

**Swimming Against the Tide:  
History of Dutch Propaganda Films about Indonesia and the Revolutionary  
Role of Joris Ivens**

**Submitted To**

*Prof. Dr. M.L.J.C. Schrover*

**Submitted By**

*Jafrin Rezwana*

S1574183

Leiden University

jafrinrezwana@yahoo.com

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Universiteit Leiden

## Table of Contents

<b>1.0.</b>	<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	4
	1.1 Research Question	
	1.2 Theoretical framework	
	1.3 Historiography	
	1.4 Material and method	
	1.5 Structure	
<b>2.0.</b>	<b>Chapter Two: Decolonisation of Indonesia</b>	15
	2.1. Coming of the Dutch	
	2.2. Growth of nationalist movements in Indonesia	
	2.3. The Second World War and the Japanese occupation	
	2.4. Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949)	
	2.5 Conclusion	
<b>3.0.</b>	<b>Chapter Three: Dutch Propaganda Films</b>	23
	3.1. Early phase of Dutch documentary films	
	3.2. Film history from 1930 to 1945	
	3.3. Propaganda films during 1945- 1949	
	3.4 Conclusion	
<b>4.0.</b>	<b>Chapter Four: The First Anti-colonial film and the Role of Joris Ivens</b>	36
	4.1. Early life of Joris Ivens	
	4.2. Formation of his radical ideologies	
	4.3. Before making <i>Indonesia Calling!</i>	
	4.4. His work in the USA and relationship with the government	
	4.5. Making of <i>Indonesia Calling!</i>	
	4.6 Content of the Film	
	4.7 Conclusion	
<b>5.0.</b>	<b>Chapter Five: The Aftermath of <i>Indonesia Calling!</i></b>	53
	5.1. Reaction of the colonial government	
	5.2. His relation with the Netherlands	
	5.3 Conclusion	
<b>6.0.</b>	<b>Chapter Six: Conclusion</b>	62
<b>7.0.</b>	<b>Bibliography</b>	68

## Chapter One

### 1.0 Introduction

The Dutch colonial government used film as propaganda to establish and showcase their colonial agenda while recording footage in the Dutch East Indies (current Indonesia) for almost half a century, especially during the Era of Revolution (1945-49).<sup>1</sup> These propaganda films, most of which were shot by white Dutchmen, served two major purposes. Firstly, targeting domestic audiences (in the earlier period) they were a source of information about Dutch East Indies for Dutch citizens and researchers. They created a positive impression about the colony, to inspire missionaries, and to attract entrepreneurs to invest money in Dutch East Indies.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, aiming both at national and international audiences (during the Era of Revolution and the decolonisation period) they helped justify Dutch presence in Indonesia presenting the Dutch as sympathetic and useful friends in war-torn conditions. An analysis of this material demonstrates how Dutch authorities used films as a tool for colonial justification.

Interestingly, not everyone agreed with the ideology of the Dutch colonial government. Joris Ivens (1898-1989) was one of the most famous and controversial Dutch film-makers in the Netherlands, who dared to swim against the tide. A man with versatile talent and remarkable courage, Ivens challenged the trends in Dutch propaganda films with his most renowned work *Indonesia Calling!* (released in 1946). When he made this film, he was still in the service of Dutch East Indies government at that time. His resigning telegram on 21 November 1945 to the government of Batavia was full of powerful words protesting his country's ongoing imperialism and his solidarity with the Indonesian Republic.<sup>3</sup> From then on, his relationship with his homeland became problematic with significant ups and downs.

### 1.1 Research Question

This study begins with an overview of the development and production of Dutch propaganda films during the Indonesia War of Independence (1945-49) and then zooms in on the role of Joris Ivens in this context. It comprises of two major questions:

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<sup>1</sup> M. Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (Basingstoke 2001 3<sup>rd</sup> ed) 428.

<sup>2</sup> To know more about the intentions of films for those days, see: V. Monnikendam, *Dutch Indies film project: Synopsis for a documentary* (Hilversum 1993).

<sup>3</sup> H. Schoots, & David Colmer, *Living dangerously: A biography of Joris Ivens* (Amsterdam 2000) 201.

1. Why did Joris Ivens make his anti-colonial film?
  - A. What were the motives of Joris Ivens for making this film and how did he challenge Dutch colonial propaganda?
  - B. What was the aftermath of *Indonesia Calling!* How did it affect his relationship with his fatherland?
2. Who were the other filmmakers of that period who worked for Dutch colonial propaganda? What was the motive of Dutch government for commissioning those films?

