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To cite this article: Egbert Barten (2011) Dutch Anti-Semitic Colour Animation in World War II: Robert Van Genechten's *Van Den Vos Reynaerde* (1943), *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 31:1, 1-41, DOI: [10.1080/01439685.2011.552675](https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2011.552675)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2011.552675>



Published online: 23 Mar 2011.



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# DUTCH ANTI-SEMITIC COLOUR ANIMATION IN WORLD WAR II: ROBERT VAN GENECHTEN'S *VAN DEN VOS REYNAERDE* (1943)

Egbert Barten

In the very middle of the Second World War in The Hague, the Netherlands, a colour animation film of Walt Disney-like quality was made as an anti-Semitic 'sequel' to the medieval Dutch fable *Van den vos Reynaerde* (*About Reynard the Fox*). Part of this film was discovered as recently as the 1990s in the German *Bundesarchiv* and restored by the *Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Only a few years ago, the remaining parts were found and so it became possible to see and study the complete film. In this article, I will explore the film and its makers, and why until recently few knew that this film existed. This article covers the complete film and presents source material that was unknown until now.<sup>1</sup>

It all started with Robert van Genechten (1895–1945). This radical Flemish activist fled to the Netherlands at the end of the First World War, after which he was sentenced in absentia to eight years imprisonment by a Belgian court. He finished his law studies in Utrecht and became a lawyer in that city. In June 1930, he acquired Dutch citizenship. In 1934, he joined the Dutch National Socialist movement – the *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* or NSB. He published extensively about the Flemish movement, capitalism and the *dietsche* connection between Flanders and the Netherlands. He became one of the most prominent theoreticians of the NSB and, from October 1938, also head of the *Departement Vorming* (department for socio-cultural training).<sup>2</sup> In 1937, he published his only literary work, *Van den vos Reynaerde*, in *Nieuw Nederland*, the political and cultural monthly of the NSB, as part of his activities as head of the department.

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Underneath his caftan, Jodocus is wearing nine yellow squares resembling a Star of David. These are only seen for a fraction of a second. This and all other frame enlargements from *VAN DEN VOS REYNAERDE*, collection Eye Film Institute (Filmmuseum), Amsterdam.



Reynaert in the forest.





Reynaert with the proclamation of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.



'From the third egg emerges an ostrich-frog ...' (screenplay version 2, scene 15).





The goose is unable to pay his taxes and is evicted from his house. In this picture, the rhino tax collector has horns on his head and turns green, like the devil.



The banquet of the Jodocusses.



**FIGURE 1** Robert van Genechten speaking in Utrecht, 1941. Image from the NSB newsreel *Spiegel der Beweging*, nr. 9, 1941. From the collection of the Dutch broadcasting archive, Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum.

Van Genechten situates his story in Flanders and begins with the death of the old King Nobel. The donkey Boudewijn, who represents democracy in this story, manages to usurp the throne. While the other animals quarrel as to whether Boudewijn is a legitimate successor, ‘a most peculiar animal, that no one knew’ announces himself.<sup>3</sup> It is Jodocus, the rhinoceros, who has come to ask the donkey for a place in his empire. Boudewijn agrees, but after the arrival of Jodocus, King Nobel’s old empire starts falling apart. The stronger, predatory animals Izegrim the wolf and Firapeel the leopard are sent to the borders of the empire to prevent the return of young Lionel, King Nobel’s son. This way they are no longer a threat to Jodocus as well. A republic is proclaimed in which liberty, equality and fraternity exist for all animals. Jodocus manages to accumulate more and more power by bringing more rhinos into the empire and they start collecting taxes under his leadership. He also tries to alienate the animals from their own natural disposition by promoting animal miscegenation:

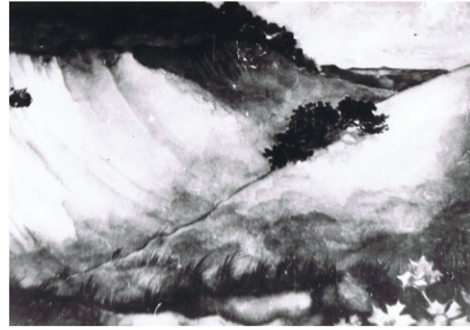
Then there was a great confusion amongst the animals. They had become true brothers and mated amongst each other. The bull and the goat, the hare and the fish, the ferret and the wild boar; because they didn’t recognize each other, and confused each other’s names and habits, they ate their own children. (p. 34)

Jodocus also tries to get Reynaert to do his dirty work for him.

The dissatisfaction among the animals increases. Nobel’s son Lionel confers with Izegrim, Firapeel and Reynaert about what to do next. At the head of a large procession of animals, Lionel travels through his father’s old empire. The animals commit an enormous massacre among the rhinos, and Jodocus is also killed, ‘But in spite of all the preparations, some of them managed to escape and fled to other countries’ (p. 98). Meanwhile, Reynaert has resumed his old habit; he has escaped from the retinue of the new King Lionel to catch a fat hen and ‘this is the way it will always be’ (ibid.).



**FIGURE 2** Maarten Meuldijk's vision on miscegenation. From Robert van Genechten's book (p. 35).



**FIGURE 3** Background from *Van den vos Reynaerde* with the hills from which Jodocus is to emerge. 'Snap shot' photo from J.W.I. du Buy's collection, reproduction in the author's collection.

What Van Genechten tried to tell with his version of the *Reynaert* story was that the Jews are responsible for all social wrongs and that they aim to enrich themselves at the expense of others. Only vigorous resistance against them will prevent a complete collapse of society. Parliamentary democracy – another Jewish invention according to Van Genechten – is wrong, and the ideals of the French Revolution (liberty, equality and fraternity) inevitably lead to degeneration and miscegenation. It is important to preserve the national character. The anti-Semitic work of Van Genechten did not find much response when it was published in instalments in the NSB magazine; this changed when it was published in book form by the National-Socialist publisher *De Amsterdamsche Keurkamer* in 1941.<sup>4</sup> The Netherlands was occupied by then; Van Genechten himself had become procurator general at The Hague court in 1940 and was notorious for his acts as prosecutor at the Peace Court, which was established by the Germans. Publisher George Kettmann turned *Van den vos Reynaerde* into a book lavishly illustrated with black-and-white drawings from Maarten Meuldijk, cartoonist at the NSB weekly *Volk en Vaderland*. Van Genechten was very keen to keep track of the sales of his book. *Van den vos Reynaerde* was published in March of 1941 and one month later, he was already asking Kettmann about the sales. The publisher was slightly non-committal, but he did mention that the NSB did very little to bring the book to the attention of the public. However, the sales of the book were good. In August of that year, 1885 copies of the first edition of 2000 books were already sold. A second edition of 8000 copies came out that very same year. The book was also available in Belgium through book exporter Van Ditmar.<sup>5</sup>

The book was mainly reviewed in the explicit National-Socialist press. The first glowing review appeared in *Volk en Vaderland* on 28 March 1941:

Apart from the already great merit of having retained the vernacular tone of the age-old and famous original and at the same time having made a true 'sequel' incorporating many new inventions and witty touches, this new *Reynaert* is a wonderful example of satirical *tendenz-kunst* [...] Politics have truly been inspirational here: far from being a slightly artificially contrived story, it is



sparkling with life, and readers will want to reread it time and time again. [...] There is no better propaganda than that of healthy laughter. Both the amount of real humour that Van Genechten gave *Van den Vos Reynaerde* and the naturalistic way in which Meuldijk brought the delightful animal figures to life in black and white, are valuable assets for our political propaganda.

Outside the specific NSB press, there was hardly any media response to the book. In an advertisement in *Volk en Vaderland* of 6 June 1941, calling the book 'a gift to the people', the publisher wrote that the newspaper press and the literary journals do not want to review it, because 'these gentlemen are still afraid of anti-Semitism [...] while in their hearts the Dutch have already been anti-Semites for a long time'.

The success of Van Genechten's book in National-Socialist circles – in 1941, the Flemish broadcasting company even turned it into a radio play called *Jodocus* for its Brussels station<sup>6</sup> – may have influenced the decision of the Department of Information and Arts (*Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten*, DVK) to turn this work into a status project of the Dutch film industry. An animation film was to be made and what is more, it would be made in colour, which – at that time – was a first for the Netherlands.

This commission was given to Nederland Film, a company established in 1941 with the support of DVK. Nederland Film was run by National-Socialist film-maker Egbert van Putten (1899–1996). At the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s, Van Putten was involved in the *Nederlandsche Filmliga* (Dutch Film Society) and after that he lived for several years in Berlin. In Germany, he worked on several films and wrote the screenplay for Lotte Reiniger's animation film *Das Rollende Rad* (1934). He also distributed the Swedish anti-Semitic film *Petterson och Bendel* (directed by Per Axel Brenner, 1935) in Germany. Furthermore, he was *Kringleider* (Kreis Leader) of the NSB in Berlin. In short, he was a man with quite a lot of contacts in the film world and in politics, both in Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>

From Berlin, he was supported by Alfred Greven, a former Ufa producer who kept an eye on German film interests and who initiated pro-German film companies wherever he thought it necessary. Nederland Film fit into this scheme well. The firm had two departments: one for the production of documentary films and one for the production of animated films. Both were established in the very centre of The Hague. The documentary unit was located at Smidswater 1 and the animation section was located at Smidswater 20, a large, two-story space over the coach house at the back of a stately mansion at Lange Voorhout 62, where Jan Teunissen (leader of the Film Guild of the Dutch Kultuurkamer and head of the NSB Film Service) lived. Since the large doors of the coach house had to be kept free for Teunissen's car, the animation film studio was accessible only via a small gateway next to the Teunissen's house at Lange Voorhout. This gateway bore the number 64, resulting in the nickname 'Studio 64' for the animation film department. Several employees of the former (George) Pal Studio in Eindhoven (producing superb puppet commercials for Philips and other companies before the war) were recruited for the production of animated films and Nederland Film also took over some of its equipment. George Pal had fled Holland in 1939, making a career for himself in Hollywood (and being nominated for an Academy Award for his short *Tulips Shall Grow* as early as 1943, a film set in Holland



**FIGURE 4** Nederland Film manager and director of the film *Van den vos Reynaerde*, Egbert van Putten, with one of the financial backers of Nederland Film, Gerard van den Arend, who was also one of NSB leader Anton Mussert's aides. Photo from the author's collection.



