

## NOON INCIDENT AND AFTERMATH

### (1) Peter Jancke

In almost all respects, Cambridge and Roxbury are on opposite sides of the moon. Peter's apartment was in Roxbury; his work and social life remained in Cambridge. He worked at a computer assembly plant located in Kendall Square, the burgeoning cybertech park to the northeast of M.I. T. . Peter had acquired a reputation among the university community, the anti-war and civil rights movements, and the drug scenes , those worlds that converged and intersected around Harvard Square , as a personality or, depending on one's point of view , as a character.

His strategy for drawing attention to himself demonstrated a strong native cleverness. While on a globe-trotting peace march that passed through Australia a few years before , he'd bought himself a bush-ranger version of the 10-gallon hat. It was velvet-black, constructed from shiny felt. A tassel of gold braid crawled , worm-like , around the base of its volcanic peak. The left side of its wide brim was bent vertical and fastened to this bulge with an outsized golden safety pin. Every square centimeter of its surface, peak , rim, and up-ended flap, was concealed, as a blizzard will cover a roof, beneath a layer of Movement buttons : anti-war, anti- arms-race, anti-nuclear, for civil rights, for the environment, for the legalization of marijuana....

As he walked around Harvard Square in the company of groups of rootless druggies , Peter was invariably the only one who stood out. Students, Cambridge residents, tourists felt free to approach him and ask him about his trophy collection . For his part, he was always prepared to give an impromptu speech on the need for a pacific, non-violent world. There was indeed something of the old-fashioned evangelical minister in him . Though rarely coherent, his sermons were dependably eloquent. The air of unbalanced agitation that accompanied these impromptu expatiations did not diminish their charm. To the contrary, it bestowed upon him a prophetic holiness, the aura of the visionary he truly was, verily a John the Baptist crying in the wilderness.

The real extent of his activism was hard to gauge. He could not have been as involved as he claimed to be. The

evidence did indicate that he had participated in some interesting events , including a San Francisco to Moscow Peace March, had marched and demonstrated in Canada, parts of the US and Europe , in particular his homeland of Germany where, surrounded by the evils of the Nazi regime and the horrors of the Allied bombings, he was born in 1940.

Tall, thin, nervous, bristling with dark energy, somewhere between the Angel of Mercy, the indignation of the righteous , chronic desperation and the Angel of Death, his presence anywhere was immediately remarked. He went in for black: the black hat, black jeans, a black sweater. Short cropped black hair and a scraggly black beard and mustache clustered around his mouth like the wriggling spines of a porcupine. He had no trouble with his appetite yet always appeared emaciated, as if moral suffering had somehow translated itself into the forms of visceral starvation. Unforgettable were eyes under thick glasses, often black sunglasses : wild, unstable, darting, filled with thunder and lightning, its bolts thrusting out dangerously beneath storm clouds. Above them hung bushy eyebrows, heightening his manic air, the qualities of frenzy.

In wintry weather Peter wore a bright red rain coat with a broad rain-proof hood, its back covered by a large sewn CND symbol. Then the Australian hat was replaced by a knitted red stocking cap, also thickly seeded with peace buttons.

He was making good money at his job, all the more so in comparison with his milieu. It was frittered away with a kind of demonic energy on drugs, parties, movies, dates. The job itself was easy . If one considers totally mindless tasks easy. He stood within a group of fellow workers , mostly black, women or poor immigrants. at the same spot every day in front of a horseshoe- shaped table holding frames and other gadgetry . Once a computer chassis rolled onto the frame , their job was to wire it up quickly, soldering red wires into red leads, yellow wires into yellow leads and so forth. Central to this activity, one observes , was the color code. Its eventual transposition into his fantasy mythology may have written a new chapter in the science of technogenetic disease.

Peter eventually walked away from the assembly plant. He may have been fired; it is more probable that he just didn't show up and that was the end of it. By that time he no longer went back to Roxbury . He'd gotten into spending his nights in a certain crash pad on Massachussetts

Avenue, close to the present location of the M.I.T. museum on the tiny, incongruously named Main Street. This place had gained notoriety as Cambridge's principal distribution center for hard, soft, safe or dangerous, legal and illegal drugs in the Square district. Everything, except heroin which of course was strictly lower class, could be bought, sold, or used right there. These were young people who imagined themselves so well informed, that because they knew enough to shun heroin, they considered it safe to indulge in anything else, from paregoric to amphetamines to morphine salts.

