

## 1. A Child That Didn't Exist

My biological father was Horatio De Rue, and my mother was Rachel Walker. The only thing these two families have in common, is that they have a Jewish background.

My father's father was a Dutch general in the Dutch East-Indies. My father's mother was a Javanese woman from Portuguese Jewish descent. My mother's father and mother were farm hands, both from Ashkenazy Jewish descent. There's little to tell about them, apart from the fact that most family members were killed in Auschwitz and Birkenau. The De Rue family came from Portugal and Spain, where their name was Pinto. In the 1600s they fled to France, because of the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions. In France they belonged to the thousands of crypto-Jews who denied their Jewishness and adapted French names. So Pinto first became De Pinto, and later De Rue.

In the 1800s they joined the Huguenots, a Protestant movement which faced persecution in France, and they fled to the Dutch Republic. Now freed from their Jewish stigma, they became respected Dutch citizens, and as such they moved to the Dutch East Indies, where they were active in government and plantation management. As such, they belonged to the colonial aristocracy.

General De Rue, my grandfather, played a rather doubtful role in the continuing war against the Acehnese resistance, for which he was decorated. The General met his first wife in the Dutch city of Breda, where he studied at the Military Academy. For obvious reasons (only the wealthy should become officers) there was no military academy in the Dutch Indies. Back in Batavia they had four sons.

After the death of his first wife, the General married my grandmother, a partly Javanese woman, who's last name was Rosario Da Silva. Her family history resembled that of the De Rue family. Also forced to leave Portugal in the 1600s, they first settled in Holland, but took the opportunity to become planters in Suriname, in the late 1700s. Fifty years later they moved to yet another Dutch colony, the East Indies, where they mixed with the local aristocracy.

The General and his new wife also had four sons. Three of them became officers in the Royal Dutch Indies Army (KNIL), one of them, my father, refused to become an officer and chose to study medical science in Holland, to become a neurosurgeon. After the De Rue and Rosaria Da Silva families, and all the other colonial families, were released from Japanese prison camps in 1945, my three uncles were active in the so called 'political actions', a four-year struggle to re-establish Dutch colonial rule. My grandfather was retired by then.

My father arrived in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 1948, to study at the University Hospital. The rest of the family was forced to move to Holland, in July 1950, when the KNIL was dismantled. Only Auntie Toetie, my grandmother's sister, chose to move to New Guinea, which was still under Dutch rule. She refused to leave her beloved Indonesia.

Early 1951 my father met my mother, who was a nurse in the hospital where he studied to become a neurosurgeon. They were both lonely people in a city that tried to recover from the war. She had been in hiding during the war, while part of her family was arrested by the Nazis and killed in concentration camps. After the war she had a relationship with a man she met while she was in hiding. They had twins, two girls, who died shortly after birth. They separated, she was a 'fallen woman', and moved to the city, where nobody knew her. In the summer of 1951 she told my father that she was pregnant.

My father panicked. He could never marry my mother, because she wouldn't be accepted by his family. My grandparents and my three uncles and their families recently settled in Huis ter Heide, De Bilt and Bilthoven, where they belonged to the wealthy, well respected incrowd of ex-colonials. My uncles were integrated in the Dutch Army, as high ranking officers with war experience. Soon my father would be a well respected neurosurgeon, one of a few in the Netherlands. No way my mother would fit in.

So my father went to De Bilt, to visit his parents and find a way out. The General offered a solution: he would give my mother 4,000 guilders, a substantial amount of money in those years, and in return she would have to lose all claims. Never should Horatio De Rue even be mentioned as the father of her child. Further more, the child couldn't be born in Amsterdam, because it might damage my father's career.

My mother agreed, and on November 3, 1951, I was born in a hospital in Haarlem, where a study peer of my father was a gynecologist. My father came to visit her and gave her the money. She asked him to register my birth, and he agreed to do so. Then they said goodbye. If only things weren't so difficult...

