

Dieser Text wird oft als Beleg dafür zitiert, dass Sartre Terroristen unterstützte. Die meisten, die diese Ansicht vertreten, kennen aber wohl nur den reisserischen Titel dieses Interviews. Sartre sagt, dass Terrorismus nur als Gegengewalt akzeptierbar ist. Klar ist, dass Sartre nicht jede Gewalt ablehnte. Er war Vertreter einer radikalen Verantwortungsethik. Seine Ablehnung der heute allgegenwärtigen Gesinnungsethik (Stichwort: *political correctness*) begründet sich philosophisch auf der Phänomenologie. Des einen Terrorist ist des andern Freiheitskämpfer. Die grössten Helden in der Geschichte waren entweder Massenmörder (Caesar, Karl d. Gr., Friedrich d. Gr., Lenin) oder Terroristen (Wilhelm Tell, George Washington, die Kämpfer der französischen Résistance).

'Terrorism Can Be Justified'

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Although more than 70 years old and nearly blind, Jean-Paul Sartre, the father of existentialism and author of more than fifteen novels, plays and philosophical tracts, is still actively and often controversially in touch with his times. Two months ago, the famed French writer sparked an imbroglio by charging that the government of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had torpedoed an epic history of modern France that Sartre was preparing for French television; French TV executives insisted that the problem with the production was cost, not content. On the foreign front, Sartre was quoted last week in the leftist Paris newspaper Libération as saying that he looked forward to "celebrating" the death of Spanish leader Francisco Franco, who he characterized as a "Latin swine"¹. Recently Sartre agreed to discuss his current thoughts and work with NEWSWEEK's Jane Friedman in Paris. His only condition: his close friends and partners in the TV project, Pierre Victor, Philippe Gavi and Sartre's longtime companion, Simone de Beauvoir, 67, also be present. Below, excerpts from their roundtable conversation.

Friedman: What did you intend your TV film to show of French history?

Sartre: The idea was to take the past 70 years and to describe the world as seen by one person – me – and to achieve a collective view as well. We had developed the first part from 1905 to 1928 – my childhood and French society then, the threat of war and the first world war itself.

De Beauvoir: We wanted not to give an official history, but to tell it from the viewpoint of the masses. Instead of letting politicians and generals talk, we wanted to speak with soldiers in the trenches, people who resisted the war, to show the possibility of revolt available to man. And I wanted to let women speak, not only about the feminine condition but of their vision of war.

Friedman: Apropos of women – do you, M. Sartre, agree with Simone de Beauvoir's opinion that women should be forced by law to leave the home and seek jobs?

Sartre: Yes, I agree. Because the role of the woman in the family is one of submission. Women, on the whole, do not yet have the same freedom as men.

Friedman: You were among those most active in the rallying people against Franco's decision to execute terrorists. But some say that foreign protest may have contributed to even greater repression in Spain. How do you feel about this?

Sartre: The argument that outside action may endanger those who fight for liberty is always used. The opposite is true.

Friedman: What about political terrorism? Is it ever justified, and when?

Sartre: I believe terrorism is justified [when] it is a response to murder. The Spanish government killed five men who would not have been killed in another country with our kind of legislation. [Spanish] police were killed in reprisal and vengeance. It was a barter that the [Franco] government provoked. Terrorism in France would be less justified; few people are executed here. Terrorism is always admissible depending on the way laws are made, their uselessness and violence. It is right that against these so-called official laws, there be a more secret world where law is made through acts like acts of terrorism.

¹ eine etwas unglückliche Übersetzung des Wortes „salaud“ ins Englische (A.B.)

Friedman: Have your political views changed any recently?

Sartre: Not in the sense of having become a centrist after having been on the left. I am no longer Marxist although I have been influenced by Marxism. Marxism has a way of explaining man – as a product of his economic system – which does not correspond to what I believe. I think individual freedom exists and it must form the basis of true revolution. This is what I wanted to show in the TV film, how this freedom has developed in the last 70 years despite a context not conducive to freedom. People rely more and more on something inalienable in themselves. That's where I draw my hopes for the future.

Friedman: Could the situation in Portugal fit the theory?

Sartre: It could, but we have to know how it will end. For the moment, we are worried.

Friedman: Now that the TV film is off, are you beginning other projects?

Sartre: Pierre Victor and I will trace the philosophical evolution of the two notions of power and freedom in a book. In what measure is power an enemy of freedom? And in what measure do they coexist? How can they give rise to a single reality both strong and free? The book will take two years. Pierre will do the reading since I can't. At night we'll discuss and tape sessions.

Friedman: How is your health?

Sartre: I feel well. Only I don't see any more. I can't read or write. Simone de Beauvoir and others read to me a bit.

Friedman: How do you describe our 45-year relationship with Simone de Beauvoir?

De Beauvoir: I would call it a relationship that has lasted 45 years.

Sartre: It's not just a friendship. It's the sentiment you have in a marriage.

De Beauvoir: Well, thank you. Then there was no point in not getting married.

Friedman: M. Sartre – you recently said that you felt that you had ten years of life left. How did you come to that conclusion?

Sartre: Because, in my family, we die old and longevity is hereditary- my grandfather died at 94, my grandmother at 80 and my mother at 86. So as a devoted son, I say that I will live to be 80.

Friedman: What is the most important thing in your life today?

Sartre: I don't know. Everything. To live. To smoke.