Peter's change of routine could have been predicted: the #1 bus out to Roxbury stopped running at midnight, just when the underground life of the Square was gathering momentum. Following a night of carousing from apartment to apartment, with stopovers in the all-night cafeterias, he would end up in the living room of the Mass. Ave. apartment, curled up on a couch or rolled into a sleeping bag on the floor.

## (2) The Waldorf

At that time a branch of the Waldorf cafeteria chain stood across from Harvard Yard, on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Dunster Street. Today it has been replaced by the large Au Bon Pain cafe-terrace and the yawning falsity of Holyoke Square. The Waldorf was closed only when it was not open, that is to say rarely, usually for clean-up between 3 and 5 in the morning. There were others hang-outs around the Square in those days: Hayes Bickford's, smaller and cleaner, more gown than town, was on the next block, at the site now occupied by the Yenching Chinese restaurant.

Walton's, across the Square, down away from the large Harvard COOP department store building, was less frequented, shiftier, less salubrious, partaking of the aroma of a B-movie, seedy, even sinister. Cronin's, more commonplace, was located on Brattle Street, a few blocks away. You could get beer there provided you weren't under age, sometimes even if you were. It was a good place to have a cheap meal and meet friends. Bartley's Burger Palace, still in operation after many decades, has always appealed only to students: corn-ball, loud, colorful and always over-crowded, it was hardly the place to recover from a bad acid trip or catch up on lost sleep.

In the early 60's an historical invasion of troubled youth, like a storm cloud arising from nowhere, suddenly filled up the cafeterias, the Waldorf in particular, during all hours of the day and night. One can suppose that the executives who had negotiated a Waldorf concession in full

view of Harvard's genteel gates had not anticipated its' takeover by this kind of riff-raff. Young people of late high school and early college age, sitting immobilized in shock from a protracted high, or amphetamine horror show, or calamitous acid trip, were always to be found there. They clung together in packs, huddled together for warmth and relief of primitive fear, coasting along on an interminable procession of coffee cups. They were disoriented, unkempt, even dirty, foul-mouthed, ( though too exhausted to be really abusive ). For the most part they came from middle-class backgrounds, were moderately well-educated, nurturing ambitions in music, art or poetry; and poor, more frequently than not homeless, drug-addicted, physically and mentally sick. Above all, they appeared to be so arrogantly unrehabilitatable, so congenitally inert, that it is readily understandable that Waldorf's management had concluded that these people considered the restaurant their private dormitory, a crash-pad underwritten by the city, a night club where, provided you kept ordering drinks, you could stay as long as you liked.

Am I being too conspiratorial when I speculate that the Waldorf had singled out Peter Jancke, with his high public profile, ( the hat if nothing else ), as someone to be made an example of, who symbolized for them all the frustrations of coping with this growing, uncontrollable youthful scourge? It could hardly be denied that Peter's behavior was becoming increasingly bizarre by the day. He might suddenly bang a plate down on the table; or scream out a reply; or just scream, or howl like a wolf. He was accused of making unwelcome passes to girls coming into through the doors. And he had the bad habit of going from table to table handing out peace movement literature - something I myself consider laudable, even necessary in a society whose way of life is dominated by legions of apathetic churls, yet a form of civil disobedience not gauged to win the hearts and minds of restaurant managers.

Counter men and cashiers had been letting Peter know since October that he wasn't welcome. He responded in kind, alternating between gentle Gandhi-like abnegation and the nasty back-biting of a currish disposition. Came the day when he was told by the woman at the cash register by the door that he'd been banned. He ignored the ban for a week, returning to eat and socialize as it pleased him. Then one night, as he was eating dinner, the manager walked into the restaurant through the kitchen doors to hand him an ultimatum: either leave at once or face the

police. Peter stomped out the entrance . He refused to pay for the interrupted meal.

The stage was set for a confrontation. All that is certain about Peter's arrest is the date: early afternoon of a Friday in mid-November of 1964. I wasn't there; this account relies on the testimony of eye-witnesses. The cashier was known to harbor some personal grudge against him : it may have been his politics, or the peace buttons on the hat, or the increasing wildness of his behavior. The moment she noticed his face boldly urging its way through the door, her dowdy left palm reached across the counter and grasped the telephone receiver.