The first question inquires the objects of Joris Ivens in making the first anti-colonial film taking a stand against Dutch colonial propaganda. The question focuses on the aftermath of the film and the controversies it created between him and the Netherlands. The second question is asked to understand the difference between his work and works of other filmmakers of the same period. By learning the motives of the Dutch government in commissioning propaganda films and the purpose of Joris Ivens in making the anti-colonial propaganda film can help us perceive the dichotomy between colonial and anti-colonial propaganda in film and media. The two questions altogether give the complete picture of the history of Dutch colonial propaganda films during the Indonesian War of Revolution.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework

Using the word ‘propaganda’ requires some explanation. As reported by Richard Taylor, ‘Propaganda is the attempt to influence the public opinions of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values.’ Propaganda is concerned principally with ideas and values from one person, or group of individuals, to another.<sup>4</sup> ‘Propagation’ is the action, ‘propaganda’ is the activity.<sup>5</sup> One crucial phenomenon of propaganda is that the necessity of propaganda arises only when there is the presence of an enemy. Whereas, one’s ‘propaganda’ is often entitled to ‘information’ or ‘publicity’. Sometimes it is hard to identify the distinction between propaganda and ‘information’ or ‘publicity’. However, the defamatory connotation of propaganda is not even a twentieth-century development. Reference of its early usage is found in *A Dictionary of Science, Literature and Art*. It says, ‘Derived from this celebrated society, the name *propaganda* is applied in modern political language as a term of reproach to secret

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<sup>4</sup> R. Taylor, *Film propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany*. (London [etc.]: New York 1979) 28.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 19.

association for the spread of opinions and principles which are viewed by most governments with horror and aversion.’<sup>6</sup> Among all other forms of media, films are the strongest weapon.

The use of propaganda was not an invention by the Dutch colonial government. Propaganda is a tool to confuse the enemy, circulate deceitful information to mislead them and keep up the spirit of the masses and earn support. To do so, it must manipulate facts and present an image of specific places or events. Philip Knightley has talked about the importance of propaganda in a war:

On the war front, information- propaganda is, perhaps, a better description- is used to keep the enemy guessing, to sap his will to fight and to mislead him. On the home front, information- news, is a better description- is used to arouse the fighting spirit of the nation, to mobilise public opinion behind the war, to suppress dissent and to steel the people for the sacrifices needed for victory.<sup>7</sup>

Among all mediums of propaganda, films are the most effective. It can reach a wide audience and makes things more plausible. With excellent skills of the camera and dramatic narrations, it can privilege one party and thus make it difficult to have a balanced understanding of conflicts. Documentary films, particularly, make propaganda appear more credible. Documentaries are often believed to show facts. Joris Ivens, initially, believed documentary filmmaker cannot lie or cannot harm the truth as documentaries use information as their source. Later, he had to admit that documentary films are also subjected to a sponsor’s interest and therefore have some limitations in producing objective history.<sup>8</sup> Chris Vos argues that documentaries also have a storyline or plot, ending with a climax, with narrative techniques directly from the film. Here is the scope for distorting history in visual media in the name of dramatising it.

Films as a tool of propaganda have, of course, not only been used in the Netherlands. In Nazi Germany, the government produced many films in agreement with a full-scale propaganda campaign to make people aware of dangers posed by The Jews and rationalise the future measures which they would take as a ‘final solution’ of the Jewish problem. The anti-

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<sup>6</sup> W. Brande, & George W. Cox, *A dictionary of science, literature, & art: Comprising the definitions and derivations of the scientific terms in general use, together with the history and descriptions of the scientific principles of nearly every branch of human knowledge* (London 1842). Cited in Taylor, *Film propaganda*, 31.

<sup>7</sup> *The Independent* on Sunday, 2 September 1990.

<sup>8</sup> K. Bakker, *Joris Ivens and the documentary context* (Amsterdam 1999) 250 - 252.

Jewish protagonist appeared repeatedly in the films produced in the Third Reich.<sup>9</sup> There were also many more Nazi propaganda films, not only about Jews. The leaders of Soviet Russia also recognised the importance of film. For example, Lenin stated that ‘of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important’. In a conversation, with A. V. Lunacharsky in February 1922, he remarked that the production of new films imbued with communist ideas and reflecting Soviet realities should start with newsreel, since, in his opinion, the time had not yet come to produce such films. Censorship is an important element in propaganda films. Therefore, he adds, ‘censorship, of course, will be needed. Counter-revolutionary and immoral films should be barred’.<sup>10</sup> Stalin also described the film as the best instrument for propaganda.<sup>11</sup> It is also easy for the state to control the message which the film is providing with the help of its censorship organs. Both the Nazis and Bolsheviks used propaganda films to justify their authoritarian activities.

