

## Life imitating art, Italian mystery writer arrested for murders

AMANDA PRESSLEY | STAFF WRITER

The celebrated writer of police thrillers, Cesare Battisti, was arrested March 18 in Rio de Janeiro.

A writer of over 24 mystery novels, Battisti is accused of aiding in and committing four murders.

Battisti was found at in a hotel near Copacabana Beach in Brazil.

Investigators from the French and

Italian sectors of Interpol began following a young female supporter of Battisti months ago. She was en route to give money to the accused and led Brazilian police to him.

"Brazilian police have been following him for several months," said federal police spokesman, Bruno Ramos, to The Associated Press.

Immediately after the arrest, Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi declared the event a "brilliant operation" and began extradition proceedings.

This most recent arrest is just another chapter in the thrilling, event-filled life of Battisti.

In 1976, Battisti founded the organization Armed Proletarians for Communism in south Milan in response to the tense political climate.

At the time, Italy was politically torn between extremist socialist and communist groups and bombings ensued by the various parties.

During Italy's "anni di pombo," a decade of politically driven terrorism, Battisti's organization was responsible for armed acts including kidnappings, murders and robberies. They targeted members of right-wing political organizations and those who supported the police.

Battisti is accused of murdering a butcher and supporter of the

Italian Social Movement, Lino Sabbadin, and a prison guard in the late 1970s.

He is also implicated in the murders of a policeman and a jeweler, Luigi Torregiani.

After being imprisoned for two years, Battisti escaped from a Frosinone prison in 1981 and fled to France in the early 1990s.

In reaction to the influx of leftist activists fleeing Italy, France created safeguards for them. Socialist French president, Francois Mitterrand, sponsored a program to allow Italian militants asylum if they abandoned their violent ways.

Battisti lived in France for over a decade, during which his trial continued in Italy. In 1990, he was convicted in absentia, a ruling confirmed by high court in 1993, of the murders of Sabbadin and the guard.

Battisti received the sentence of life in prison.

"Not to say that he should be, but if he were to be extradited back to Italy, it seems there needs to be a new trial where he can defend himself in person," said first-year Hannah Johnston.

In 2004, in response to criticisms of being too lenient on terrorism, France rescinded its policy of allowing political asylum.

Italy and France immediately began a joint effort to extradite Battisti back to Italy.

However, Battisti did not attend his judicial meeting and fled the country with the aid of a French-based "support committee" made up of his followers.

On March 19 of this year, Battisti was transferred to a jail in Brasilia, the country's capital, but extradition is proving to be problematic.

Ramos explains that Brazil does not support any punishments that are longer than 30 years in prison and often won't extradite fugitives if their impending punishment is longer than that or involves death.

Brazilian politicians, including Representative Fernando Gabeira, are speaking out against Battisti's capture.

"Battisti is a man dedicated to his intellectual work ... [and] deserves our help," said Gabeira

via his Web site, [www.gabeira.com](http://www.gabeira.com), according to CNN.