I was named Jacob (to be called Jack), after my mother's eldest brother, who also survived the war, and my last name was Walker, because that was my mother's last name. As a single mother she had no future in Holland, so she decided to emigrate to Canada, like so many Dutch people did in those days. So in December 1951 we arrived in St. Catherines, Ontario, where she met a Dutch man who recently arrived there. With the money she got from my grandfather they opened a bar. However, at some point, when I needed to be registered, there were no papers to prove my existence. My father 'forgot' to register my birth. This was a real problem, and in the end my mother had to return to Holland, to settle it. There was a special court case in Amsterdam, where my father's peer, the gynecologist, had to declare that my mother had given birth to me on November 3, 1951. As a result I was registered in retroaction, on July 2, 1952, by the Chief Prosecutor. This was my first conflict with the law.

My stepfather, John Mulder, and I didn't have a good start. The registration thing cost them a lot of money. Although I can't remember anything from before I was three, my mother told me once that he started hitting me when I was three weeks old, because I cried in the morning, and he thought that a three weeks old baby should be 'old and wise enough' to understand that a man with a pub, who worked late, should be able to sleep in the morning.

At this point the story gets unreal, if it wasn't already. John Mulder was a truck driver from Holland, who got married before the war. The Mulder story was a drama in itself: part of the family denied their Jewishness several decades before the war, the other part died in Auschwitz because they didn't. And this John Mulder enlisted in the Waffen SS, in 1942. With the Wiking division he was responsible for the killing of 13,000 Jews in Tarnopol and Maripol, in the USSR. They hanged the chief rabbi from the Synagogue in Tarnopol. His huge hands showed the signs of frostbite. Yes, he had a hard life, and when he was drunk, he sang Nazi songs...

After the war he couldn't return to Holland, so he found a way to emigrate to Canada. Marrying my mother wasn't an option, first, because he was still married in Holland, and second, the Canadian authorities might want to research his past. I wasn't his child, and I never would be. I was a child of "that Indo", and he mistrusted anyone who was (partly) Asian, African, Native American, whatever. I wasn't allowed to play with Native American kids (nor was anyone else in my school, for that matter). He abused me, by hitting me, straight in the face, with his huge hands. For many years I had nightmares, in which I saw the hands, ready to hit me.

When I was four years old, my mother feared for my life, or for child protection services, and she took me to Holland. This is what my auntie Ellen (wife of my uncle Maurits, one of my father's brothers) told me about it: "I just had watched a Disney movie with little Maurits, in the Tuschinsky Theatre in Amsterdam. As we were leaving, I saw your mother and you on the steps of the cinema. I said, "Is that Jackie? He's such a cute little boy!" She replied, "If you want him, you can have him. I can't keep him." She explained the difficulties with your stepfather, and I promised I would discuss the matter with uncle Maurits. One week later we took you in, and your mother returned to Canada."

I lived with my uncle Maurits and auntie Ellen, and their two children, for a year or so, and then I had to move to my uncle William and his family, because my father and his family came to visit them, and I couldn't be there. Obviously my father didn't want to confront his family with his illegitimate child. And when my father and his family came to visit my uncle William, I had to move to my uncle Hugo and his family. Every time I needed to go to a new school, in a new town, with new children, and this repeated itself over and over again, for years and years, until I was twelve.

The worst thing was that my Indo family has tried to reunite me with my mother and stepfather. Once when I was six and once when I was eight. In the mean time switching to yet another school wasn't much of a problem to me, not even to speak English again, but the culture shock was huge. Not only did the beating resume within days, the tension was always there. There was no love in their house, no positive vibes. They hated each and everyone, even each other. They were the eternal victims of the world, the government, the city council, the Indians, the negroes, etc. Their lack of intelligence, their impotence to see the relationship between cause and effect, made their lives hell.

When I was six, my stepfather was diagnosed with tetanus, and while he was carried into the ambulance, the doctor said, "He won't make it till the next corner." I remember that I prayed, "Let him die, please God, let him die!" But he survived, which proved to me that there is no God.

