

Scientist's Strange Last Days

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Amsterdam

Dr. Richard M. Follis Jr. of Washington, D.C.—rumored to have been a CIA agent—was the third foreign visitor to disappear mysteriously in Amsterdam within a few months.

Although the many canals of the Dutch capital have been dragged, the body of the American authority on nutritional pathology has not been found. He disappeared December 5, and police have called off the search.

The Amsterdam Criminal Investigation Department says Follis presumably was

murdered by gangsters who were after his money.

It is known that Follis spent the evening before he disappeared in the company of a woman he met in a bar.

Amsterdam police believe he was dropped by his murderers into one of the canals. In August and September, they found two other bodies in the canals: one was that of a British scientist, Claude Berkeley, and the other was of a Japanese businessman, Yukata Kameda, who had been decapitated. Their murderers have not been caught.

Although the United States State Department has denied officially that Follis was an American agent, well-informed sources here say that the Dutch Intelligence Service and the American Central

Intelligence Agency are involved in the case.

Follis arrived by air on December 3. He was on his way to a Tehran, Iran, medical conference but interrupted his plane trip to talk with Dr. H. A. P. C. Oomen, director of the Institute for Tropical Hygiene, who lives in Laren, 17 miles from Amsterdam.

His talks with Dutch authorities on food problems were planned in advance. Follis met with Oomen that morning. He also had scheduled a talk with Professor A. Querido in Leiden, but he never met Querido.

Oomen said later: "I know the American as a prominent scientist. It was a normal talk. We drank a cup of coffee. Follis was very enchanted to see me again. It was 10

o'clock in the morning. He said he wondered what Amsterdam was like at Christmas time. Nothing gave me the impression of a sudden disaster. Only one thing I remember—it was not quite the behavior of the Follis I knew before. Follis was, how can I explain it, let us say, absent-minded."

On Monday afternoon, Professor Querido waited in vain for Follis to keep a date with him at the University of Leiden. When the American failed to appear, he called the American Embassy. His call triggered the investigation.

Querido said later: "I was quick with my alarm, because I thought Follis did some work for the CIA. He

traveled much more than necessary for his scientific duties."

Follis was booked at the Hotel Schiller, a first-rate hotel on Rembrandt Square, the picturesque joy-center of the old city.

Nobody knows where he went after the Oomen talk. But at midnight he went into the Victoria Bar, on Rembrandt Square. This is one of the pseudo-Bohemian bars around the statue of the master painter, Rembrandt.

Follis was known as an almost total abstainer, not a drinker. But at midnight in Amsterdam, he was full of spirits and had very friendly discussions with everybody from that waterfront milieu who begs for a drink when

they think a rich American is in the area.

Follis met a woman there named Wally. She told me:

"That man was a nice man. He seemed depressed to me. He was carrying something in his mind that was heavy. He said I was a sincere girl, despite my profession. He bought me a bottle of champagne. We went from bar to bar. He got helplessly drunk, and we came to an end in the Amstelbar, a clip joint with red walls. A band was playing."

She told me she walked to his hotel with him and promised to return the next day if he sent her flowers. A valet at the hotel took Follis to his room.



AP Wirephoto

RICHARD FOLLIS
"He traveled too much"

The flowers did not come the next day, she said.

"I did not call him the next day. I wish I had. Perhaps he was still alive. He was a nice guy, talked about his wife and kids. A strange man. He had a kind of tic and moved the corner of his mouth up and down. Maybe he was murdered. The bloody fools from Thorbecke Square kill you for pleasure," Wally told me.

Follis' associates in Washington say that American Embassy officials know of no contact between Follis and the girl.

STORE

Follis was gone from his hotel room the next morning. He was seen next in a jewelry store on the Heisteeg

where he promised to buy an \$80 ring, but he never came back for it.

He vanished until midnight, when he was seen again in the Schiller Hotel, not drunk but very nervous, described as acting like a tiger going to and fro.

Then he left the hotel and visited the Trocadero night-club. There, witnesses say, he drank quite a lot and was not able to pay his bill of \$15.

He was seen again in the Schiller Hotel but did not ask for his key and soon left.

LAST

At 3 a.m. on the cold morning of December 5, he was seen by a last witness on the corner of Thorbecke Square and the Herengracht (one of the 17 canals).

There, according to the witness, stood a tall man in an olive green coat with a dark soft hat, looking very drunk, wearing dark spectacles.

After that moment, silence falls over Follis.