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A Dutch Mystery: Where Is U. S. Researcher?

Amsterdam Police Say American Doctor Fell Into Canal; Body Is Still Missing

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*Special to The Buffalo Evening News
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WASHINGTON, Dec. 15—Sometime after 4:30 AM a week ago Sunday, one of the world's top authorities on nutritional pathology, a Washington doctor named Richard H. Follis, disappeared without a trace in Amsterdam.

Chief Inspector Piet Landman, of the Amsterdam police, says the 56-year-old doctor probably fell into one of the city's many canals and drowned during the howling Atlantic gale that raked Holland that week-end.

But the body of Dr. Follis has not been discovered after extensive dragging operations.

"I hope we will find it eventually," says Inspector Landman, "and then the great mystery will vanish."

In Europe, the press is headlining the doctor's disappearance and hinting broadly that somehow the CIA is involved.

In Washington, the doctor's colleagues scoff at the idea of an intelligence connection. One pointed out: "Dick Follis was one of the most dedicated scientists in the world."

Some Call It Murder

In London, usually reliable intelligence sources say that the doctor was almost certainly murdered, but they refuse to say how or why they arrive at that conclusion.

In Amsterdam, Inspector Landman insists: "I do not think there has been a crime—just an accident."

Meanwhile, bizarre and con-

flicting information surrounding the case continues to mount up. A State Department security official calls it one of the most peculiar and perplexing matters he has ever dealt with. "Almost nothing about it jibes," he said.

The doctor's background is impressive and impeccable.

A graduate of Yale University (1932) and Johns Hopkins Medical School (1936), Baltimore-born Dr. Follis, the son of a famous surgeon, taught for several years and then, in 1955, became an employe of the Veterans Administration.

Made Many Trips

That same year he was detached for work at the prestigious Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington, but the VA continues to pay his salary.

Since 1955, the doctor has made more than a score of trips to odd corners of the world on survey work in the field of nutrition.

A few were to attend medical conferences, but most were to carry out field studies in his specialty, the cure and prevention of goiter, a deficiency disease of the thyroid gland due to a lack of iodine content in the diet.

Dr. Follis arrived in Amsterdam Friday morning and that day, according to his friends here, kept an appointment with a Dutch expert in the field of vitamin A deficiency and childhood blindness that results from it.

Failed to Make Call

According to the Amsterdam police, Dr. Follis returned to the

old, traditionally elegant Schiller Hotel in the heart of the somewhat garish downtown district of the city.

From that point on the facts become widely garbled. Dr. Follis' friends, his family, and doctors who have known him for years and traveled with him say that he was a man of "absolute punctuality," and "a sober, seasoned traveler."

Yet, after what Inspector Landman said was "a long Friday night in several clubs near the hotel" Dr. Follis did not telephone a Dutch nutrition expert named Andreas Querida at Leiden University as he had written he would.

Was Seen at Club

Dr. Follis, according to Inspector Landman, remained in his hotel room until about 2 PM Saturday and then went down to the lobby where he appeared to witnesses to be "very distracted."

That night, Inspector Landman said, the doctor again visited some of the clubs at which he had been the previous night, and a man fitting his description was last seen by witnesses at about 4:30 AM near a club called the Moulin Rouge—about 50 yards from a canal and about 100 yards from the Schiller Hotel," according to Inspector Landman.

Colleague Called Police

"Witnesses say he looked very ill," the inspector says. "It was very windy and rainy that morning and even some cars blew into canals. I think that kind of accident happened to the good doctor."

When Dr. Follis failed to show up for his appointment with Mr. Querida, there was considerable concern on the Dutch scientist's part. "Even though I did not get the expected phone call I had cleared away all my business and left the afternoon open," he said.

By late afternoon Mr. Querida became seriously worried. "I called the hotel and found that his room key was gone and that he had not been seen that day. Then I called the American Embassy in case he had been in an accident. They knew nothing, they said."

Then the doctor called the police. A search of Dr. Follis' hotel room showed that he had not slept in his bed for at least one night and possibly two. All his luggage was intact, including most of the \$500 expense money he carried with him.

Theory Is Questioned

The next day, Inspector Landman called what State Department officials here consider a "really strange" press conference to announce the fact that Dr. Follis was missing and that he had fallen into a canal.

For a few days, the inspector's explanation seemed good enough.

With no sign of a corpse after three, and then four, days, the European press, the doctor's friends and employers, his family and persons who know Amsterdam and read about the doctor's disappearance began to question it.

A diplomat from the embassy of the Netherlands in Washington says: "Those canals are in concentric circles and are as calm as a fish pond."