Alya was a beautiful Native American girl, who cleaned the pub. She was sixteen, and her father was a drunk. Sometimes he would be in an aggressive mood, and become abusive, so my mother allowed her to sleep in my bed, instead of letting her go home. It was a hot summer, and Alya was only wearing her undies and a vest. She was sad and tired, so was I, and we cuddled a little, to comfort each other. This was the first affectionate physical contact I can remember. And when Alya fell asleep, with her arm over her head, and I watched her beautiful hairy armpit, I had my first sexual experience, if you can call it that.

Another thing I'll never forget is my mother's trunk in the attic. In there I found her nurse's uniforms, her English course text books, and a wooden cigar box with some photos. In one of these photos she posed in front of the Soestdijk Palace, where the Queen lived, and another showed her and a man. Once, when my mother seemed to be very sad and a little drunk, she told me, "That's Horatio De Rue, your dad. Such a lovely man." A couple of weeks later, when I examined the trunk once more, the box with the photos was missing.

Melanie Safka sings a Dylan song called Mr. Tambourine Man, and that song really hits me, because at some point she doesn't sing "Nobody *knows* where I'm going to", but "Nobody *cares* where I'm going to". That touches me deeply, because I loved to go to the fair when I was a little boy, and one night I just stayed there, hoping that the show people would take me with them, so I could travel the world. I fell asleep on the stairs of a caravan, and when I woke up I was in the caravan, on the sofa bed, covered with a blanket. A nice lady poured me a cup of cocoa, and when the morning came she said I needed to go home. So I did, prepared to be beaten up by my stepfather, and when I entered the kitchen I found out that they never noticed that I had been out all night. That hurt more than any beating.

In spite of everything, in spite of all the times she just stood there when my stepfather beat me up, I have loved my mother for a long time. I thought she was a beautiful woman. Once I went into a field to pick flowers for her, and on my way back I fell into a ditch. I was wet, my clothes were dirty, and my stepfather beat me up, as usual. Another time I fell into the Welland Canal, when I was fishing. I couldn't swim, and while I was sinking to the bottom of the canal I saw the light above me and I thought, "Leave it, Jack, you're gonna die, and it's okay." Then, out of the blue, I saw something appearing near me, something black, and it spread through the water like ink in a glass of water. It proved to be a coaler, who passed by in his truck, saw me fall into the canal, and jumped in to save my life. He took me home, and after he had gone, my stepfather beat me up. What was new?

Farouk Hacek was a huge Doberman, which belonged to a penniless artist, a regular of my parents' pub in downtown St. Catherines. When the artist couldn't pay his tab,

my stepfather kept the dog, to force the artist to come up with the money. Farouk Hacek and I became best friends. He was always with me, even when I went to school. He would wait for me in the school yard, and on the way home I would call the builders on their scaffolds names, knowing they wouldn't touch me when Farouk Hacek was around. Even my stepfather saw that it would be wise to stay out of my aura, so one day, when I woke up, Farouk Hacek was gone, and with him my self-confidence.

I bought daggers, for my 'Indian image', and our class teacher called my stepfather, instead of asking me to leave the daggers at home. I still see him entering the class room, with his huge hands, dragging me out of my desk and hitting me so hard that I hit the cupboard in the back of the room. That's how you handle an eight year old menace who socializes with 'Indian trash'. At some point my stepfather and my mother decided to return to Holland, because they had drawn the attention of Canadian child protection services, and people started to talk.

In hindsight I realize that I have traveled from Holland to Canada when I was just born, from Canada to Holland when I was four, from Holland to Canada when I was six, and from Canada to Holland when I was nine. Four transatlantic flights in the 1950s. It must have cost my father's family a fortune, as my mother and stepfather couldn't afford it. I remember little of these flights, except that the stewardesses were nice and the flights were boring. On arrival I would be handed over to 'a responsible relative'.

Life with my Indo family wasn't as warm as it could have been, but it was heaven compared to life with my mother and stepfather. I know, life isn't perfect, but how could it have been better for me, when I was living with my aunties and uncles? You see, the problem was that they were afraid to give their own children the impression that they loved me as much as they loved them. They found it necessary to prove to their children that there was a difference between their own children and me, the visiting child. I never sensed that their children demanded them to make such a difference, but they did anyway. And I didn't envy my cousins; I knew my place, and I was thankful for it. I loved the Indo lifestyle, the aunties preparing delicious Indonesian food in the kitchen, talking pecok (a mix of Indonesian and Dutch) with each other - Hush! Don't let the men hear it! We're only allowed to speak Dutch! - the lovely weekend parties, when my uncles played rock music in their t-shirts, etc.

