

(Force of Life Regained) had asked him to make a film about its sanatorium Berg en Bosch near Apeldoorn. Capi helped him out with the lighting. Ivens felt committed to the project and encouraged Hin with remarks like: 'Why don't you put a sequence into the film where everything is seen from the point of view of the patients? Typically he only sees the ceiling and the upper parts of the bodies, the tree tops, etc. and when he gets well, the world returns back to its feet.'²⁰ Instead Hin decided for a more 'objective' approach, showing the different aspects of the sanatorium. The film *UIT BERG EN BOSCH* was released in 1931.

Catholic ideals

Collaborating with Ivens was crucial for Hin's development as a filmmaker. He was extremely supportive of the idea of a number of like minded people working collectively on a film production – exactly what was happening inside the Studio Ivens. But he wanted to use the collective approach for catholic ideals. Thanks to Ivens, Hin came into contact with a group of young Catholics around the literary magazine *De Gemeenschap (The Community)*. This monthly publication, founded in 1925, has been aptly characterised as 'a religious effort to renew the appearance of the earth by means of fire and artistic enthusiasm.'²¹ There were obvious parallels between the *Filmliga* movement and *De Gemeenschap*: both had come into existence as a result of a generation conflict and both exuded a remarkable determination concerning their activities. But there were also many personal links between the two bodies. For *De Gemeenschap*, it was a logical step for a catholic filmmaker to start applying the principles of the avant-garde cinema to a catholic film. Symbolically, in late 1931 Hin installed his film studio in the attic of the Oudegracht 55 in Utrecht, the same address where *De Gemeenschap* had its offices. In Utrecht he founded a catholic film collective named *Hinfilm*, where he was joined by four or five other members. *Hinfilm* produced a much admired feature length documentary for the Catholic Trade Union Movement called *KENTERING (A TURN OF TIDE, 1932)*, and managed to survive precariously for a couple of years on meagre commissions from other catholic organisations.

In the Spring of 1934 the financial situation of *Hinfilm* was so desperate that Jan Hin accepted an offer by the French Catholic production company *FIAT Film* to make a film in Paris. *KENTERING* had convinced Abbé Vachet, head of *FIAT Film*, that the Dutchman had the artistic qualities that his organisation badly needed. Hin started working on a film about the ordination of priests, *LE MARCHE VERS L'AUTEL (THE MARCH TO THE ALTAR)*. But it soon turned out that Hin's ideas about the film were completely different from Vachet's. In June he contacted Helen van Dongen, who was also staying in Paris, so that he could complain about his 'rotten job.' Ivens had left for Moscow in April, while Van Dongen had taken a temporary job with another of Hin's acquaintances - Hans Richter. However, the meeting did not take place, as she was fully occupied with the editing of Richter's film *DAILY LIFE* (although it would remain unfinished). Whether Hin agreed with her opinion of Richter ('a horrible person... with whom I have a quarrel every other day') remains a question to be answered.²² Van Dongen would soon leave for Moscow to join Ivens, whereas Hin would reach a compromise with Vachet 'that he would do the camerawork, in the sense, that he would only act as a technician.'²³

Hans Richter reappears

While Ivens would completely disappear from Hin's life, Hans Richter made an unexpected reappearance. In August 1935, Hin received a letter from Richter, who was in Switzerland having gone into exile from the Nazis, requesting that he assist him on a film commissioned by Philips.²⁴ Richter had already produced, with success, other films for the electronics giant in Eindhoven, *EUROPA RADIO (1931)* and *HALLO EVERYBODY (1933)*. The new film was to give the viewers an impression of the role played by electronics in modern society. Hence the title - *VOM BLITZ ZUM FERNSEHBILD (FROM LIGHTNING TO TELEVISION)*. Hin was offered 200 Dutch Guilders per month, a sum he could well use, as his financial position was still disastrous. The first thing he had to do was get a work permit for Richter. After Hitler had come to power in 1933, the Dutch Government had sharpened the rules. But thanks to a friend working for the Ministry of Social Affairs, Hin was able to get the coveted document for Richter. He arranged for the archive footage and stock shots that Richter needed and hired the Hungarian cameraman Andor von Barys to shoot the material in the Philips factories. In an avalanche of images and sounds *VOM BLITZ ZUM FERNSEHBILD* showed the role of Philips products in modern society. However, Hin is not mentioned in the film credits.