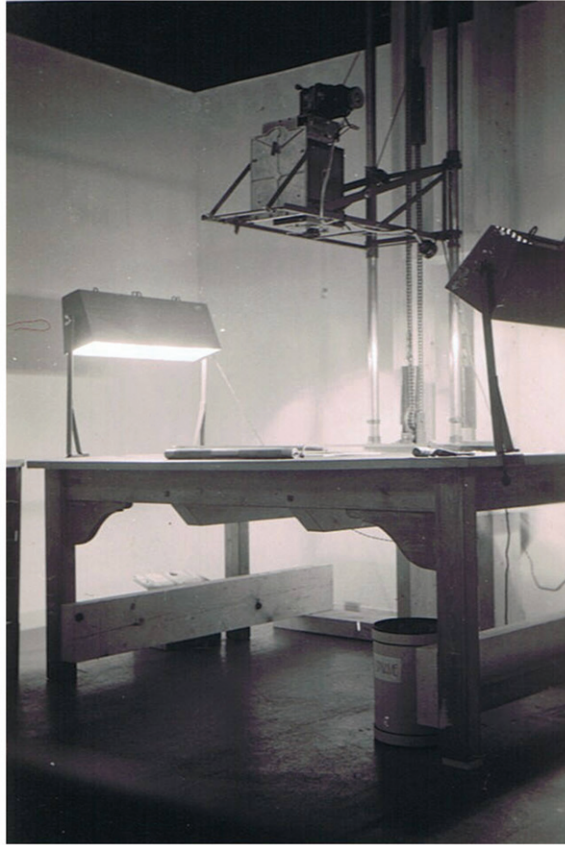
**FIGURE 5** Egbert van Putten, 1940/1941. Photo R.J. Meijer, from the author's collection.

during the war years) but leaving behind in Holland a studio full of equipment and trained personnel that were very convenient in regards to the new plans.

In one of the earliest records of Nederland Film (dated 22 September 1941), *Van den vos Reynaerde* was listed as an 'animation film in colour [...] to be made with a minimum length of 250 meter' (approximately nine minutes) for Dfl. 15,000.<sup>8</sup> When Van Putten closed the deal with DVK in July 1942, the budget had been increased to Dfl. 30,000.<sup>9</sup> At the end of 1942, the expenditure was six times as high as the original estimate and the expected length of the film was to be 600 metres (over 21 minutes).<sup>10</sup> The bill eventually paid by DVK must have been higher still, but the exact amount is lost in the mists of time.

In the Dutch press, the production of the film was vaguely referred to as 'the Nederland Film animation project'; the fact that it was a screen adaptation of Van Genechten's anti-Semitic book was never mentioned.<sup>11</sup> Even so, the work on the film was not kept a top secret. Colleagues within the film company must have had at least an inkling of what happened in The Hague. Judging by the remarks made by fellow animator Marten Toonder shortly after the war, for instance, some of them knew exactly what was going on: 'an NSB company making an anti-Semitic animation film'.<sup>12</sup> The animators working on the film also knew what was expected of them. According to animator Joop du Buy, who worked from the summer of 1942 until April 1943 at Nederland Film, the rhinos were called 'Jew Animals'.<sup>13</sup> Animator Jenny Dalenoord (b. 1918) is also convinced that they knew:

I did not feel very sympathetic towards the film, because it had a typical anti-Jewish background. We all knew this, because that was the whole purpose, but we did not like it. But on the other hand, we had to make money. [...] horrible,



**FIGURE 6** The installation for recording animation films at Nederland Film, March 1943. This installation was taken over from Pal Studio in Eindhoven.

how did they come up with such a thing, this kind of anti-Jewish propaganda. As far as propaganda goes, I don't think it would have worked, because the same pictures were shown on advertising pillars, with slogans underneath. Not rhinos but little men with large noses, caricatures and so on. Very large posters.<sup>14</sup>

Jenny Dalenoord is probably referring to billboards of Fritz Hippler's *Der Ewige Jude* (1940) on display in many places in The Hague from the beginning of October 1941, because the Dutch version of this film was released at that time and the release was marked by a particularly vicious poster made by illustrator Hans Borrebach.<sup>15</sup>

The screenplay of *Van den vos Reynaerde* was probably written by Henk Plaizier (b. 1913) of the *Persgilde* of the *Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer* (the Press Guild of the Dutch Culture Chamber).<sup>16</sup> The letter of DVK from 22 September 1941, quoted above, mentions the production of the film 'according to the attached screenplay' and goes on to say that 'any small changes to the screenplay should be discussed with H. Plaizier'. It is unclear, though, to what extent the employees of Nederland Film themselves were involved in developing the screenplay, but it is quite probable that they were. Evidence for this assumption comes from the fact that there are two

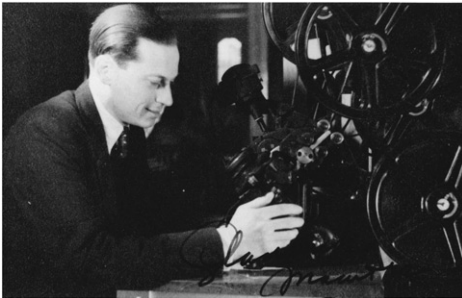




**FIGURE 7** Camera assistant Joop van Essen's identity pass from the Film Guild, valid through 1942. The pass signed by Jan Teunissen, leader of the Film Guild, and by Van Essen himself. Original in collection Joop van Essen, copy from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 8** Camera assistant Joop van Essen posing next to the moviola of Nederland Film. Original in collection Joop van Essen, copy from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 9** Administrator J.A. (Lex) van Glabbeek posing next to the moviola of Nederland Film, March 1942. Copy from the collection of André Holla.



**FIGURE 10** The animation department on 5 December 1941. On the wall seven examples of animals from the film, including Reinaert and Boudewijn the braying donkey, and third from the left Jodocus the rhinoceros animal. Jenny Dalenoord is sitting at the middle drawing table against the wall; the other animators are unknown. Photo from the author's collection.

known versions of the screenplay, the first of which comes from the estate of one of the animators and that this is the only known copy of that version (Appendix 1). There is also a picture of a 'screenplay meeting' at the offices of Nederland Film that has only Nederland Film employees in it (see Fig. 12).

The credits of the film mention Nederland Film manager Egbert van Putten as director. After the war, Van Putten said this was only a formality: 'although I was officially responsible, I had very little to do with it, the boys from Pal Studio did it all on their own'.<sup>17</sup> The employees who came from Pal Studio, Hill Beekman (b. 1911), André Holla (1916–1996) and Jozef Misik must have had an important voice in the design of the animal characters, most notably the rhinoceros Jodocus. They did not base their work on Maarten Meuldijk's black-and-white drawings from Van



**FIGURE 11** The animation department in March 1942. Since the photo from December 1941 an extra row of drawing tables has been added. This means that in the meantime more people were employed to work on the film. The woman turning towards the camera is Jenny Dalenoord again. The woman sitting at the head of the drawing tables is Corry Mühlenfeld. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 12** Screenplay meeting 1942. From left to right Bouman, Misik, Holla and Beekman. In the background are framed drawings of the film's protagonists. On the left Jodocus, on the right Reinaert and Boudewijn the donkey on the throne. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 13** Animator Hill Beekman posing next to one of the drawing tables at Nederland Film. On the table a backdrop from *Van den vos Reynaerde*. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 14** Animator André Holla posing next to one of the drawing tables at Nederland Film, April 1942. Photo from the author's collection.

Genechten's book, because they were not suited for the American-style animation. All characters were designed from scratch.

To form a group of animators large enough for the ambitious animation film project and to find young talented animators, a cartoon competition was organized in Haarlem early 1942. The jury consisted of Hill Beekman and the Haarlem artist H.G. Kannegieter.<sup>18</sup> The 30 winners were rewarded with a free course in animation, which was led by Kannegieter, and afterwards they were offered employment at Nederland Film. Among the winners were Joop du Buy, Han van Gelder, Greetje Krouwel and Jan van Hillo. Hans Kresse, who became a well-known cartoonist later on, did not participate in the competition, but was allowed into the course because he was very talented and he also became an employee of Nederland Film.



**FIGURE 15** Animator and later manager André Holla at the offices of the animation film. On the wall a chart entitled 'Performance Statistics Animation Department'. On the back, André Holla dated the photo himself: 'March 1943, before I took over from Kannegieter'. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 16** Jan Bouman posing next to one of the drawing tables at Nederland Film, March 1942. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 17** Hill Beekman doing the same. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 18** The painting department at Nederland Film. It is unknown who the ladies in the picture are. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 19** The animation department at Nederland Film. It is unknown who the three animators are. Photo from the author's collection.