Colonial powers such as Britain, France and the Netherlands used propaganda films to legitimise their colonial rule. For example, when we look at British colonial film history, it starts in the early twentieth century. Between 1920 and 1940 the British government commissioned many films on topics like health care, public hygiene, and agricultural training, intending to spread medical and environmental knowledge in their colonies in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. British film makers produced documentaries showing colonial trade, to support the expansionary goal of economic monopoly, capitalist modernity and strengthening ties with the Commonwealth as well as political hegemony with the United States of America. These films intended to show the wealth of the nation and strength of a capitalist, imperialist government.<sup>12</sup> David Harvey has called this as ‘dialectical relation between territorial and capitalist logics of power’.<sup>13</sup> Especially, before and during the Second World War these films became an integral part of British colonial propaganda inside and outside the colonies. These films were influenced by American philanthropic agencies such as Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation.<sup>14</sup> *Unhooking the Hookworm* (1920) and *Malaria* (1925) are two among them.

Wendell P. Holbrook in his article *British Propaganda and the Mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945* shows how the British government used radio and films to earn

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<sup>9</sup> David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933-1945* (Oxford 1983) 238.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/jan/17.htm> (Last visited on 15-04-2016).

<sup>11</sup> L. Trotsky, *Problems of Life* (London 1924) 38.

<sup>12</sup> L. Grieveson, Colin MacCabe & British Film Institute, *Empire and film* (Cultural histories of cinema). (Houndmills 2011) 73.

<sup>13</sup> D. Harvey, *The new imperialism* (Oxford [etc.] 2003) 180.

<sup>14</sup> Grieveson, *Empire and film*, 55.

the support of the local people in the war. In most of the cases, these were colour films and made in local language. The subjects of the films focused on the power and valour in combat of imperial military units, including the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. However, the local people were mainly amazed by the impressive technology of motion picture rather than the content of the films. Most importantly, the people in Accra were fond of the impressive performance of Charlie Chaplin. The Charlie Chaplin show was regularly screened along with the propaganda films. The purpose of it was to make the appeal for support 'sugared with a little amusement'.<sup>15</sup>

Rosaleen Smyth in her article 'The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939-1945' has described British colonial propaganda films about Sub-Saharan Africa. Her findings of the motives for promoting those films were:

- i) Building up better inter-racial understanding;
- ii) Producing propaganda for issues related to health, agriculture and animal husbandry;
- iii) Teaching them the importance of education;
- iv) Giving lessons to an improvement of social conditions;
- v) Explaining the forms of Government and their policies;
- vi) Conducting Missionary work;
- vii) Presenting information on anthropological research;
- viii) Providing an alternative form of entertainment of populations;
- ix) Expanding Empire production, markets, and trade.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of Dutch propaganda films, there was a change of motives for commissioning propaganda films. This study intends to find out those objectives. By considering those motives, this paper explores the Dutch perspectives. In this context, it inquires the motives of Joris Ivens for making the anti-colonial film. Ivens made ethnographic movies such as *The Rain*, *The Bridge* and *The New Earth* before making *Indonesia Calling!* In fact, making ethnographic films about the local people was a standard policy of other colonial powers of the twentieth century. We see the same approach to the French colonial propaganda movies in the case of Algeria. Guy Austin in his article 'Representing the Algerian War in Algerian Cinema:

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<sup>15</sup> W. Holbrook, 'British Propaganda and the Mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945', *The Journal of African History*, 26:4 (1985) 347-361, 356.

<sup>16</sup> Rosaleen Smith, 'The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939-1945', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 8:3 (1988) 285-298, 286.

*Le Vent Des Aures*' said that there is a hole in French film history. Because of extreme censorship, the films are mostly the depiction of Algeria without Algerians. There was not enough representation of the Algerian people rather French soldiers fighting in Algeria.<sup>17</sup>

In general, motive is the answer to the factual question "why?" Alan F. Blum and Peter Mchugh in the article 'The Social Ascription of Motives' have examined the conceptions of motives regarding their sociological process. The social scientists often describe motives as private and personal/internal characteristics which lead the person engaging into various behaviours. However, the authors have described motives as a public method which is based on an observer's rule of relevance for depicting grounds of conduct.<sup>18</sup> It is a sociological procedure for expressing how matters of sociological interests show themselves as persons. Even when describing "hidden" motives, the observer is involved in setting some public criterion which enables others to grasp the action. There is a danger of setting such criterion. In this case, the observer treats the person's concrete speech acts; for example, giving reasons or providing justifications, or describing intentions as an explicit expression of motives. The interpretation may lead to a difference between professed motives and "real motives", and with the actor's degree of awareness of his motives.<sup>19</sup> To speak of motive, we must neither bring the observer's interpretation of the cause of the action based on public rules to theorise it, nor the actor's declaration of why it was done. Therefore, "to locate motive is thus not to 'find' anything but to describe the necessary and analytically prior understandings and conventions which must be employed in order for a member even to invoke motive as a method for making a social environment orderly and sensible."<sup>20</sup>