Peter strode to the food counters against the back wall and ordered a lemonade: " yellow" was deemed benevolent for the moment. He returned to the front and, ( of course), sat down at a table directly facing the cashier : it was a mutual detestation society. Harsh words passed back and forth. She did warn him that the cops were on their way; he refused to budge. There was the sound of the approaching siren. Still he didn't move. The police car parked in front of the restaurant. While one cop sat behind the wheel, the other, described as red-headed, middle-aged and stocky, stepped out onto the pavement and came into the restaurant.

Peter was pointed out and the cop went to his table to out under arrest. Here accounts differ : one version would have it that he started crying out ( 'yelling' is probably the better word) , a grab-bag of political slogans, invective, threats, and meaningless rant , a real Waldorf salad . Others say that he jumped up to run out the door and was felled by the policeman's club.

This is not impossible yet most unlikely. Peter's tendencies generally went in the direction of verbal bantering rather than running away. Given his state, he could have been swept by a wave of panic and tried to bolt; I don't think so . The story I find most credible states that, as soon as he saw the cop he slid off his chair, he dropped onto the cold, dirty blue carpeting and , his hands clutching at the mid-points of his thighs, curled up in a fetal position. The celebrated hat had rolled off his head and along the floor. At least one witness claims that the cop stepped on it. Since the hat disappeared into the lockers of the city jail for 6 months, by which time I'd left Cambridge for New York, I was unable to confirm this assertion .

It is generally acknowledged that the cop, by now very angry, asked him :

"What is this? Some kind of political tactic ? Are you going limp?" Peter mumbled "Yes", or nodded his head, or in some way responded in the affirmative.

Apparently this cop hated political demonstrators with every spastic fiber of his being. He cursed and trembled; he (may have) kicked Peter in the ribs . As Peter continued to refuse to respond, he removed a set of handcuffs from his belt. They were twistors: they force their bearer to hold his arms close together; every free motion twists a wire inside their loops closing them more tightly about their victim's wrists.

The cop locked and adjusted the right handcuff onto his wrist. He grabbed hold of the chain: Peter was wrenched off the floor with vindictive cruelty .Two months later one could still examine the burn marks on his wrist . His heart-rending screams shot a wave of terror through the restaurant. All activity froze: one can be certain that people stared at him with the lurid fascination they always exhibit in such situations. He was dragged and shoved to the counter and forced to pay for the lemonade. Then he was hustled out the door jammed into the cop car and driven to the city lockup a mile away in Central Square.

### (3) Saturday Morning

Bill's constitution had been ruined by drug addiction. No-one meeting him for the first time would take him for his real age, 25 . He was prematurely worn down. Introverted, awkward with people, he could be ingratiating or obnoxious in turn. A mantle of rejection clung to his shoulders ; from what or from whom one could never be sure. His posture, the manner in which he tended to keel over, gave the impression that he was recoiling from an anticipated or imagined whip.

No discernible schedule governed his life. When in Cambridge he crashed here and there in pads around the Square, usually on one of the couches in the living room of the Mass. Ave. hang-out. At no time either fully awake or asleep, one could expect to find him sprawled over a table in the Waldorf, or along the banks of the Charles River, or on the stone benches of the 3 Cambridge subway stations .

I ran into Bill early on the morning after Peter's arrest. He was walking up Mass. Ave. in the direction opposite to mine. Our paths crossed by the Hayes Bickford. As he passed me he whispered, the after-echo of a death-rattle at the root of his throat: " Peter Jancke's been busted. Don't tell anyone " Then he wobbled out of range.

I took my breakfast in a small deli near the Harvard Law School. Then I reversed my steps, walking back down Mass. Ave. towards the police station. On the other side of Bow Street, that is to say, just beyond the Square, I ran into Randy, the only young Afro-American associated with the Cambridge drug scene :

" Hey! That you, Dave? Whatch' up to? Wh' you in such a hurry?"

I made some vague remark about going to visit a friend in jail. His manner turned cynical/ friendly:

" You ain't shittin' me , is you? You ain't , by chance, headin' over there to see Pete Yankee, now, is you?"

" Why yes: how did you know?"

" Shit, man! There ain't nothin' I don't know ! Bill musta' told you."