The other side was that we, Indos, had to excel all the time. Our Dutch had to be better than the Queen's, when Dutch children got a B for any subject, we had to get an A. It was never good enough. However, I liked that intellectual challenge, due to the fact that I missed that challenge when I was with my mother and stepfather. Both of them weren't very bright, and they didn't have class, whatsoever. Okay, you're proud of yourself when you're eight and able to solve a problem that seems to be unsolvable to your parents, but it doesn't make you feel safe. And it's quite embarrassing when you hear them uttering their stupid views of politics and history to intelligent people, even when you're eight.

My uncles weren't your average, typical Indos; they were also the sons of the General and his Javanese-Portuguese aristocratic wife. To excel as colored people from a tropical country, in a homeland that wasn't really theirs, was the Indo part. To be more Dutch than the Dutch, except for the food preferences, was also the Indo part. But to be humble, helpful, frugal, and conservative when it comes to old values, was the aristocratic part. Noblesse oblige, and that's how my uncles and my father were raised. In a less strict form they raised their children, including me, the same way.

Nancy Mitford wrote, "It is true that one U speaker recognizes another U speaker almost as soon as he opens his mouth," and "It is solely by its language that the upper class is clearly marked off from the others." My uncles seemed to be aware of that, so it was very important to us children to use the right vocabulary at all times. It didn't bother me one bit. I was a natural talent when it came to languages, dialects and accents, because it enabled me to be included in the different cultures I was part of. In my early childhood I wasn't loved and accepted for the child I was, and since every human being has the need of inclusion, I had to develop skills which facilitated inclusion.

Back in Holland, my mother and stepfather ran a lodging house in the old town of Utrecht, near the red light district. They rented out rooms to students. The more rooms they rented out, the more money they would earn, so when I stayed with them, I didn't have a room. I had to sleep in the kitchen, in a wall bed. The only thing good about it was that I could raid the fridge at night, and look out the window to watch the prostitutes in the alley. I was deeply in love with Kitty, the daughter of a prostitute and a pimp who ran a whore house in the alley. She was 10, one year older than I, and she thought I was cute. I made some money as a delivery boy, getting the girls in their windows burgers from the lunchroom, or condoms by the gross from a shop called Salamander.

Kitty's dad, Paul, had a Mercedes Sport, a beautiful convertible, and I thought being a pimp wasn't the worst thing that could happen to you, career-wise. In the summer of 1962 I was invited to stay with Kitty's parents in Amsterdam, which meant I would be close to Kitty for six whole weeks, so I happily accepted the invitation. My mother and stepfather couldn't have cared less. I've learned to adapt to my environment. You're more easily accepted when you speak the lingo, so that became one of my survival skills. In no time I learned to speak like the Amsterdam kids in the Red Light District, and I fell in love with the city. Living with Kitty and her parents I found out that there was no difference between them and so called 'normal' people. The only difference was that Kitty's mother didn't go to work in the office every day, but behind an illuminated window.

Kitty's parents were decent people, and when I asked her older brother Pete if he would be a pimp when he grew up, to be able to drive a beautiful Mercedes Sport, he said, "Hell no! I want to be a painter and decorator!" Apparently it's very easy to judge people, especially when they're not living the lives of 'normal' people, but at the age of ten I knew that judging people you don't know is a difficult thing, and you just shouldn't do it.

Back in Utrecht after that great summer in Amsterdam, my stepfather beat me up as usual, for no reason at all, and one night I climbed the stairs of the fire escape in our back yard, which took me all the way to the attic of a neighboring building. I managed to climb into the attic, then walked down the stairs, and broke into the premises of an arms dealer. I found a .38 revolver and a box of ammo, and left the building the way I came. I was determined to never let anyone beat me up again, not ever.