**FIGURE 20** Holla with the moviola. Photo *ibid.*



**FIGURE 21** Holla at the drawing table 1942. Photo *ibid.*



**FIGURE 22** Cameraman Jozef Misik posing next to the moviola. Photo from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 24** Beekman with the moviola. Photo *ibid.*



**FIGURE 23** Misik, *ibid.*

In April 1943, the film was almost finished. The minutes of the meeting of the DVK Propaganda Council mention a preview of the film for the financiers and the staff who made the film.<sup>19</sup> The preview was held on Sunday 25 April in the Asta Theater in The Hague.<sup>20</sup> Animator Holla remembers that it was 'black with NSB people',



**FIGURE 25** *Van den vos Reynaerde* composer Leo Ruygrok in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, August 27–28, 1942. He is rehearsing the suite he composed for another Nederland Film, *Wie Gaat Mee?* (1942). Photo R.J. Meijer, from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 26** Part of the group of young artists who were trained as animators in the second half of 1942, after winning a contest, posing in front of the entrance of the coach house at the Lange Voorhout in The Hague ('Studio 64'). Second from the left, with necktie, Jan van Hillo, the rest are unknown. Original in J.W.I. du Buy's collection, reproduction in the author's collection.

referring to the fact that NSB members usually wore black uniforms.<sup>21</sup> Among the many NSB officials present was Tobie Goedewaagen, secretary general of DVK. The author Robert van Genechten was conspicuously absent. He had tried to end his life twice in April 1943, the second time – only days before the preview – he shot himself through the head. Although he survived this second attempt, he was hospitalized for a long time and was undergoing treatment at the time of the preview.<sup>22</sup> Van Genechten did see several excerpts of the film in the summer of 1942 and wrote to his publisher: 'What I have seen of it is really very attractive'.<sup>23</sup>

As Van Putten remembered it 50 years later, Goedewaagen was very satisfied with the result. The Propaganda council of his department, however, was not totally enthusiastic. From the minutes of 27 April 1943, it appears that the members now had a problem with the fox figure: according to the council it was badly chosen from 'a National-Socialist point of view'. This objection is all the more remarkable since the Reynaert in the film is exactly the same National-Socialist folk hero as in the book. On the other hand, the council was full of praise for the technical excellence of the film; the animated sequences were termed 'magnificent'. In October 1943, Van Putten wrote a letter about the film to DVK that implied that the German authorities also had some reservations about the film, although it does not become clear what.<sup>24</sup> Nothing more was heard of the film after this. During the production of the film, the totalitarian press had only written in vague terms about the animation film project, and after the preview (at which no representatives of the press had been present),



**FIGURE 27** Another part of the group, posing on the other side of the Lange Voorhout. On the uppermost row, third from the left, Greet Krouwel, directly beneath her, Joop du Buy. On the row below that, fifth from the left Han van Gelder (with glasses). Bottom row, in a coat and with glasses, Jan van Groningen. Original in J.W.I. du Buy's collection, reproduction in the author's collection.



**FIGURE 28** 'Studio 64', drawing made by Jan van Groningen from 1943 as a farewell gift to Joop du Buy. Original in J.W.I. du Buy's collection, reproduction in the author's collection.



**FIGURE 29** A group of winners is sketching on location, probably somewhere in Haarlem. The man in white is teacher H.G. Kannegieter; the younger man looking at his drawing is Han van Gelder. Sitting on the ground is N. Hoogerwerf, the others are unknown. Original in J.W.I. du Buy's collection, reproduction in the author's collection.

none of the newspapers mentioned the title. *Van den vos Reynaerde* was never released in the cinema, which is remarkable for a film that had raised so many expectations and which had cost so much money.

Why *Van den vos Reynaerde* was never released is a matter for conjecture. Were the objections of the Dutch National-Socialists, DVK, or maybe even the Germans





**FIGURE 30** The fox as an unreliable animal in two other films of the period: title image from *Der Störenfried* by Hans Held (1939/1940). Film still from the author's collection.



**FIGURE 31** *Das dumme Gänslein* by Hans Fischerkösen (1944), produced partly in the Netherlands by people who also worked on *Van den vos Reynaerde*. Film still from the author's collection.

themselves too strong? Did they have trouble believing in the positive (i.e. National-Socialist) characteristics of the fox, an animal that usually has the role of the unreliable scoundrel in animated films? How could it be that the prototype of a villain had suddenly changed into a hero?<sup>25</sup> Or was it no longer deemed necessary to release an anti-Semitic film by the time it was completed? The 'Great Propaganda Action' against the Jews was over by 1941, so maybe *Van den vos Reynaerde* was completed too late to be useful.<sup>26</sup>

Other films made by Nederland Film weren't released either, for example the music film *Wie gaat mee?* (Who will come along?) directed by R.J. Meijer in 1942, which *did* get a press release and which was reviewed extensively and enthusiastically.<sup>27</sup> So it wasn't entirely uncommon that propaganda films were not shown at all. The fact that it was no longer possible to make a version of *Van den vos Reynaerde* that was satisfactory for all parties might be partly explained by the speedy dissolution of the animation section of Nederland Film after finishing the preview version of the film. From the beginning of 1943, people who had worked for Van Putten were distributed among the two *Arbeitsgruppen* of the German film companies Bavaria Filmkunst and Fischerkösen Film Produktion, which opened branches in The Hague. In a letter, Van Putten complained that the film could not be finished according to the wishes of the German authorities because, contrary to earlier promises, the two new studios refused to cooperate with him in finishing the film.<sup>28</sup> Van Putten took the only existing projection print of the film with him to Germany and gave it to the widow of his friend and film director Edgar Beyfuss.<sup>29</sup> Although this copy has not been recovered until now, the original negative and sound materials were eventually found in the German *Bundesarchiv* around the turn of the millennium. This material probably came from Geyer Werke, the only film laboratory that could process (Agfa)colour film in occupied Europe.

Judging from the surviving part of the film ('an old fable rejuvenated, after a book by Robert van Genechten', according to the opening titles) and the surviving



screenplays, the film follows the plot of the book in most respects. It retains the central ideas of the book, including miscegenation, the destructive influence of the rhinos, and the ‘cleansing’ power of the National-Socialist folk hero Reynaert who even ‘purges’ the sand contaminated by the rhinos in version 2 of the screenplay. The emphasis is on the folk hero Reynaert, who leads the revolt against the rhinos. The lion Lionel is almost absent in the screenplay. Both in the film and in the screenplay there is more emphasis on the economic exploitation of the animals by the family of the rhino, who collects taxes in a merciless fashion.

The most substantial difference is that in the book a few rhinos manage to escape in the end while at the end of the film all rhinos are driven into the sea, even though this was apparently considered too cruel: the rhinos are given winglets to fly to heaven like so many angels. An equivocal ending indeed, and strangely enough it was not in the screenplay versions. It might have been invented to accommodate the ambiguity of Van Genechten’s book and its suggestion that the rhinos (read: the Jews) should be fought even when they have already died and gone to heaven (as is shown in the film). The final shot of the film shows Reynaert looking out over the sea with his offspring, which can be interpreted as follows: the rhinos were drowned, but we are still vigilant.

How did the filmmakers fare after the war? The director, Egbert van Putten, fled to Germany in September 1944, and was arrested in Berlin after the German capitulation. He was transported to the Netherlands, where he was detained for a short period from April until August 1946.<sup>30</sup> It is unknown whether he was heard by the *Commissie tot Zuivering van het Filmwezen* (Committee for Purging the Film Industry). In any case, he went abroad soon after his detention. He was no longer active in the film industry, although he did some odd jobs for a few large Hollywood productions in Spain in the 1960s (including Anthony Mann’s *El Cid*, 1961). He returned to the Netherlands every now and then and kept in touch with his former employees.<sup>31</sup> When I located Van Putten in Madrid in the 1980s and asked him to share his memories of this period, Nederland Film and the film *Van den vos Reynaerde*, he was all too willing to do so; his statements showed no trace of regret or guilt. Instead, he made it seem as if he had been a guardian angel, who had established Nederland Film and particularly the animation department for the sole reason to prevent the animators of the Pal Studio, who had been without work after Pal left for Hollywood, being sent to Germany.<sup>32</sup>

Many of the people who worked on the film did not return to the film industry after the war, perhaps to avoid being put before the Committee for Purging the Film Industry (there are no sources that confirm this), perhaps for other reasons as well. The fact that the film was never publicly shown and remained relatively unknown must have influenced the fact that none of the makers experienced any negative consequences. Hill Beekman and André Holla returned to the advertising business where they had worked before George Pal came to Eindhoven. H.G. Kannegieter (1898–1991) and Joop du Buy (1924–1994) went back to making cartoons; one of Joop Du Buy’s activities was making a cartoon for the communist newspaper *De Waarheid* (The Truth). Of all the employees who had worked on *Van den vos Reynaerde* only two remained in the film industry. Cameraman Jozef Misik started working for the puppet film studio of Joop Geesink, and even though Geesink was prohibited from work for a few months by the Committee for Purging the Film Industry because



**FIGURE 32** 8 May 1945. Liberation of The Hague. Robert van Genechten, who has just been arrested, sees how the crowd breaks through the barrier, offering shelter between the arresting squad. He is pushed inside, leaving the furious crowd in the street. Image from footage in the collection of the Dutch broadcasting archive Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum.

of his film activities during the war, Misik was allowed to replace him in the first half of 1946 as manager. Misik's assistant Joop van Essen (b. 1922) – who had also worked for the documentary department of *Nederland Film* after working for a few months on *Van den vos Reynaerde* – established his own film company, *Mirror Film*, after the war in Amsterdam. With this company, he was to make many films.

