagam" which details the internal killings of Tamil nationalist militant movements, Tarzie Vittachi's account of the 1958 riots "Emergency 58" which is presently banned in Sri Lanka, and "Yaalpana Vaibava Maalai". A part of his political activism as an expatriate included regularly translating into French and publishing the periodic releases of the Jaffna University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR).

We believe that those responsible for Sabalingam's murder are the Liberation Tigers who more than any other Tamil militant groups, violently suppress any opposition or criticism with guns and bombs. It is for this reason that we reject the assertion of Lawrence Thilakar, one of the leaders of the Liberation Tigers residing in Paris, denying responsibility in this killing.

Our suspicions are based on the pattern of denials followed by reluctant admission of responsibility which is an element in the history of the Liberation Tigers. We cite the following incidents as examples:

- mass slaughter of Sinhala villagers in Anuradhapura
- killing of Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran
- mass slaughter of Muslims in the Eastern province

Until May 1 1994, killing those who challenge the Liberation Tigers was restricted to Sri Lanka and India. That it has now occurred in Europe is cause for alarm and more significantly, destroys the credibility of the liberation struggle in the international forum. To place the personal growth and authority of any one militant movement over the liberation struggle, poses a real threat to the sovereignty of the Tamil people. Such actions must be strongly condemned as well as rejected. Sabalingam, like Rajani Thiranagama, is yet another victim in the long line of Tamil intellectuals who have been killed for linking human rights and the liberation struggle. In both cases, the universal recognition these independent activists were accorded for their self-sacrifice and commitment to the cause, lent them credibility which posed a threat to their killers.

Anxious to preserve the history of the Tamils, Sabalingam republished "Yaalpana Vaibavamaalai", an account of the ancient history of Jaffna. His ongoing work involved publishing ancient historical records pertaining to Tamil speaking peoples. That at the time of his killing he was engaged in documenting the liberation struggle through hitherto unseen individuals' statements and photographs, arouses many suspicions. Evidently his killers feared that the events and details of the struggle that have been forgotten and hidden will now be brought to light.

It is imperative that we universally condemn such killings which are an attempt to suppress the voice of freedom and together, challenge the killers in order to prevent more senseless deaths. Those who believe that dissenting voices can be silenced with guns are indeed blind to history. The greatest eulogy we can deliver in Sabalingam's death is to continue his work for human rights and liberation.

From those who are publishing in exile to oppose anarchy:

Manitham(Switzerland) Samar(France) Sinthanai(German) Theni(Germany) Thoondil(Germany) Suvadugal(Norway)
Thayagam(Canada) Thedal(Canada) Kaalam(Canada) Naangavathu Parimanan(Canada) Thaaham(UK) Sumaihal(Norway)
Oothaa(Germany) Eela, oomi(UK) Vizhippu(Canada) Kriya Kural(Canada) Tamil Resource Centre(Canada) Sri Lankans for
Human Rights(Canada) Campaign for Democracy in Sri Lanka(Canada) South Asian Solidarity Committee(Germany)
Interculture Media Point(Grenzenlos-Germany)