Chequered career

The film career of Jan Hin was a chequered one. Apart from *KENTERING*, he is probably best remembered for a film about a sailing race with the yacht 'Zeearend' (Sea Eagle) called *4.000 MIJL ONDER ZEIL (4,000 MILES UNDER SAIL, 1937)*, and thirdly, for his involvement in the *Nederlandse Werk-gemeenschap voor Filmproductie*, a collective producing films about post-war reconstruction in 1945 and 1946. Between 1937 and 1945 and then again from 1950 until his untimely death in 1957 at the age of 58, he did not make any films at all, as he was forced to earn a living for his growing family in the Hin hosiery factories. Along with his friend and mentor, the film critic Janus van Domburg, he was responsible for the introduction of avant-garde aesthetics to the catholic world. In this he was greatly helped by what he had learnt from working with Ivens and Richter, and he always appreciated the fact that they had given him this opportunity to learn. For that reason he never expressed any regret about Ivens' espousal of Communism, nor did he blame Richter for failing to give him due credit for his contribution to *VOM BLITZ ZUM FERNSEHBILD*.

This article is based on extracts from *Jan Hin, filmmaker van het verlangen (Jan Hin, filmmaker of the desire)*, a publication by the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, Hilversum 2004.

See <http://www.beeldengeluid.nl/>

The publication includes a complete inventory of the Jan Hin papers, which have been deposited with the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision by his son Maarten (1944-2002). The European Foundation Joris Ivens holds photocopies of those Jan Hin papers that relate directly to Joris Ivens.

¹ Copy of a letter from Joris Ivens to Menno ter Braak, 15 December 1927, Hin-archive 4.04

² Letter from Joris Ivens to Jan Hin, 13 March 1929, Hin-archive 4.04

³ Letter from CAPI to Jan Hin, 29 March 1929, Hin-archive 4.04

⁴ Letter from Joris Ivens to Jan Hin, 5 April 1929, Hin-archive 4.04

⁵ Letter from Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to Jan Hin, 24 May 1929, Hin-archive 4.03

⁶ This footage has been preserved with the Filmmuseum: [hin-journaal], F 466

⁷ Letter from Joris Ivens to Jan Hin, 4 July 1929, Hin-archive 4.04

⁸ Letter from Joris Ivens to Jan Hin, 24 June 1929, Hin-archive 4.04

⁹ Jean Paul Goergen e.a. (ed.), Hans Richter. *Film ist Rhythmus*, Berlin: Freunde der deutsche Kinemathek, 2003, p.10

¹⁰ Letter from Joris Ivens to Jan Hin, 14 September 1929, Hin-archive 4.04

¹¹ Joris Ivens, *The Camera and I*, Berlin: Seven Seas Books, 1969, pp.43-44

¹² Quoted in: *Filmiga*, vol.3 nr.4, January 1930, p.52

¹³ Letter from Joris Ivens to Jan Hin, Odessa, 5 March 1930, Hin-archive 4.04. Ivens writes among others: 'How is your work? More certainty? [...] I hope that you will have work this Summer. [...] Early April I'll be back in Holland, and I'll give you advice on a camera. I saw some Askania's here, the latest models too. But my impression and that of others is: Debie L is better. 'If you have to buy one, take that one, don't order too many lenses, I want to give you oral advice on that matter.'

¹⁴ Notes by Jan Hin with regard to Berlin-trip; letters from Helen van Dongen to Jan Hin, 26 April 1930 and 6 May 1930; letter from Joris Ivens to Jan Hin, 1 May 1930, Hin-archive 4.04

¹⁵ Letter from Fritz Winter-Rudloff to Jan Hin, 5 May 1931, Hin-archive 4.03

¹⁶ *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, 28 November 1930

¹⁷ Carbon copy of letter from Capi to Prof. L. Frenken, 8 June 1933, Hin-archive 4.04

¹⁸ Carbon copy of letter from Capi to Prof. L. Frenken, 14 July 1931, Hin-archive 4.04

¹⁹ Letter from *Hinfilm* to Prof. L. Frenken, 30 December 1931, Hin-archive 4.04

²⁰ Letter from Helen van Dongen to Jan Hin, 17 December 1930, Hin-archive 4.04

²¹ Letter from Jan Engelman to Jan Hin, 15 December 1929, Hin-archive 4.04. For Jan Engelman see Liesbeth Feikema, Roman Koot en Edwin Lucas (eds.), *Op gezang en vlees belust. Over leven, werk en stad van Jan Engelman*, Utrecht: Kwadraat, 2000

²² Letter from Helen van Dongen to Jan Hin, 24 June 1934, Hin-archief 4.04

²³ *De Tijd*, 24 november 1934, newspaper cutting, Hin-archive 6.08

²⁴ See the correspondence between Hans Richter and Jan Hin, August-December 1935, Hin-archive 4.02



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