Some of the lower-level employees of *Nederland Film* became more or less well known after the war. Animator Jenny Dalenoord (b. 1918) became a well-known illustrator of children's books (including *Wiplala* by Annie M.G Schmidt and many books by Miep Diekmann). Her colleague Jan van Hillo (1922–1980) became a famous television reporter in the 1960s and 1970s at the broadcasting companies NCRV, NTS and NOS. He was famous for a report from the Palace of Soestdijk with Queen Juliana – which was also turned into a bestselling book<sup>33</sup> – and programmes with other members of the Dutch royal family. He also made several documentaries about the persecution of the Jews and the concentration camps, which brought him plenty of attention. This provoked one of the other animators of *Nederland Film*, Joop du Buy, into launching a campaign to ban Van Hillo from the television screen. It is unclear whether this campaign was limited to but one angry phone call to Beekman.<sup>34</sup> Van Hillo died at the age of 57 in 1980. Du Buy himself talked very freely about the film when Gerard Groeneveld and I were preparing our first publication about the film for *De Volkskrant* in 1991. He was also very cooperative, handing over all the material about the film he had in his possession.<sup>35</sup> But when the article was



**FIGURE 33** 10 May 1945, Robert van Genechten with a group including Anton Mussert and Max Blokzijl in the exercise yard of Scheveningen Prison. Image from the collection of the Dutch broadcasting archive, Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum.

published and he realized that he was one of only very few people who had dared to speak about the film, he took back his words and said there had been a misunderstanding and that he had not worked on the film at all. ‘I am not an anti-Semite’ was the heading of the interview published in the newspaper *Haarlems Dagblad* in which he tried to take back his earlier statements – as if we had ever made such an accusation.<sup>36</sup> The incident showed how difficult it could be to publish about such sensitive subjects without raising controversy at the end of the 20th century.

Robert van Genechten, the creator of the story and hence the evil genius of this film, was finally arrested on 8 May 1945 in The Hague and detained in Scheveningen prison, together with people like NSB leader Anton Mussert, Film Guild leader Jan Teunissen and NSB propagandist Max Blokzijl. During his trial in October 1945, he was criticized for his merciless policy as prosecutor of the Peace Court in The Hague, but he was also confronted with anti-Semitic statements he made during a few radio lectures. Neither his book *Van den vos Reynaerde*, nor the film of the same title were discussed. The trial ended in a death sentence. Although Van Genechten appealed to the Supreme Court, he did not await its judgment. He committed suicide on 13 December. His suicide letter, addressed to the clerk of the Special Criminal Court in The Hague, contained not only an admission of guilt but also the following words:

I especially wish to express my regrets about the acrimonious and malicious words I used with respect to the Jews at a time that they were already so seriously



afflicted, even though I am not in the least guilty of their massacre and have always found it horrifying.<sup>37</sup>

From the fact that Van Genechten deemed it necessary to emphasize that he was not in the least responsible for the Holocaust, I think it may be concluded that he had in fact come to believe the opposite in the weeks between his sentence and his suicide.

## Credits

Title: Van den vos Reynaerde

Other title: Reinecke der Fuchs

Year of production: 1941–1943

Production company: Nederland Film, The Hague, commissioned by the Department of Information and Arts (DVK) in The Hague. Made in the coach house of Lange Voorhout 62 (also called 'Studio 64') in The Hague.

Budget: initially fl. 15,000; finally more than fl. 97,000.

Director: Egbert van Putten

Screenplay: Henk Plaizier (based on the book *Van den vos Reynaerde* by Robert van Genechten, *De Amsterdamsche Keurkamer*, 1941)

Music: Leo Ruygrok

Camera and synchronization: Jozef Misik

Assistant Trickfilm camera: Joop van Essen

Animation: Hill Beekman, André C.J. Holla, Jan Bouman, Olga Tijssen

Animators/inkers/in-betweeners: Jenny Dalenoord, Jan van Hillo, Corry Mühlenfeld, H.G. Kannegieter, Joop W.I. du Buy, Hans G. Kresse, Han van Gelder, Greetje Krouwel, Jan van Groningen, Martin Keuris, J. van Gorkum, Harry Baljet, Th. Meyer, N. Hoogerwerf, L. Schoof, [...] Knijff and many others.

Voice over: unknown.

Laboratory: Geyer-Werke AG, Berlin-Neukölln.

Screening: private screening on 25 April 1943 in the Asta Theatre in The Hague, never released after that.

Première: (recovered first act) 25 April 1992 in Hoogt 1, during the Holland Animation Film Festival in Utrecht; (complete film) 4 November 2006 during the HAFF in Utrecht.

Technical data: 35-mm, animation film, colour (Agfacolor), optical sound, Academy ratio.

Archive data film material: Eye Film Instituut (Filmmuseum) Amsterdam, A 2158, 327 metres, circa 12' (complete nitrate image and sound negative); DK 2457, 327 metres (restored safety 35-mm print).

## Appendices

### *Introduction*

In this article, all existing source material of the film *Van den vos Reynaerde* is published, including the two versions of the screenplay (Appendix 1), the commentary (Appendix 2) and all the set pictures, but excluding – with one exception – the material from the Department of Information and Arts archive in the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) in Amsterdam.

It is remarkable that so little production material of this film has been recovered. Not a single cell or line test and only one sketch. Are they still hidden somewhere in somebody's attic or did a large-scale destruction take place? The latter actually seems very improbable, that is why I urge all researchers and collectors to keep an eye open for any material from this film that might crop up in the near future.

## Appendix 1

### **Van den vos Reynaerde (1943); a comparison of the two remaining versions of the screenplay**

Version 1 and version 2 both belonged to A.C.J. Holla (one of the four main animators who are mentioned in the credits of the film) and are now part of the author's collection. This is the first time that version 1 is published in English.

Version 2 also exists in the NIOD archives (DVK Archive file 121 Aa; see below) and an English translation was published before by Barten and Groeneveld 1994 (see footnote 1, screenplay as appendix, pp. 210–212).

In the opinion of the author of this article, Anabella Weismann made a translation into German of this English translation, which she published to accompany her article 'Von Nashörnern, Füchsen und Gänsen. Zur nationalsozialistischen Propaganda in den besetzten Niederlanden am Beispiel des Zeichentrickfilms VAN DEN VOS REYNAERDE', in: Wolfgang Benz *et al.* (ed.), *Kultur Propaganda Öffentlichkeit. Intentionen deutscher Besatzungspolitik und Reaktionen auf die Okkupation* (Berlin, 1998), 225–260 (screenplay on p. 256–260). However, Weismann claims that she translated the screenplay herself from the original Dutch, but the addition 'Ende des erhaltenen Filmfragmentes' at the exact spot where we wrote 'End of the surviving reel of film' in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* raises considerable doubts.

Remarks of the author in *italics* and in [...]

### **Version 1**

[2 pp., typewritten]

[p.1]

'SCREENPLAY FOR THE ANIMATION FILM  
'VAN DEN VOS REYNAERDE'

### *Introductory text*

After King Nobel, who had ruled the animal kingdom for years, passed away, all

## SCENARIO VOOR DE TEEKENFILM

" VAN DEN VOS REYNAERDE "Inleidende Tekst

Nadat Koning Nobel, die jarenlang geregeerd had over het dierenrijk, heengegaan was, scholden alle dieren tezamen om over de keuze van een nieuwe vorst te beraadslagen teneinde in het vervolg beter beschermd te zijn tegen de listige streken van den Vos Reynaerde.

Kleurengamma overgaande in het eerste tafereel.

In een duinpan is een grote dierenmenigte uit alle windstreken bijeengekomen. In een bonte mengeling staan daar koeien, schapen, biggen enz. broederlijk bij elkaar. Op de takken van de bomen hebben de vogels en apen zich een plaatsje gezocht. Middenin staat de lege zetel van de overleden Koning Nobel. Duidelijk zijn op de voorgrond zichtbaar Bruin de Beer, die zijn beschadigde poten belikt; rondom zijn kop zwermen bijen. En Tybaert de Kater voorzien van een grote doek die om zijn hals geknoopt is. Luid pratend en discussiërend wordt het onderwerp van den dag besproken n.l. de keuze van een nieuwen koning. De ezel is onderwijl op de zetel geklommen en verbeeldt zich door ijn bulken zolang mogelijk te rekken, de menigte in den waan te kunnen brengen, dat hij ook leeuwen capaciteiten bezit. Zodoende in aanmerking komt om over de dieren te regeren en te heersen. Jodocus de neushoorn gluurt door enige takken naar het schouwspel in de duinpan. Hij stapt van achter de boom vandaan en zal het zaakje eens nader gaan bekijken (Panorama langs verschillende dieren) Vriendelijk glimlachend en groetend tegen ieder dier, dat hij tegenkomt, weet hij ongemerkt tot aan de koningszetel door te dringen. Hij buigt voor den koning en haalt uit zijn reistasje een perkamenten rol te voorschijn. De koning rolt het perkament open en leest het; goedkeurend knikt hij, bijgestaan door zijn raadslieden die ijverig medeknikken. Men ziet een bosch waar op verschillende bomen proclamaties gespijkerd zijn; hier en daar staan groepjes dieren het geval te lezen. Bij een der bomen leest Reynaerd de proclamatie. Duidelijk is nu de gehele proclamatie zichtbaar.

PROCLAMATIE

"Hiermede proclameer ik, Koning Ezel, dat vanaf heden in mijn rijk voor alle dieren vrijheid, gelijkheid en broederschap zal gelden."

Reynaerd de Vos draait zijn kop om, knipoogt tegen het publiek en met een snelle greep trekt hij de proclamatie van de boom af.

In een rij staan verschillende/bruidsparen, vreemsoortige geestelijk uitgedost te wachten. Even daarna komt een jodocus te voorschijn en begint de paren in de echt te verbinden.

Enmiddels heeft Reynaerd de proclamatie aan de kippen laten lezen. De kippen tonen zich zeer verheugd over de beloofde vrijheid en dringen naar de uitgang van het hok. Reynaerd de Vos maakt bereidwillig het hok open. De eerste de beste kip die uit het hok komt grijpt hij en draait haar de nek om.

