US crime writer Douglas Preston believes that Amanda Knox and Raffaele Sollecito played no part in the murder of Meredith Kercher. Here he explains why...

Not guilty?

The Italian public and, indeed, the Italian police, have misunderstood what those statements mean, and the man who implicated himself.

The police knew he was guilty when they interviewed him, yet they allowed him to continue talking. They were using their own techniques, some of which were illegal and unethical. They were trying to get him to admit his guilt, but they didn’t succeed.

Mignini, under the shadow of the charges against him, was nevertheless assigned to the Knox case as the chief prosecutor.
Damning evidence against Knox and Sollecito.

The prosecutors presented this mountain of evidence at the trial, which lasted almost a year. Knox’s and Sollecito’s lawyers patiently chipped away at it and, in the end, felt they had utterly demolished it – every pebble of it. Step by step, with sober, expert testimony and documentation, their lawyers sought to destroy the prosecution’s case. Why was so little of this refutation reported in the press? The details were highly complex, involving matters of science, organic chemistry and forensic technique. It did not lend itself to soundbites and dramatic revelations. Nevertheless, in the end, the defence team believed they had successfully shown that no reliable evidence existed – absolutely none – that placed Knox or Sollecito at the scene of the crime.

Despite the defence’s best efforts, the jury found the pair guilty. Why? I posed this question to my most knowledgeable contact in Italy, a highly connected person who knows whereof he speaks. Here is his opinion: “This verdict had nothing to do with the actual evidence. It’s all about la faccia, face. They had to convict her. Now, with the conviction, everyone has saved face, the judiciary, the prosecutors and police have been vindicated. There will be an appeal and she will be acquitted, and that will be done to satisfy the Americans. Then everybody will be happy. Of course, Amanda and Raffaele will be in prison for another two years, but that’s a small matter compared to the careers of so many important people.”

Douglas Preston is a journalist who lived in Italy for many years and is co-author, with Mario Spezi, of the The Monster of Florence (Virgin Books). He writes occasionally for the New Yorker, Atlantic, National Geographic and other magazines.