"Yes he did. " I laughed

"Bill's been hoppin' around Cambridge like some kinda' Town Crier, sayin ' "Pete's been busted! Don't tell nobody nothing'!" Look- if you gets to see Pete, tell him we gotta talk ! Fuck that peace shit! Jail ain't no place for no crazy man! "

Randy turned off, laughing, onto Putnam Avenue.

When I got to the Cambridge jail I learned what I already knew, that visiting was not permitted; also that Peter was being held over the weekend and would be arraigned on Monday morning in Boston.

At the arraignment, the Waldorf deposited a shopping list charges against him, starting with the unpaid dinner of the previous week. The city added a further charge: malicious destruction of municipal property. During his stay in the Cambridge jail, Peter had scribbled the phrase "Ban the Bomb" hundreds of times over the walls of his cell.

(4) Judy Marshall

Judy Marshall was able to discourse with some authority on the wisdom of not hanging around with the wrong crowd, yet it appeared to be the only crowd she knew. Altogether she was far too cynical for her age, which I estimated at being about 20. She was chubby and short, with a pink, rotund, puffy face and infinitely sad eyes. She always dressed in tall riding boots and a cape, which she was in the habit of throwing over her left shoulder as if bracing herself against a high wind.

Tears came readily to her eyes. She spoke in a low voice, deliberately and slowly. Her state, between shock and panic, was always depressed; yet her taste for

adventure remained pronounced, her eagerness to experience life strong and undiminished.

I ran into her about a week after she'd run away from Amherst, Massachusetts, town of poets and crusty colleges. She periodically left home but always returned. She'd hitch-hiked around all of New England and acquired a specialist's first-hand knowledge of the routes whereby psychedelic drugs made their way up from New York to Massachusetts, and from there to the rest of the region.

As dealer and pot-head , (by her lights "ex", but this was stated with little conviction ), she was an inexhaustible source of information on the garden varieties of all the mind-bloating drugs: pot, amphetamines, LSD. She confessed that throughout all the years of her middle teens she had floated on a perpetual marijuana-induced high. She maintained close connections both with the drug network in Western Massachusetts and with the local Amherst police. Her friendship with the town's police chief gave her an inside track on up-coming drug busts or raids. This information was passed along to the local dealers in exchange for access to unlimited supplies of weed. As evidence for which, she'd brought a 2-pound stash into the Square to cover the expenses of the road.

Her annual flights from the parental manor had taken on the character of a ritual. She always managed to arrange a 'grand scene' before leaving, storming out the door with assurances that she would never be returning. Fear, habit, poverty, the hardships of the drug world , always drove her back. She described herself to me as a 'coward' , unable to do for herself what she begged of her parents: to be put out on the street, forced to fend for herself.

She was actually very fond of her parents. The lone child of their middle age, they had spoiled her without mercy. When she stayed with them she lived in a small building, a kind of barn at the back of the house which she had designed herself. Here her friends came, to deal, or get high, or pass out. She insisted to me that her parents suspected nothing of her involvement with the drug world, nor of her years of drug addiction.

She stayed in my apartment for 4 days. A sad, distant girl. During the day she wandered the banks of the Charles River, sitting for hours on the cold benches, looking into the far distance, crying. At night she would return sometime after 10 and we would sit around and talk.

I'd gotten into the habit of going to Harvard Square immediately after my work, a detested job in an entry-level position as computer consultant. The company, International Information Incorporated, located in Kendall



Square, had been founded by the man whose juvenile soul had conceived the PDP-1. I much preferred the company of the derelicts and sad young people clinging to existence in the restaurants, cafeterias and pads of Cambridge, to that of my wearisome colleagues, their minds stuffed with fads, fashions, obsessive pursuits and fixed ideas . Not that I don't myself have all these things in abundance. Granted that a constant diet of the burnt-out drug scene would have been just as impalatable in the long run.

My first meeting with Judy was in Cronin's. Coming through the front door, I stepped right into the orbit of an alcove in which this tearful, terrified girl, caped and booted, with long uncombed hair and a snub nose, cushioned between a sleeping bag and a back-pack, sat, bathed in such an aura of utter misery, with so evident a need to talk to anyone who would listen, that I soon found myself , with a minimum of preamble, joining her at her table and opening a conversation.

A waitress appeared in about 15 minutes. I ordered a pitcher of beer and two dinners: then, as now, a good computer job confers certain advantages .