FIGURE 34 First page of version 1 of the screenplay. From the author's collection.



animals flocked together to deliberate about a new monarch in order to be better protected against the cunning tricks of the fox Reynaerde.

Colour scheme transition to the first scene.

In a hollow in the dunes a large crowd of animals from all corners of the kingdom has gathered. It is a colourful and peaceful mix of cows, sheep, pigs, etc. The birds and monkeys have found a place to sit on the branches of the trees. In the middle is the empty throne of the dead King Nobel. In the forefront we can clearly see Bruin the bear, who is licking his wounded paws; bees are buzzing around his head. And Tybaert the cat who has a large bandage around his neck. They are loudly discussing the topic of the day: who is to become the new king. Meanwhile, the donkey has seated himself on the throne and imagines that he can trick the crowd by prolonged braying into believing that he has lion-like qualities. And thus will be chosen to govern and reign over the animals.

Jodocus the rhinoceros is peeping through the branches at the scene in the hollow. He steps from behind the tree and intends to take a closer look. (Panorama shot of different animals.) With a friendly smile and a word of greeting for each animal he encounters, he manages to reach the throne unnoticed.

He takes a bow for the king and produces a parchment scroll from his travelling bag. The king unrolls the parchment and reads; he nods approvingly, his counsellors are standing by diligently nodding as well. A forest is seen where proclamations are nailed to several trees; here and there are animals reading the thing. Near one of the trees Reynaerd is reading the proclamation.

The whole proclamation becomes clearly visible.

### *PROCLAMATION*

‘Herewith I, King Donkey, proclaim that  
as of today there shall exist liberty,  
equality and fraternity for all animals.’

Reynaerd the fox turns his head towards the audience, gives a wink, and swiftly tears down the proclamation.

Strange couples of animals are standing in line, dressed up in festive attires. Presently a jodocus appears who starts marrying the couples.

Meanwhile Reynaerd has shown the proclamation to the hens. The hens are overjoyed about the promised freedom and flock to the entrance of the cage. Obliging, Reynaerd opens the cage. He catches the first chicken coming out of the cage and wrings her neck.

[p.2]

Reynaerd is disguised as a midwife and lifts the knocker and lets it fall several times on a door. The door opens and Reynaerd is heartily welcomed by the Goose-Ostrich couple. He is let into a room; in a corner is a large basket, lined like a cradle. Reynaerd takes out an egg, the parents are looking on excitedly as Reynaerd breaks the egg. To the great surprise of the goose the egg brings forth a . . . hedgehog. From the second egg emerges a hare, from the third a frog and then Reynaerd produces a large egg from which emerges a young rhino. The ostrich blushes as she sees this last product. This is the limit for the goose; he gets terribly excited, pulls a frame with the proclamation in it from the wall and smashes it to smithereens. Furiously, he runs out.

A barn is seen with several counters in it. Behind every counter is a rhino who collects the products that the animals must pay for taxes. The goose enters the barn, he is very annoyed. He passes several counters and starts to complain to Jodocus. Jodocus soon silences him by showing him several tax assessments that the goose hasn't paid yet.

In a large room, Jodocus and his blood relatives are having a banquet. There is a festive mood. Reynaerd the fox is dressed up as a waiter and is serving the company [crossed out 'assisted by his wife and children'], Jodocus distributes tax assessments among his relatives for them to collect. On the table next to Jodocus is a list with the names of several animals who are in arrears. With a swift movement of his napkin Reynaerd the fox manages to whisk it away. He disappears unnoticed to warn the animals on the list.

[written in pen: 'Reinaert shows list'. The Dutch original has 'zijn' (to be), this should probably be 'laat zien' (to show)]

Leaning over a hedge, two neighbours discuss Jodocus' plans. A third one joins them. The three of them run to their neighbours and little by little a procession is formed. In front are intimidating bears, followed by leopards, elephants, snakes, etc. etc.

The banqueting hall is seen again were the jodocusses are yelling for wine – but where is Reynaerd??

Now the procession of animals is seen again, it has grown in the meantime, and the sound of the onrushing animals becomes more and more intimidating.

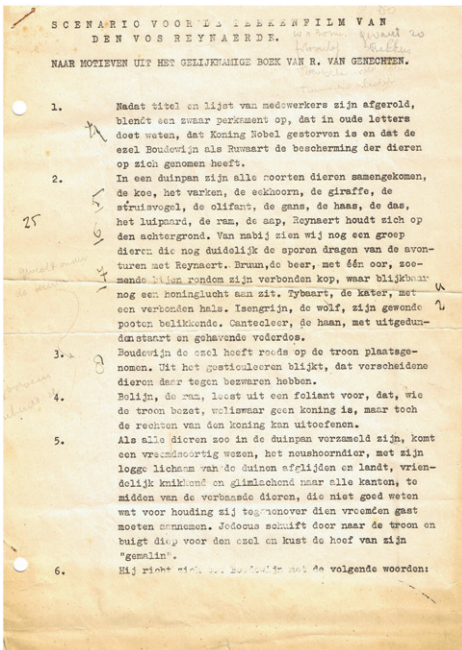


FIGURE 35 First page of version 2 of the screenplay (copy of André Holla). From the author's collection.

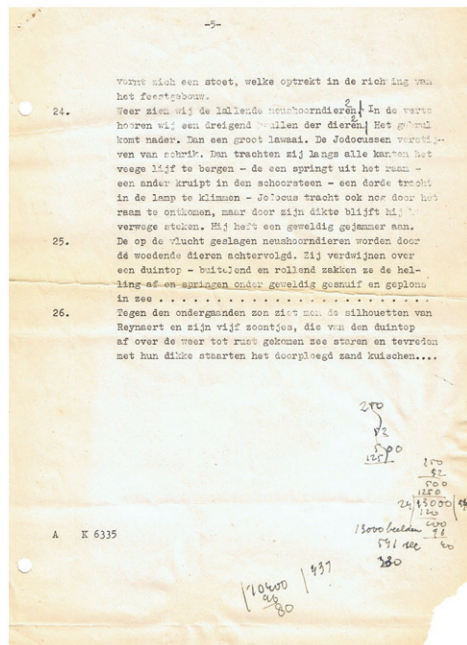


FIGURE 36 Last page of version 2 of the screenplay with a calculation of the number of images and seconds (copy of André Holla).

The mood in the banqueting hall is getting better and better. The cries for Reynaerd are getting ever louder. Softly the door is opened and Reynaerd comes in. Behind him the animals are pushing forward. Seeing them, Jodocus and his family grow rigid with fear. They are trying to save themselves in all directions. One is jumping from the window, another is going up through the chimney, a third one is trying to climb the chandelier. Jodocus himself tries to get out through the window, but because he is so fat he gets stuck halfway through. He starts to whine pitifully. The fleeing jodocusses are pursued by the masses.

The jodocusses appear as black silhouettes against the sky on the edge of the dunes. They are driven into the sea by the surging crowd.

***Version 2 (in author's collection)***

[5 pp., typewritten. The version used here is the one originating from Holla, because of the notes added in writing.]

[p.1]

'SCREENPLAY FOR THE ANIMATION FILM OF VAN DEN VOS REYNAERDE. BASED ON MOTIVES IN THE BOOK OF R. VAN GENECHTEN WITH THE SAME NAME.

[in pencil between title and text, almost illegible:

Dfl. 80

10 × 30 m. (??) Gevaert 20

photo leave Rekkers

pick up money from Twentsche

Teunissen key.<sup>38]</sup>

1. [scene one is renumbered into scene 4 in pen] After the title and the list of credits of the collaborators, a heavy parchment unrolls, that tells in old letters that King Nobel has died and that the donkey Boudewijn has assumed the protection of the animals.
2. [in pen the numbers 5, 6, and 7 are written next to scene 2] In a hollow in the dunes have gathered all the animals: the cow, the pig, the squirrel, the giraffe, the ostrich, the elephant, the goose, the hare, the badger, the leopard, the ram and the monkey. Reynaert keeps himself at a distance. In close-up we see a group of animals that still wear traces of their adventures with Reynaert, Bruun, the bear, with only one ear, buzzing bees round his bandaged head, where apparently is still some honey to be found. Tybaart, the cat, with a bandaged neck. Isengrijn, the wolf, licking his wounded paws, Cantecler, the cock with his thinned tail and battered feathers.
3. [in pen the number 8 is written next to scene 3] Boudewijn the donkey has already seated himself on the throne. From the gestures of the animals can be read that several animals object to this.
4. Belijn, the ram, reads aloud from a folio that, whoever seats himself on the throne is not a king but he can exert all royal powers.
5. When all animals are gathered in the hollow in the dunes, a strange looking creature, the nose-animal (rhino), comes gliding down the dunes with his pompous body. He stops smiling to all, in the midst of the astonished other



animals, who don't know what attitude to take towards the strange guest. Jodocus moves towards the throne, bows deep for the donkey and kisses the hoof of its 'queen'.

