

Oriana Fallaci says she's dying of cancer

Famed journalist says she stopped caring for self after Sept. 11

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ROME — Oriana Fallaci, the Italian journalist known for ruthlessly grilling her subjects, says she detests interviews but has granted one herself — to herself — because she is dying of cancer.

The Milan daily Corriere della Sera published the slim volume, "Oriana Fallaci Interviews Oriana Fallaci," as a supplement to its newspaper Friday.

In the work, Fallaci, 74, asks herself why she agreed to the interview.

"Because death is on my back. Medicine has issued the sentence: 'Lady, you cannot get better. You won't get better,'" is the reply.

Fallaci's battle with cancer began some 11 years ago. In the early 1990s, she had surgery for breast cancer. Her latest work indicates that cancer has recurred.

"I had a tremendous pain in my lungs and in my trachea and in my esophagus, where the Alien has made his nest," she says of her recent ailments.

Sept. 11 attacks a turning point

Fallaci writes that she stopped taking care of herself, including having medical tests and seeing oncologists, on Sept. 11, 2001, the day of the terror attacks against the United States.

She said she needed to spend all her time writing and translating two books that have since been published and which, in her typically blunt style, reflect scathingly on society, including the differences between Christian and Islamic culture.

The second of the two, "The Strength of Reason," came out this spring. In it, Fallaci accuses the Roman Catholic Church of being too weak before the Muslim world, and Europe of selling itself to Islam "like a prostitute."

Two years earlier, her best-selling essay "The Rage and The Pride" drew accusations that Fallaci was inciting hatred against Muslims.

Famous interviewer 'detests' interviews

In her work published Friday, Fallaci, a former war correspondent, says, "The West, Europe, Italy, is sicker than I am."

Interviewing herself, Fallaci responds that she "detests" interviews, including those of the "so-called powerful of the Earth."

"To be good, an interview has to stick itself into, sink into, the heart of the interviewee. ... In this I have always seen an act of violence, of cruelty."

Subjects of her interviews would unlikely disagree. Among those who expressed amazement over her relentless style is Henry Kissinger, the former secretary of state.

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Oriana Fallaci, shown here in an undated photo, says "death is on my back."