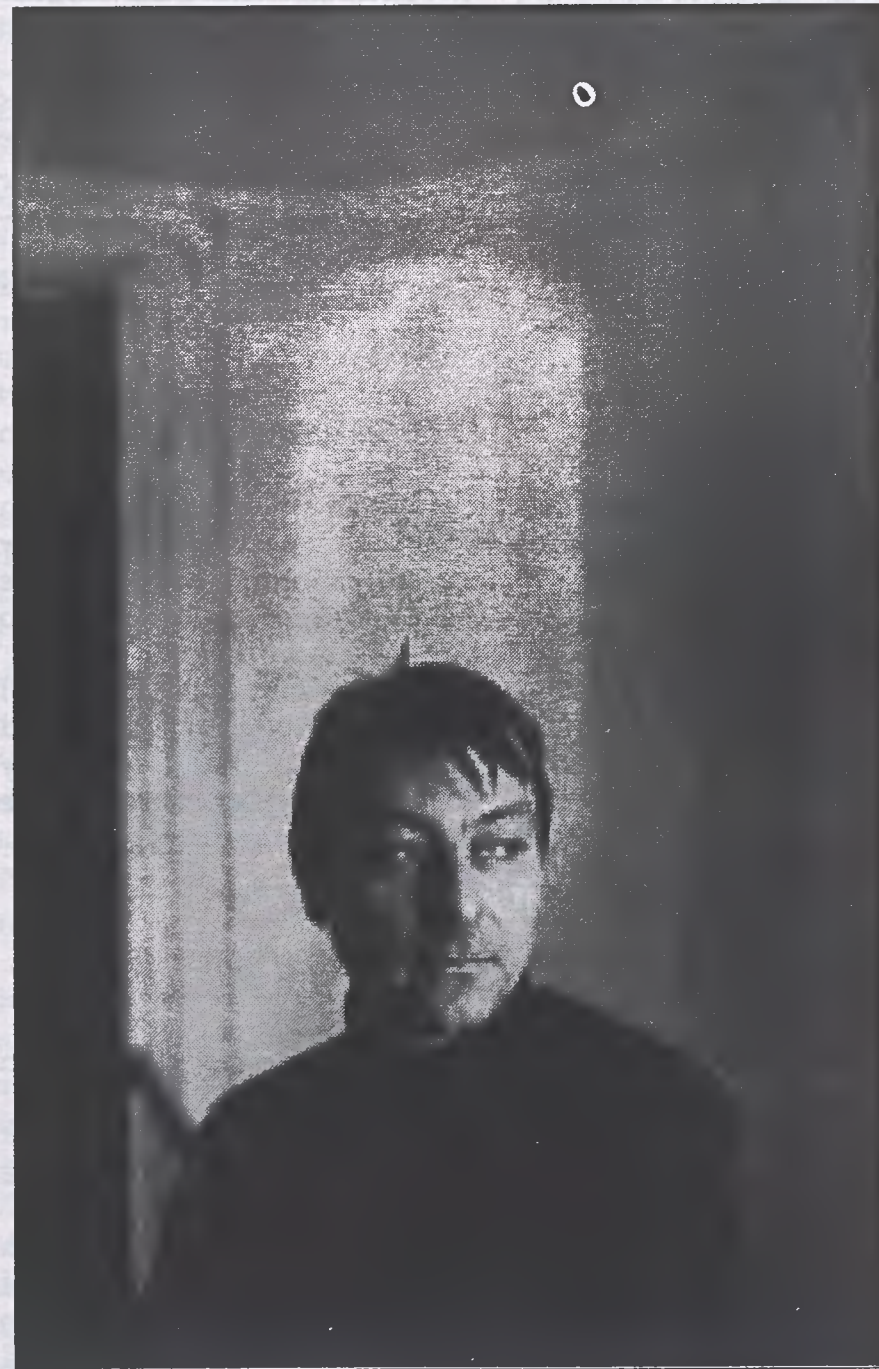
Other groups are reaching out to help the alleged murderer. Parisian artists and writers are also supporting him, claiming he is a writer of crime novels, not an actual criminal.

"All writers write about their lives because it comes from their subconscious," said Visiting Instructor of English Caroline McAlister.

The relationship between his writing and his life has been further complicated by pleas of innocence in his books.

"I am guilty, as I have often said, of having participated in an armed group with a subversive aim and of having carried weapons. But I never shot anyone," said Battisti in his novel, "Ma Cavale (My Escape)."

The Brazilian courts will now have to decide the fate of this acclaimed author and fugitive.



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BATTISTI, AN ALLEGED COMMUNIST AND SUCCESSFUL AUTHOR, HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH MURDER.

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Caroline McAlister  
Visiting Instructor  
of English

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the Near East and South Asia, to [ForeignAffairs.org](http://ForeignAffairs.org).

Instead of listening to intelligence reports, politicians used raw data to make their own conclusions. According to Pillar, the Bush administration was told that Niger uranium-sale evidence was suspect prior to its use in Bush's State of the Union address.

The war in Iraq has not helped reduce the levels of international terrorism. International terrorism was on the rise after the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. After the Iraq War, the number of terrorist attacks per year rose even more.

According to a study by Mother Jones magazine, using statistics from the MIPT-RAND terrorism database,

the number of lethal terrorist attacks has increased by 607 percent worldwide since before the Iraq War. Osama Bin-Laden said in a 2006 audio tape, "Iraq has become a source and attraction and recruitment of qualified people." Recruits are joining terrorist organizations in response to the Iraq invasion.

"(Terrorism's growth) accelerated; Iraq is a training ground for techniques. If we had stayed the course after Sept. 11 and brought peace and security to Afghanistan, it would have been much better," said Robert Duncan, assistant professor of political science.

Afghanistan was attacked before Iraq and was thought to have held Osama Bin-Laden. The Taliban were allies of Al-Qaeda and were harboring its members. With greater focus on the Iraq war, soldiers are being pulled

away from Afghanistan, and the Taliban is coming back into power.

Instead of a functioning, unified democracy, Iraq has gone into a state of civil war. More than 100 civilians are killed a day. Almost half of all civilian deaths during the Iraq war have occurred in the past 12 months. News organizations have documented at least 59,800 Iraqi civilian deaths. As factional violence has increased so has the use of mortars, heavy explosives and car bombs. Attacks using chlorine gas have also begun this month.

"Look at the history of the region; borders were drawn after the World Wars based upon European spheres of influence, the whole area mistreated by Western powers. It's naive to think we can transpose (democracy)," said Duncan.