6. Jodocus addresses Boudewijn with the following words: 'Sire, I have heard of the situation in your empire. I have travelled a lot and my family and I have gathered a lot of wisdom. Let me be your counsellor and let me bring civilisation to these parts'.
7. General mumbling among the animals. There are ayes and nays. Donkey and his 'queen' are in favour.
8. Jodocus continues: 'In civilized countries, there is no distinction among the races. All animals are equal and must intermarry between them. It is a heathen custom that a dog should marry a dog and a bull a cow, Furthermore, every civilized country has a good tax system. Who could better serve you as tax collector than I, Jodocus, and my relatives? We have a lot of experience in the financial field'.
9. Next scene:

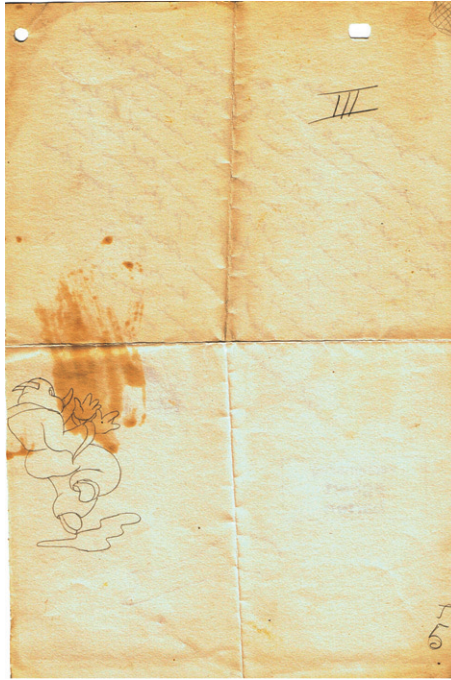
Proclamation

With this I, Ruwaart Boudewijn, proclaim that in my empire shall exist Freedom, Equality and Fraternity. Furthermore, all animals shall pay taxes. My unselfish servant Jodocus shall be charged with the collection.

10. Dissolve to a forest where the proclamation is nailed to several trees. Here and there are groups of animals reading it.
11. Near one of the trees, Reynaert reads it, turns his head towards the audience, gives a wink, and swiftly tears down the proclamation.
12. An elated party around the freedom tree with the Jacobin cap in top. Strange couples of animals have been formed. Jodocus watches the party with delight. Other animals look at it in disgust.
13. Meanwhile, Reynaert shows the proclamation to a flock of chickens that are still locked up in a cage. With a lot of airs and graces he explains that he wants to invite them to the party but when the first hen, loudly cackling, leaves the cage, Reynaert wrings its neck.

[p.3]

14. A tour of the households of the strange couples follows, which we see engaged in several activities.
15. Disguised as a doctor, Reinaert knocks on the door and is welcomed heartily by the goose–ostrich couple. Reynaert enters the house. In the corner of the living room is a large crib. From it, Reynaert takes an egg and cracks it open. From the first egg emerges an ostrich-geese. Both parents are happy, though a bit confused by the strange proportions. From the second egg emerges an ostrich-hare. The ostrich is embarrassed, his long neck turns red. The goose controls himself but it is clear that he has a difficult moment. From the third egg emerges an ostrich-frog. The neck of the ostrich turns more red still, the goose nearly chokes. The ostrich tries to prevent Reynaert from opening the fourth egg but is too late: an ostrich-rhino crawls out of it. Now the goose



**FIGURE 37** Draft of a Jodocus on a half animation film sheet (see the holes at the top of the sheet allowing the paper to stay in place). This is the *only* production drawing from the film that has been recovered until now. This is remarkable for a film for which thousands of drawings, cells and backgrounds were made. From the author's collection.

can't stand it anymore, he is in a terrible fit and beats on his chest. The neck of the ostrich has turned deep red, she points out the proclamation that is hanging in a frame on the wall. The goose flies to it, tears it to pieces and runs out of the house.

16. One sees a shed. In it are several counters; behind every counter is a rhino. The rhinos collect the products that the animals must pay for taxes. A squirrel with a large basket of nuts, a chicken with eggs. From the left they enter loaded with goods, they leave to the right empty-handed.
17. A goose looks dejected, he has nothing on him. When it is his turn, he explains to the jodocus behind the counter that he has no fruit and therefore cannot pay the taxes. The jodocus is furious and orders the goose to pay the amount within 24 hours. Otherwise his furniture will be sold. The goose is desperate.
18. An hourglass is seen, the last grains of sand fall down.

[p.4]

19. In the high reeds alongside a ditch stands the little house of the goose. It looks very poor, no curtains before the windows, the door paintless, etc. We hear the sound of clattering pots and pans. A small shadow becomes visible, the dark shadow becomes bigger all the time, until it covers the whole house. A jodocus comes strolling by, enters the house. There is silence for a moment, then

- a fearsome noise is heard, and the goose flies out of the house. He looks flabbergasted. Jodocus closes the door and nails an announcement of public sale onto the house,
20. The goose has pulled himself together and prepares to leave. His face looks very sad. One of the jodocusses pats him on the back and tells him that with this the case is not yet closed. They demand his jacket and his shirt. In a short time, they completely undress him. The goose stands there, blushing, while it gradually dawns on him what had happened. He gets very excited and becomes very angry, to the amusement of the jodocusses.
  21. [*This whole scene is crossed out in pen and instead are the words: angry goose*] The actions of the tax collectors and the high taxes provoke resistance under the animals. We see Reynaert talking to groups of animals while he rouses the dissatisfied.
  22. [*Here is a note in pen in the margin: see other scene*] The jodocusses have organized a festive dinner. Jodocus has got the animals in his power in such a way that he has a bear carry him to the party while Rosseel the squirrel, sits on his neck and catches lice which he eats, out of sheer hunger. At the party are animals like Bruun the bear, Grimbert the badger, and Tybaert the cat, all working as waiters serving the jodocusses who behave impertinently. The jodocusses drink a lot of wine and become noisier all the time.
  23. While the jodocusses partake, the resistance grows. We see Reynaert incite the animals to resist themselves. Headed by Isengrijn, the wolf, a procession is formed, which walks in the direction of the building where the party is going on.
  24. We see the drunken rhino-animals. [*Here '2' is written. The next sentence has a note saying '2' next to 'animals'. Were the animators planning to draw only two jodocusses in this scene?*] In the distance, we hear the menacing roar of the animals. The roaring comes nearer. Then a great noise. The jodocusses are terrified. Then they try to save themselves by running in all directions, one jumps out of the window, another hides in the chimney, a third tries to climb into a lamp; Jodocus tries to flee through the window but he gets stuck because he has become too fat, his lamentation is profound.
  25. The rhino-animals are chased by the rabid animals. They disappear over the top of the dunes: rolling and tumbling they slide down the slope and with an enormous splash, they jump into the sea . . .
  26. Against the setting sun one sees the silhouettes of Reynaert and his five sons, that stare from the top in the dunes at the sea which has come to rest once more while they sweep the sand with their bushy tails . . .

A K 6335'

[beneath scene 26 are a few calculations, including the note: '13000 images 541 sec']

### *Version 2 in NIOD Amsterdam (DVK, Archive 102, File 121 Aa)*

This version 2 is the same as the one in the author's collection, but it is completely clean, there are no production notes, which is logical as this screenplay was kept as 'attachment 388/2' (which is the only note on the screenplay, written in

pencil) together with a copy of a letter to Egb. van Putten/Nederland Film dated 22 September 1941, which therefore remained at the offices of DVK.

The complete text of the letter:

*[stationery of DVK, the letter itself is a carbon copy]*

No.	Dept.	Subject	Tp.	Coll.	In answer to letter of
388/2	PG	Animation film van den Vos Reynaerde	Vl.	[scribbled]	4 Sept. 1941 No. 59

The Hague, 22 September 1941

PRINSESSEGRACHT 21

TELEPHONE 180130

TO MR Egb. VAN PUTTEN

Manager 'Nederland-Film',

Smidswater 1,

THE HAGUE.

Herewith I confirm that I have commissioned the making of an animation film in colour after the themes of the book 'Van den Vos Reynaerde' by R. van Genechten, according to the *attached screenplay* and on the following conditions:

the length of the film shall be at least 250 m;

delivery will be not later than six months from today;

the price will be Dfl. 15,000 payable in six instalments; the first instalment as soon as possible after confirmation of the commission and the last instalment on delivery. (All this may be discussed in more detail with the accountancy department of my Ministry);

Of the gross receipts of copyrights in the Netherlands 60 percent is payable to the National Treasury, of the gross receipts in Germany this will be 50 per cent and in other countries 30 per cent. With the proviso, however, that no more than Dfl. 15,000 will be repaid to the National Treasury; any surplus will be payable to Nederland-film.

Any small changes in the screenplay must be discussed with Mr. H. Plaizier of the department of General Propaganda (Algemeene Propaganda) of my Ministry, who must be continually kept

[p.2]

abreast of all developments regarding the production of the film and the progress that is being made.

On behalf of the Secretary-General,

The head of the General Propaganda Department,

(N. Oosterbaan).

Encl: 1 copy of the screenplay 'Van den Vos Reynaerde'.



*Differences between screenplay versions 1 and 2.*

1. A more active role for Jodocus (see scene 8).
2. A more screenplay-like subdivision in the scenes to be animated (version 1 is still descriptive, version 2 anticipates the scenes to be animated). Therefore, version 2 is probably a later version, which can also be deduced from the fact that DVK based its commission for the film on this version.
3. More action, less description.
4. The 'colour scheme' from version 1 is not used in version 2, but it was ultimately used in the film itself.
5. The hatching of the ostrich eggs has a more racist tone and it is visualized differently – maybe to make it more interesting for the audience?
6. See scene 12, version 2: emphasis on the perversity of the French Revolution (Jacobin cap).
7. In the birth scene in version 1 none of the offspring even remotely looks like a goose, in version 2 one of them does, which makes what comes next all the more dramatic.
8. Scene with the goose at the counters with the Jodocusses actually has a more dramatic impact in version 1.
9. Scene 19 (eviction of the goose, a scene strongly reminiscent of a similar scene in Veit Harlan's film *Jud Süß*, 1940) is absent in version 2.
10. At the banquet in version 1 Reynaert is the waiter, in version 2 the other animals.
11. The ending of version 2 is also different, it has a more positive stance toward the National-Socialist folk hero Reynaert, but it is considerably more racist: the sand is purged of the last recollections of the jodocusses . . .