Judy's story was simply told:

In Amherst she'd been given the address of the famous den of iniquity on Mass. Ave.. She showed up there, only to find that the community was holding a party, a celebration of Peter Jancke's release from jail. Peter was the center of everyone's attention: drunk, happy, not too mad. He took an immediate liking to her and, with his habitual impulsiveness, offered her a place to stay in the Roxbury apartment he shared with Rod and his assembly line of young girls.

On her third afternoon in the apartment, that is to say, 4 hours or so before our encounter , Peter came onto her sexually. Or so she interpreted his behavior. As she told it, she repulsed him and he went insane immediately , throwing furniture about the room, breaking dishes, babbling endlessly, making attempts at setting the building on fire - his usual catalogue. Rod wasn't there. She grabbed her things and fled. I had inherited the aftermath of the rout.

This was the earliest version. What actually happened became clarified over the next few days as more details were added. Peter had been confusing her with many of the other women he'd courted, with names like Susan, Roberta, Marian, with an ex - wife, with someone he'd met on the boat coming over from Germany, even with his mother in Ulm.

Judy's descriptions of his apartment showed that he'd been far gone long before she met him. Already he'd filled the rooms with his museum of color-coded fetishes, the texts of his inner mythology, his simulacra of cosmic harmony. While she was there, Rod and his girls put in frequent appearances and disappearances. He and Peter filled the air with acrimonious shouting, enriched by Peter's growing incoherence.

I'm fairly convinced by now that there was considerable exaggeration in her impression that his manner was to be interpreted as a sexual attack. The breakdown that she witnessed, the tirades and the violence, were components of well-established patterns, that had only been shocking to her because she'd never encountered anything like it in her limited experience.

Peter's mind had been hanging by a thread even before that fateful Friday afternoon when he walked into the Waldorf. It was far more likely that it had been the brutal treatment he'd received from the cop, combined with the weekend in the lock-up, which had pushed him over the brink. In general, the druggies were too run-down and exhausted to have much sexual appetite, and it defies credibility to believe that she'd gotten him so excited that he literally flipped when she turned him down.

#### (5) Reconciliation

1. During this period I myself was renting a room in another one of the notorious drug-world crash pads. I was not particularly notorious myself, and I shunned all drugs, even marijuana, like the plague. The druggies welcomed me as a stabilized influence, while I found them a welcome relief from the pretensions of the academic world, within which I'd been given clear instructions to pass the rest of my days. At the time I met Judy, the dealer who'd organized the pad, one of the Square's kingpins, was on the lam from the cops, while the rest of the movable fix were staying away because the place was pivoted on the edge of a police raid. I put Judy up in one of the empty rooms.

After breakfast on the morning of the next day I walked with her the 3 blocks to the Mass. Ave. pad. We arrived around 9 A.M. We walked up to the second floor, where she waited on the landing and I went in. The large living-room was barren of furniture, save for two large couches, a few chairs and a very dirty rug on a rotted plank floor. The three large bay windows were covered over with burlap bags and strips of brown paper. Enough light seeped in from the rents in the paper and the opened windows to allow one to maneuver about the room.

Parading around the living-room and ranting, Peter had gotten there before us. 3 college-age boys were curled up on the two couches, trying to sleep despite his endless harangue. By listening one could eventually disentangle the rhetoric from its diverse preoccupations. The clichés and at times impassioned rhetoric of the antiwar movement were mixed in with his obsessive fears. Interspersed were his mystical interpretations of various colors. Occasionally he brought in sentimental reflections on past and present girl-friends.

Suddenly he would turn around and start accusing the occupants of the apartment, including the ones in the living-room trying to sleep, of robbing him. There was a certain irony to this: Peter was free to treat them this way only because they had organized the fund-raising to put up the bond money to get him out of jail.

I went back out into the hallway and told Judy that it was safe for her to come in. She shambled over to the couch and sat down. Peter was very happy to see her. He stopped his monologue and walked over to the couch. Then he sat down beside her and lay his head on her lap. Judy maintained a rigid posture, afraid to move a muscle, afraid to do anything that might signify rejection. Her right hand was on his forehead, the other lay on his shoulder and back.

She cried without restraint. As soon as he was fast asleep, she moved his head onto a cushion and disengaged herself from under him. Then she indicated to me that she wanted to leave.