One day I was playing with my friends in the garden of a deserted building. Actually it was more like a park. People from the neighborhood used the park to dump their garbage, like old furniture, and even an old Fiat 500. One of my buddies' father was a car mechanic, and he managed to fix it, so we could drive the car around the pond. It was great fun, until we were caught by the police. My stepfather came to pick me up from the police station, and while we walked home, he said, "I'm going to teach you a lesson you'll never forget, you piece of shit!" I knew what was awaiting me, but this time I wouldn't let it happen. Not again. Never again. So I was prepared. It was the first time I saw genuine fear in a grown man's face. The sight of a ten year old kid with a .38 in his hands, absolutely ready to blow his brains out, was too much for the bastard. He turned around, and ran off, out in the street. My mother cried, "Oh Jack! I'm so sorry!"

I spent two weeks in a children's home, then I was picked up by my uncle Maurits and auntie Ellen, who had a hard time finding me. I was never to live with my mother and my stepfather again.

## 2. Rebel, Rebel

Until 1949 New Guinea was part of the Dutch East Indies since 1828. When in 1949 the Dutch East Indies became independent of the Netherlands, forming Indonesia, New Guinea was kept outside of the sovereignty agreement. In 1963 New Guinea was to be handed over to Indonesia, via a United Nations administration, so that's why my auntie Toetie, my grandmother's sister, had to leave her beloved Indonesia behind, in September 1962, because her aristocratic family 'collaborated' with the Dutch for centuries, and her life would be in danger if she stayed.

Since money, within limits, wasn't an object, my uncle Hugo found her a house in the village of Huis Ter Heide, near Utrecht. He and his family, with whom I was living at the time, lived just around the corner, so auntie Toetie could always call them if she needed them. My auntie Toetie didn't have a happy life. Her Dutch husband died several weeks after they got married, and they never had any children. She never thought of remarrying. Instead, she studied law, and worked in local administration, in Batavia, the capitol of the Dutch East Indies. In 1951 she didn't want to move to the Netherlands, with all the other colonials, so she said goodbye to her family and moved to New Guinea. She didn't like the Dutch people and the Dutch climate.

Her first winter in Holland, 1962-1963, was a disaster. She didn't know how to handle the coal stove, and I had to come over all the time to help her. Uncle Hugo decided to install an oilstove, which was an improvement, but then she used gallons and gallons of oil, because she desired tropical temperatures in the living room, 26° C., and still felt cold. When she was diagnosed with cancer, in May 1963, it was decided that I was going to live with her, and take care of her, until she would recover. My auntie Janine came once a week to wash auntie Toetie, especially her private parts, a task I was considered to be too young for, but the rest was up to me.

I cooked, cleaned, did the shopping, went to school, delivered newspapers in the morning, before school, and again in the afternoon, after school, and I had piano lessons, once a week. A busy life, for an eleven year old kid. My efforts weren't unnoticed by one of the neighbors, Mrs. Ingeborg Van der Wal-Svensson, who was Secretary of two peace movements, *The Third Way* and the *Committee For The Peace 1961*. I spent hours with Inge, talking about peace and general disarmament, and I became her assistant.

Ingeborg designed leaflets with the Ban The Bomb symbol (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament symbol), which she took to the printers, after which I had to pick them up and distribute them, via individual members and political parties like the Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP). Ingeborg played a major role in the popularization of the peace movement in the Netherlands, and I adored her wisdom and commitment. I listened to everything she said, and could reproduce it all, from the heart. In her home, Ingeborg introduced me to many people who would later become national activists and politicians. Being the youngest member of the Committee For The Peace 1961, granted by Ingeborg, I was also interested in her other 'child', The Third Way, but this seemed to be a religious and philosophical think tank of elderly people, most of



them wealthy, concerned patricians, people who talked like my grandparents, with names like Fentener Van Vlissingen, Pierson, Mijnsen, etc. People who were, or had been, making a fortune in banking, shipping, assurance, mining, you name it.

