

8 months after arrest, a serene life for Polanski

Thursday, 27 May 2010

FILE - In this Jan. 15, 2009 file photo, film director Roman Polanski is seen in Montrouge, France. Roman Polanski is leading a charmed existence under house arrest in the luxury resort of Gstaad, as he awaits word from Swiss authorities on whether he'll be extradited to the United States for raping a 13-year-old girl in 1977. Eight months after his arrest, the Swiss Justice Ministry still won't say when it will decide if the 76-year-old director should be sent back to Los Angeles to face sentencing for unlawful sexual intercourse. And officials won't even say what the holdup is.

The chalet doors and windows are wide open. Deck chairs are set up on the patio and the garden is strewn with daffodils and wild flowers.

Roman Polanski appears to be leading a charmed existence under house arrest in the luxury resort of Gstaad, as he awaits word from Swiss authorities on whether he'll be extradited to the United States for raping a 13-year-old girl in 1977.

And he may not be going anywhere soon.

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For Polanski, confined since December to his Gstaad chalet and garden, life seems to be moving on as well as could be imagined when an electronic monitoring bracelet is wrapped around your ankle.

His critically acclaimed film "The Ghost Writer" continues its global rollout, and people close to the filmmaker say he's looking into directing a movie version of the Broadway show "God of Carnage" provided his legal situation clears up.

On a recent afternoon, his home was the very picture of Alpine calm as the wind swept through two sets of open double-doors to his backyard and another to a first-floor balcony. A pair of construction workers were busy on home improvements and the jangling of cowbells could be heard in the offing. The paparazzi were long gone.

A man who answered the doorbell from an intercom said Polanski didn't want to see anyone, and the presence of a reporter prompted someone to shut the chalet's doors and windows, and draw all the curtains. It looked again like the fortress he entered six months ago when the Swiss released him from jail on \$4.5 million bail.

Folco Galli, a spokesman for the Swiss Justice Ministry, provided no timeline for a decision that might free Polanski or confirm his transfer to U.S. authorities. The director would in any case be allowed to appeal an extradition order to the Swiss courts, setting up months more of legal wrangling.

Earlier this month, Polanski's lawyers raised the prospect for the first time of the filmmaker returning voluntarily to California to fight his case. But the statement was couched in language that suggested this remained unlikely.

Polanski also recently ended months of silence to accuse the U.S. of demanding his extradition solely to serve him "on a platter to the media."

The Oscar-winning director of "Rosemary's Baby," "Chinatown" and "The Pianist" was accused of plying his victim with champagne and part of a Quaalude during a 1977 modeling shoot and raping her. He was initially indicted on six felony counts, including rape by use of drugs, child molesting and sodomy, but pleaded guilty to one count of unlawful sexual intercourse.

What happened after that is a subject of dispute. The defense says the now deceased judge, Laurence J. Rittenband, had agreed in meetings with attorneys to sentence Polanski to a 90-day diagnostic study and nothing more. The judge later changed his mind and summoned Polanski for further sentencing - at which time he fled to his native France, attorneys say.

Polanski was arrested Sept. 26 as he arrived in Zurich to receive a lifetime achievement award at a film festival.

FILE - In this file photo of Thursday Nov. 26, 2009 a rainbow is seen above the chalet of film director Roman Polanski, in Gstaad, Switzerland. Roman Polanski is leading a charmed existence under house arrest in the luxury resort of Gstaad, as he awaits word from Swiss authorities on whether he'll be extradited to the United States for raping a 13-year-old girl in 1977. Eight months after his arrest, the Swiss Justice Ministry still won't say when it will decide if the 76-year-old director should be sent back to Los Angeles to face sentencing for unlawful sexual intercourse. And officials won't even say what the holdup is.