At weekends hotshot attorney Victor Koppe loves to dance the night away. And at the crack of dawn when everybody heads home, his house - a wonderful mansion in the centre of Amsterdam - morphs into a place that his best friends facetiously like to call ‘Club Vic’. ‘People who only know me professionally cannot imagine that I am such a fervent clubber,’ he says. No wonder. While at weekends it’s all about celebrating life together, during the week Victor is busy defending perpetrators of crimes against humanity. How does that tie up?

**Abuse of Power**

I was a rebellious little boy who got kicked out of class all the time. But also became school president. This contradiction has always been in my life. It’s probably the reason I became a criminal defence lawyer in the first place: I’m functioning in a system but also opposing that same system. I am allergic to the abuse of power by states, governments, police or prosecutors.

That doesn’t stop him from defending the Cambodian ideologist Nuon Chea who (amongst others) is being held responsible for crimes against humanity that resulted in over two million victims. And didn’t this man, referred to as Pol Pot’s ‘Brother Number Two’ do just that: abuse his power? One might almost want to lose a case on purpose.

Not Victor: ‘If I couldn’t stay professional at all times, I shouldn’t be doing this work.’ To him justice means that perpetrators of crimes are not only prosecuted and brought to a court of law, but that their trial is done in a fair and transparent manner, ‘no matter what crimes people are being accused of.

Even the professionals don’t seem to understand why the biggest crooks on earth deserve an honest trial, even though it is in fact what our system demands.

Victor doesn’t really seem to care too much. He himself is his most important audience and (if not working or recovering from some party) he loves to contemplate life. ‘I don’t want my life to pass without me noticing it.’ Luckily he likes what he sees: somebody who has been fascinated by international law and politics since high school, who used to read everything about the Cold War conflict and who is now reading about those same matters again, while getting paid for it!
Victor and his business partner (ed., and ex wife) Britta Böhler on their way to de Hofstad-case’

What more is there to wish for? Quite a lot, as it seems. In 15 years Victor hopes to be a documentary maker, own a photography gallery in Amsterdam (his house is filled with wonderful black and white images shot by the world’s top photographers), spend his summers teaching human rights law in New York and finally have finished his book on Friedrich Nietzsche and Oscar Wilde, his two heroes. ‘I already have a title. I borrowed it from Thomas Mann when he compared the two: Rebellious in the name of beauty.’ And eventually this is what Victor wants to become too.

At times like that I wish that nobody knew me’

Rebellious or not, about one thing Victor is absolutely certain: he will never leave his beloved Amsterdam. ‘I cannot imagine living in any other city in the world. Not even in New York, Barcelona or Berlin. Amsterdam is the natural habitat of creative, artistic and crazy people. It’s the city of Spinoza, Mahler and DJ Per, one of my favourite house DJs. And, of course, it’s the city of Rembrandt and photographer Inez van Lamsweerde, the city of gay pride, Anne Frank and beautiful girls riding their grandmother bikes alongside the canals.’

FAMOUS CLIENTS

- Samir A., convicted Dutch terrorist.
- Wesam al Delaema, Iraqi-born Dutchman, sentenced in the United States to 25 years for conspiring to kill American soldiers in Iraq. A Dutch court reduced that sentence to 8 years.
- Nuon Chea aka ‘Brother Number Two’, one of the four Cambodian leaders of the Khmer Rouge, whose trial will start next year.
- Yvonne B., suspected of involvement in the Rwanda genocide.
- Dutch journalists that were spied on by the Dutch government (AIVD).
- Convicted Director of War of the Civil Defence Forces Moinina Fofana, suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Terror attack suspects in the Netherlands better known as De Hofstadgroep (whose most fanatic member, Mohammed B., murdered the Dutch film director, producer and writer Theo van Gogh. At the time Van Gogh was working with the Somali-born Dutch activist and politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali to produce the anti-Islam movie Submission). Victor was the counsel for three members of De Hofstadgroep, of which the convicted terrorist Nourredin ELF is probably the best known.
- Nuriye Kesbir, top leader of the Kurdish resistance organisation PKK. A Dutch court forbid her extradition to Turkey.