In 1951 Erna s'Jacob and her husband Frans Mijnsen, who lived nextdoor to Queen Juliana's palace in Soestdijk, offered refuge to Greet Hofmans, a paragnost and for 9 years a close friend of the Queen, which caused a court crisis in the 1950s, because she was considered to be the 'Dutch Rasputin'. Even the CIA was involved, because it was said that Greet Hofmans was an agent from Moscow. I was too young to be involved with these people, and contrary to them I believed that a world revolution was the only way to change the world. Strangely enough, years later I would be in a relationship with Samantha, one of Erna and Frans' granddaughters, from 2004 to 2008, and I would even live as a guest in their estate on the Veluwe, enjoying the fireplace, the wines in their cellar, and the books in their library, which brought back so many good memories.

Back to 1963: I truly wanted to be a pacifist, but I couldn't deny my past, in which I was confronted with so much violence. I learned that words of any kind would never have stopped my stepfather to hit me; a .38 revolver did. Still, I was an optimist, and I had to give pacifism a chance. I was thirteen when I was invited to take part in a live radio broadcast discussion, in which Sir Rolly Van Rappard, an aristocrat and a conservative politician, would speak to youngsters about things like general conscription, and they were able to ask questions. So when Sir Rolly said that the army turns boys into men, I replied, "Yes, like a brothel turns girls into women". Cheers from the crowd. Live radio, I loved it. The honorable gentleman, however, wasn't prepared for this kind of response, and he told the radio people that he would leave if "that young man" would say one more word. But I had the crowd's support, so I took the microphone once more, and I said, "The military is like a whore's cunt – every prick fits into it". More cheers, and Sir Rolly left the stage, booed by the crowd.

This successful action lead to several interviews with local newspapers. I guess it was quite unusual for a thirteen year old kid to have outspoken political ideas. But I also was removed from school because of it, and it was difficult to find a school that was willing to accept me. In the early 1960s no school principal was eager to take in a young 'agitator', and a ringleader at that. Meanwhile I allowed my mind to wander from the world situation. Politics was 'work', and to relax I read a book called '*I, Jan Cremer*', the most controversial piece of Dutch literature at the time, written by a young avant-garde artist.

Cremer describes how he as a young man becomes a smuggler, a marine, a beatnik artist in Ibiza, a merchant seaman, an art student with a bursary in Paris, an amateur actor, etc., while he is enjoying a series of exciting love affairs with beautiful women. I didn't have a father figure to look up to. I didn't know my real father and I certainly didn't want to become like my uncles or my grandfather. Yes, I looked up to Ingeborg, and I had long talks with auntie Toetie, about how she wished she had been more like me, because then she would have chosen the side of the Indonesian resistance, like Poncke Princen, a Dutch deserter who went to fight the Dutch colonial army with the

Indonesian resistance and became a famous Indonesian human rights advocate in later years, but I had a life ahead of me and I picked Jan Cremer as my main role model, fictional or not. I wanted to do everything Jan Cremer did, which for starters meant that I would have to travel the world. I definitely needed a passport, and I had to persuade my guardian to support me in obtaining one.

At the time I had a girl friend who would be having a holiday in Spain with her parents, and I asked them to help me. If my guardian would call them, they would say that I would be traveling with them, and that they would be looking after me. Once I had my passport, I thought it would be nice to surprise my girl friend. With the money I earned delivering newspapers, I booked a holiday in Sitges. My girl friend was surprised indeed, but worried as well, and so were her parents, because it was unthinkable that a thirteen year old kid was traveling to a foreign country on his own. As soon as I noticed that I wasn't welcome on their camping, let alone in their tent, I returned to the hotel, and befriended a bell boy of my age. He took me to original flamenco performances, not the touristy shows, taught me how to drink muscatel from a leather bag, and I had a wonderful time.

Back in school, I was a celebrity, due to the broadcast on national radio and the interviews in the local papers. Even much older kids thought I was pretty cool. Although one was only allowed to drive a moped when one was 16, I bought myself a second hand Tomos when I was thirteen, which I pimped up to make it look like a *Born to be Wild* motorcycle. That's how I drew the attention of Alfred, who was a couple of years older than I and who would later become a famous DJ. We became good friends. Alfred and I were both Stones fans, so in the eyes of mainstream Dutch people we were "filthy, longhaired scum".