*Differences between the screenplay versions and the film*

1. In various instances (e.g. version 2, scenes 4, 6, 19 and 24) the screenplay assumes that the film would have direct sound, while the soundtrack of the film has only an introductory commentary, music and sound effects created by music.
2. In the actual film a major part of the actions of scenes 1–8 of version 2 are replaced by a narrator who tells the beginning of the story, while the audience sees stills of the characters. Animation starts only when Reynaert winks at the audience, followed by the colour scheme (see Appendix 2 for the text of the narration).
3. In the film, the jodocusses grow wings after they have drowned and rise up out of the sea; apparently, the authors considered the endings of both of the screenplays too cruel and sent the rhinos to heaven.
4. The purging of the sand by Reynaert after the jodocusses have been driven into the sea – contrary to the screenplay this is not done by all the foxes in the actual film – will probably not have been picked up by the audience as it is animated with backlighting. But as I have argued in the text: this ending could have been meant differently – the foxes remain vigilant.

## Appendix 2

Van den vos Reynaerde (1943); *credits, film commentary and the film in frame enlargements (film in collection Eye Film, Filmmuseum, Amsterdam).*

[credit titles:]

Van den vos Reynaerde  
being an old fable rejuvenated  
after a book by  
Robert van Genechten.

### *Image and animation*

Hill Beekman	[in large font]	
André Holla	[in smaller font]	
Jan Bouman Olga Tijssen and many others	[in even smaller font, on one line]	
Camera and synchronisation		
Josef Misik	[sic] [same font as Beekman]	
Music		
Leo Ruygrok	[ibid.]	
	a	
	NEDERLAND	[Italic font in the form of NL]
Agfa Color	Film	Klangfilm
film	from	sound system
	Egbert van Putten	[same font as Beekman]
	Geyer colour copy	

[the narration starts with a black screen, followed by different stills. Firstly: the grave of King Nobel]

‘A long, long time ago, when the animals still ruled the world like the humans do now, one ill-fated day old King Nobel died, the brave lion, who had always protected the animals so well against the cunning tricks of Reinaert the fox.

[black, then a still of different wounded animals]

“What shall we do now? Who will defend us in the future?” wailed the animals and lamented loudly Bruin the bear and Tybaart the cat and Cantecler the rooster, and they told everyone who would listen how they had been mistreated by Reinaert, although they wisely kept silent about how their own gluttony and vanity had caused them to become ensnared in master Reinaert’s trap.

[black, then a still of the donkey on the throne]

And then came Boudewijn the donkey and he sat ostentatiously on the throne and brayed loudly for all to hear that he – and only he – was in power from now on.

[black, then a still of the ram reading an old book]

And Belijn the ram proved from old folios that it should be this way and that there was no room for discussion and that all animals should obey Boudewijn the donkey,

because he was wearing the royal purple and was seated on the throne. But while King Nobel had brought order and peace and quiet from his throne, Boudewijn with his braying only brought discord and division to the kingdom of the animals and disaster after disaster.

*[black, then a still of Jodocus]*

It became so bad that even Jodocus, the rhinoceros animal, heard of it. Ponderously waddling, he came to the fair kingdom of the late King Nobel in the low countries by the sea from the far East, which was overcrowded with his relatives bothering each other every day, to take his chances. All the things he told the vain donkey Boudewijn! About laws and rights and riches, and freedom for all and everyone.

*[black, then a still of a maypole with a Jacobin cap]*

Why would the animals fight each other anyway? Liberty, equality and fraternity, this would be the motto of the animal kingdom from now on. And they should intermarry. No longer just the bull to the cow or the stallion to the mare. All races should be mixed.

*[black, then a still of different animals]*

And everybody was to be free to do whatever he wanted. A new ideal state would be established, so it was decreed by Jodocus and thus he established his power in the kingdom of the animals by the sea, where the donkey Boudewijn reigned from the throne and Jodocus the rhinoceros animal over the treasury.

*[black, then a still of Reinaert]*

And in the whole of the animal kingdom there was only one animal smarter than Jodocus and that animal was the fox Reynaerde, whom we will presently see in his battle against Jodocus.'

*[before the image fades to black, Reinaert winks; the first movement in the film. Followed by the 'colour scheme' of version 1 of the screenplay. The rest of the film no longer uses a narrator's voice: only music and sound effects created by music.]*



FIGURE 38



FIGURE 39



FIGURE 40



FIGURE 41



FIGURE 42



FIGURE 43 First image: the grave of King Nobel.



FIGURE 44 The wounded animals.



FIGURE 45 The donkey on the throne.





FIGURE 46 The ram and the folio.

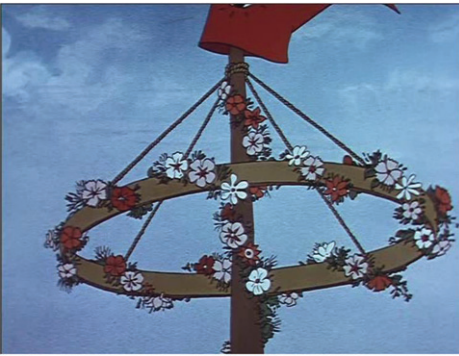


FIGURE 48 The Jacobin cap and the maypole.



FIGURE 50 Reynaert winks at the audience.



FIGURE 47 Introduction of the rhino Jodocus.



FIGURE 49 Animals who seem to like each other.



FIGURE 51 The colour scheme.



FIGURE 52 Jodocus sees an opportunity.



FIGURE 53 Underneath his caftan, Jodocus is wearing nine yellow squares resembling a Star of David. These are only seen for a fraction of a second.



FIGURE 54 Reynaert in the forest.



FIGURE 55 The animals are reading the proclamation.



FIGURE 56 Reynaert with the proclamation of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

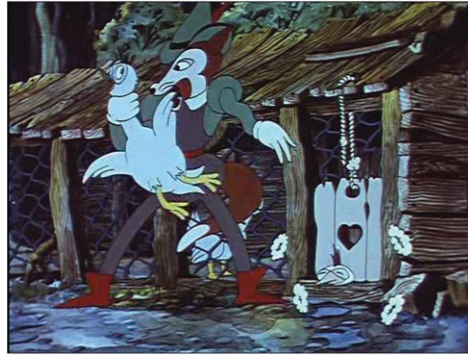


FIGURE 57 The animals are dancing around the maypole.





**FIGURE 58** The animals are being wed by Jodocus.



**FIGURE 59** Reynaert uses the proclamation to catch a hen.



**FIGURE 60** Reynaert knocks on the goose-ostrich family's door dressed as a doctor.



**FIGURE 61** 'From the third egg emerges an ostrich-frog ...' (screenplay version 2, scene 15).



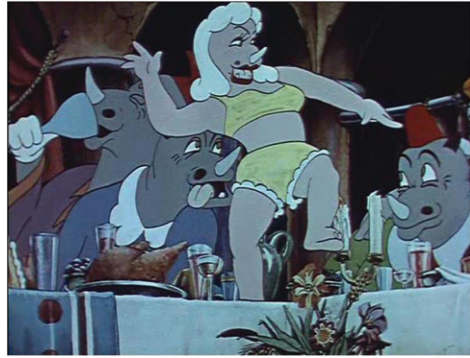
**FIGURE 62** 'The ostrich tries to prevent Reynaert from opening the fourth egg but is too late: an ostrich-rhino crawls out of it ...' (screenplay version 2, scene 15).



**FIGURE 63** The animals take all their produce to the rhino tax collectors.



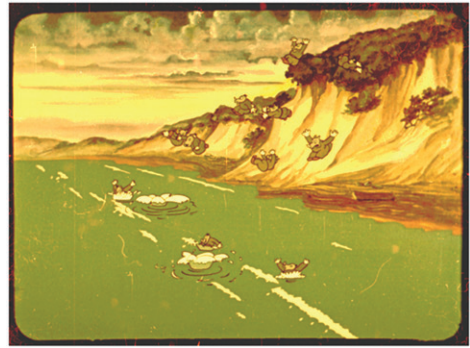
**FIGURE 64** The goose is unable to pay his taxes and is evicted from his house. In this picture, the rhino tax collector has horns on his head and turns green, like the devil.



**FIGURE 65** The banquet of the Jodocusses.



**FIGURE 66** Led by Reynaert, the animals are advancing towards the banquetting hall where the Jodocusses are enjoying themselves.



**FIGURE 67** The Jodocusses are driven into the sea.



**FIGURE 68** The Jodocusses grow wings and fly up to heaven...



**FIGURE 69** Reynaert and his offspring are purging the sand contaminated by the Jodocusses.





FIGURE 70 Closing title.