We both wanted to leave the village of Huis Ter Heide as soon as possible, knowing that people in the Western cities wouldn't give us a hard time because of our looks and our favorite music. Alfred chose to go to The Hague, because that city was the centre of Dutch rock music, but I wanted to go to Amsterdam, where political activism was blooming. Provo, a Dutch non-violent countercultural movement, was officially founded in May 1965, but already several months before that I befriended people in Amsterdam who planned to make a change, by provoking violent responses of the authorities, in a peaceful way, to show that there was something very wrong in Dutch society. Such a 'provocative' action could be handing out free tomatoes to the public, while the response would be violent disperse of the crowd and the miscreants, by mounted police armed with prolonged batons. In the end, the Provo actions would not only lead to the dismissal of police chief Van der Molen and the resignation of mayor Van Hall, but also to a structural change of police procedures and the end of police brutality.

Coffeeshops in those days didn't sell soft drugs. A coffeeshop was a pub without alcoholic beverages, frequented by young teenagers. Adam Apple's joint in Groningen, where I lived for a while, was my favorite hangout. Roughly three kinds of kids could be found here – the ones who listened to blues music, the ones who discussed politics and philosophy, and the ones who still had to make up their minds,

the trend followers. I belonged to the 'intellectual' clientele, of course, and I had my Monty duffle coat, my suede boots, and my black poloneck to prove it. On top of it I could hum and drum Dave Brubeck's Take Five. Groningen was paradise for the German kids from just over the border, like Amsterdam was paradise for us. They hoped to be able to buy hashish in Adam Apple's coffeeshop, and to satisfy demand we sold them dried rabbit pellets. They would take a deep sniff of the 'hashish', then say "Man, that's good shit!", which was true, actually.

In those days I met other Jewish kids, intelligent, non-religious young people, with whom I seemed to have a lot in common. We talked about politics, mainly. Socialism was my ideal, a righteous system, characterized by social ownership of the means of production and co-operative management of the economy, and a political philosophy advocating such a system. Communism was just one tool, probably not the best one, to establish socialism, while pacifism was a tool to reach general disarmament and end the Cold War, not necessarily a goal in itself. Hard-core pacifists would deny me the right to worship Che Guavara, my hero, so I worked and cooperated with them, for peace sake, while imperialism, the highest state of capitalism, was my biggest enemy.

I became a member of a group of German Marxist 'Antiimps', usually educated people, living in West Germany, but sympathizing with the DDR (East Germany). These people weren't real activists. They were very much against the way the Americans, after the war, had kept Nazi leaders in high places, to get the country "back on its feet" as soon as possible, and they saw that the American imperialists were pumping billions of dollars into the economy of the countries that were destroyed during the war, not to help them, but to rebuild their own economy and to gain supremacy. So yes, we discussed the usual stuff that would interest political aware fourteen year old kids in the early 1960s, very much against the will of their parents.

When auntie Toetie was in and out of hospital because of her deteriorating health, I skipped school more often and I hitched to Amsterdam whenever I could, to be part of the great cultural revolution. The things I learned there I took back to Groningen, which was still a dull provincial town in the remote North of the country, and could do with a bit of stirring up. Since I moved in with auntie Toetie, when I was eleven, I had freed myself from 'paternal control'. My Indo family had given up trying to raise me, and auntie Toetie treated me as an adult. A very young, very inexperienced adult. She never told me what to do – she asked me to do things and she advised me. It was very much appreciated.

She died at home, on a cold day in February 1966. Several hours before she breathed her last, she asked me to get her an envelope in a drawer of her Welsh dresser. She gave it to me, saying "Jack, I saved some money. It's for you, use it wisely, and don't tell anyone about it." There was 8,000 guilders in the envelope, a significant amount of money in those days. More than a year's wages for a lot of people. "Keep it on you, Jack," she said, "and don't spend it all on sweets".