## Notes

- 1 Earlier versions of the research into the film *Van den vos Reynaerde* were published as: Barten and Gerard Groeneveld, 'Reinaert en het Jodenbeest', in: *De Volkskrant*, 25 May 1991; Barten, 'Amusement en Propaganda in de Residentie Den Haag '41-'44/Animated Films 1941–1944 Entertainment and Propaganda in The Hague', *Catalogue Holland Animation Film Festival*, Utrecht, 1992, 32–40; Barten and Groeneveld, 'Van den vos Reynaerde (1943). Un Récit médiéval transformé en Film d'animation antisémite', *Plateau*, 14(4) (Winter 1993/1994), 10–17; Barten and Groeneveld, 'Van den vos Reynaerde (1943): how a medieval fable became a Dutch anti-Semitic animation film', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 14(2) (1994), 199–214; Barten and Mette Peters, 'Een Vos als Volksheld. 'Kultuur'-animatie bij Nederland Film in Den Haag', chapter 3, in: *Meestal in het Verborgene. Animatiefilm in Nederland 1940–1945* (Abcoude, 2000), 32–42.
- 2 Information mostly extracted from *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging* (Tielt, 1998), part G–Q, 1251–1253.
- 3 Robert van Genechten, *Van den vos Reynaerde. Ruwaard Boudewijn en Jodocus* (Amsterdam, 1941), 7.
- 4 For more information on De Amsterdamsche Keurkamer, see Gerard Groeneveld, *Nieuwe Boeken voor den Nieuwen Tijd* (The Hague, 1992) (about Robert van Genechten and *Van den vos Reynaerde*, 92–94) and his book *Zwaard van de Geest. Het bruine boek in Nederland* (Nijmegen, 2001) (about RvG and *Vdvr*, for instance on pp. 90 and 188–189).
- 5 Wim Gielen, 'Distels ... Een vossenstreek na Van Genechten', in: *Tiecelijn*, 11 (1998) 1, 9–23 (about van Ditmar on p. 12–13).
- 6 Gielen, 1998, 15.
- 7 For more information on Van Putten, see Barten, 'In Memoriam Egbert van Putten (1899–1996)', in: *GBG-Nieuws*, 38 (fall 1996), 37–38.
- 8 Copy of a letter from DVK to Van Putten, 22 September 1941. File 121Aa, DVK archive, NIOD (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation) Amsterdam. See also Appendix 1.
- 9 Contract between DVK and Van Putten, 09 July 1942. File 36c, DVK archive, NIOD Amsterdam.

- 10 Financial Report Production Nederland Film, 31 December 1942. File 36c, DVK archive, NIOD Amsterdam.
- 11 'Filmmaatschappij De Nederland Film. Werk in nationalen zin', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 13 February 1942; 'Nederlandsche componisten werken voor Nederland Film', in: *Het Vaderland*, 22 June 1942. Both clippings are in the Geoffrey Donaldson collection, Eye Film Institute (Nederlands Filmmuseum), Amsterdam.
- 12 Marten Toonder (editor), *Cursus Tekentfilm*, Amsterdam, undated [1945–46], B-50/51. Later on Toonder also commented on it, for instance in his autobiography and in various interviews: 'it was an anti-Jewish film, with a gruesome, incomprehensible little storyline'. *Het Parool*, 4 May 1991. Eight years earlier he had been more detailed: 'they wanted to make an anti-Semitic film, with a villainous rhino in the lead role: Van de vos Reynaerde'. Interview in *Stripprofiel* (September 1983), 13–16 (quote on p. 15).
- 13 Interview with J.W.I. du Buy, Hillegom, 27 April 1991.
- 14 Interview with Jenny Dalenoord, The Hague, 10 August 1993. In a letter to the author dated 16 February 1995, she also filled in some of the details of the film (including the identification of a few photos).
- 15 See for the poster and more information on the Dutch version of *Der Ewige Jude*, Paul van Yperen, 'Het beruchtste Nederlandse filmaffiche' and Egbert Barten, 'De eeuwige discussie over Nazi-films', in: *Skrien* (November 2005), 14–17.
- 16 This is based on the letter, which is copied in full in Appendix 1. Although this in itself is not proof that Plaizier wrote the screenplay, it does prove that he was in close contact with the group of writers, which probably included the animators. From the report 'Overzicht der Werkzaamheden door het Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten in het tweede halfjaar 1941 verricht' (file 1d, item 354.36, DVK archive, NIOD Amsterdam) it can be deduced that the department itself was closely involved in the realization of the screenplay.
- 17 Interview with Th. E. van Putten, Steep/GB, 4 July 1993.
- 18 'Nieuws voor jonge teekenaars. De tekenfilm heeft begaafde krachten nodig', *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant*, 11 April 1942; 'Uitslag teekenwedstrijd', in: *Haarlemsch Dagblad*, 30 April 1942.
- 19 Minutes of the Propaganda Council, 27 April 1943. File 119c, DVK archive, NIOD, Amsterdam.
- 20 Interview with Th.E. van Putten, Steep/GB, 4 July 1993.
- 21 Interview with A.C.J. Holla, Nijmegen, 20 July 1993.
- 22 Data extracted from the Van Genechten case file, Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging, National Archives, The Hague. On the authority of Van Putten, it was stated in some of the earlier articles on the film that Van Genechten *did* attend the preview.
- 23 Quoted by Groeneveld, 1992, 94.
- 24 Letter by Putten to De Ranitz (= Goedewaagen's successor at DVK), 24 October 1943. File 23n, DVK archive, NIOD, Amsterdam.
- 25 See for the 'usual' role of the fox in animated films of the period for instance Hans Held's film *Der Störenfried* (Bavaria Filmkunst, Germany, 1939–1940) and Hans Fischerkoesen's *Das Dumme Gänlein* (Fischerkoesen Film, Germany/The Netherlands, 1944). Information about these films can be found in Barten/Peters, 2000, 42–53 and 92. Read Willy Feliars, 'Reintje verwekt onrust' about the

- children's book that Hans Held published after his own film *Der Störenfried* shortly after the war – in which the fox is curiously called Reintje – in: *Tiecelijn*, 18 (2005) 1, 2–18.
- 26 The term 'Great Propaganda Action' is extracted from Dorothea Hollstein, *Jud Süß' und die Deutschen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), 62–117.
- 27 Barten, 'Elburg is toch ook overzee 1942 Wie gaat Mee ...?', in: *Flashback* (Winter 1993/1994), 16–20.
- 28 Letter by Van Putten to DVK, 12 October 1943. File 36c, DVK archive, NIOD, Amsterdam. See for more information on the two German studios and the films they made in the Netherlands Barten/Peters, 2000, 42–53.
- 29 Interview with Van Putten, Steep/GB, 4 July 1993.
- 30 Data extracted from the case file Th.E. van Putten, Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging, National Archives, The Hague.
- 31 Including the Nederland Film documentary film makers Reinier Meijer and Rudi Hornecker. Several interviews with Meijer, Lelystad, 1988–2003. For his contacts with Hornecker, see Barten, '... Das waren eben noch Zeiten! 'Zeiten von Kultur ... und noch etwas!' Hoe Rudi Hornecker (1901–1961) de oorlog doorkwam', in: *Tijdschrift voor Media-geschiedenis*, 2006 (1), 25–68 (about their contact after the war, p. 59).
- 32 '... but I insist that you make it *clear* somehow that the film was only made to save the 40 Philips animators from deportation to Germany! And that was the only reason 'Nederland Film' was established!!' Letter by Van Putten to the author, 18 April 1991. Van Putten calls them 'Philips animators' because the Pal Studio in Eindhoven mainly produced films for this light bulb factory. The term 'Philips animators' is also remarkable because the Pal Studio in Eindhoven mainly made puppet films. For more information on this studio, see Ole Schepp/Fred Kamphuis, *George Pal in Holland 1934–1939* (The Hague, 1983).
- 33 Jan van Hillo, *Herinnering aan de jubileumfilm Juliana Koningin der Nederlanden 1948–1973. Achter de schermen van de NOS-documentaire* (Leiden, 1973).
- 34 Notes and tape recording of an undated telephone conversation between Du Buy and Beekman. Collection Du Buy, copies in the author's collection. About which programme by Jan van Hillo they are talking is unclear because notes are undated. The Dutch broadcasting archive Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid has two recordings of TV programmes of Van Hillo mentioning the Holocaust; the NCRV programme *Close-Up*, broadcasted on 12 November 1966 (about Corrie ten Boom, concentration camps and the persecution of the Jews) and the NOS programme *Wij leven nog ...!* from 5 May 1970 (about the victims of WWII, the persecution of Jews and the resistance). Web site Beeld en Geluid archives, Hilversum. In an attachment to a letter from Du Buy to Gerard Groeneveld of 4 June 1991 he mentions 'a tape recording of twenty years ago' which implies that his action against Van Hillo was provoked by the programme on Liberation Day (5 May), 1970. Copy of the letter in the collection of the author.
- 35 Interview with J.W.I. du Buy, Hillegom, 27 April 1991, included in Barten/Groeneveld, 1991.
- 36 Wilfred Simons, 'Joop du Buy: 'Ik ben geen antisemiet'. Deel propagandafilm opgedoken', in: *Haarlems Dagblad*, 15 June 1991. The same interview was published in *Leids Dagblad* under the title 'Hillegommer weigerde medewerking aan antisemitische tekenfilm', 6 June 1991. See also Joop du Buy, 'Reynaert',

- De Volkskrant*, 28 May 1991 (letter to the editor, with reference to Barten/Groeneveld, 1991).
- 37 Letter by Robert van Genechten to the clerk of the Special Criminal Court in The Hague, 8 December 1945, quoted in full in Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, *Processen No 2 Van Genechten*, Amsterdam, undated (quote on p. 80; a facsimile of the letter is reproduced on the illustration pages in the back of the book).
- 38 These notes should probably be considered as a kind of ‘shopping list’ that Holla wrote down. You could interpret it this way: he went out to buy 10 × 30 metres of Gevaert 20 film at a photo shop, he went to the Twentsche Bank to withdraw money (maybe 80 Dutch guilders; Dfl.) and he shouldn’t forget to pick up (or drop off) the key at Teunissen’s. As we have already seen Jan Teunissen was the principal occupant of the house at Lange Voorhout 62, behind which *Van den vos Reynaerde* was made in his coach house. So Teunissen was actually the landlord of the studio. For more information on Teunissen, see Barten, ‘Van gevierd Avant-Gardist tot Paria. Leven en Werk van Jan Teunissen, 1898–1975, in: *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 3 (Amsterdam, 1991), 73–104.

(Translated by Fransien Kroon)

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