Understanding the role and motivation of a propagandist in a widespread social movement can be even more critical. Thelma Herman McCormack has suggested considering the external power structure and measuring the degree of active and concealed resistance in the population to those institutional changes advanced by the movement.<sup>21</sup> The role, i.e., the procedures for carrying out specific functions to spread the propaganda, is examined in various ways such as the content and style of the propaganda, the prestige of the propagandist in the movement and the structure of the propaganda activities which reflects the success and failure of the movement. Thelma Herman McCormack has pointed out three phases in the

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<sup>17</sup> G. Austin, 'Representing the Algerian war in Algerian cinema: le vent des aures', *French Studies*, 61:2 (2007) 182-195.

<sup>18</sup> A. Blum, & Peter Mchugh. 'The social ascription of motives'. *American Sociological Review: ASR; Official Journal of the American Sociological Association*, 36:1 (1971) 98-109, 99.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 103

<sup>21</sup> T. McCormack, 'The motivation and role of a propagandist'. *Social Forces*, 30:4 (1952) 388-394, 388.



development of a social movement. Each phase determines the different role of the propagandist. In the first phase, which she has called *ideational*, propaganda is the major activity. The content of *ideational* propaganda is mostly abstract and moralistic. Every participant is a dedicated propagandist here. The next phase is more advanced in popularity, heterogenous in composition and steady in nature. It delegates persons as propagandists who can carry on complex *political* actions to secure popular support. The final stage is an *administrative* one and requires minimum action from its members. Therefore, to comprehend the motivation of the propagandist, we must understand the structure of the social movement first and not forget the role the propagandist had played. The role is often restructured by the development of the social movement. The case she has presented in her article is that of Mayers Hyndman, the first English Marxist and his active role in the socialist movement in England between the decade of the 1880's and 1921 when he died.

In this research, the role and motivation of Joris Ivens is examined under the anti-colonial propaganda movement of the twentieth century. Indonesian Independence Movement and the Dutch colonial propaganda are put side by side to comprehend the social context. Ivens was a documentary film maker, and that was the genre of the colonial films. Authorities were aware that for a project as important as this, they needed good film makers. They appointed Ivens as a propagandist of colonial propaganda. The interesting factor here is why he turned against the people who commissioned him into work. Ultimately, he worked as an anti-colonial propagandist. This thesis will seek answers to these questions.

### **1.3 Historiography**

In the Netherlands, various television programs, documentaries, short films and non-fiction films reused Dutch propaganda films as primary sources in later periods.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is surprising that very few studies have appeared on colonial films in the Netherlands while this 'history on screen' programs have a deep-rooted impact on Dutch society.

Research has been conducted on the war between the Republic of Indonesia and the Netherlands. There are also researches on wartime and post-war policy of the colonial government to regain control, two military campaigns in 1947 and 1948 known as the *Politioenele Acties* (Police actions), diplomatic negotiations with the leaders of the Indonesian

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<sup>22</sup> See: G.A. Jansen Hendriks, 'Goodwill Ambassador': The Legacy of Dutch Colonial Films' *VIEW Journal*, 4:8 (2015) 21-34.

Republic and other incidences of that period.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, a complete study of documentary films as a tool of Dutch colonial propaganda has long been neglected by researchers. The doctoral thesis of Gerda Jansen Hendriks titled ‘Een voorbeeldige kolonie: Nederlands-Indië in 50 jaar overheidsfilms, 1912-1962’ is a recent work on this subject.<sup>24</sup> The author calls it as an attempt to ‘fill in the gap’ as she also found that there is a great scarcity of publication on this topic.<sup>25</sup> Gerda Jansen Hendriks has done several episodes for the historical television series called *Na de oorlog* (After the war) and *De Affaire* (The Affair). She is the co-founder of the television program *Andere tijden* (Different Times) and works as a director there. In some of the episodes of *Andere tijden* she has reused film footages from earlier propaganda documentaries. In her doctoral thesis<sup>26</sup> and some of the articles<sup>27</sup>, Jansen Hendriks has dealt with questions such as: what kind of films are those propaganda films? Who made them? And for what purpose? Her approach is descriptive and chronological. She used colonial documents and documentaries as a source of information and provided an intensive analysis. She concludes with the view that these films and newsreels were mostly used by the Dutch colonial authority to gain widespread support. My study uses some of the same sources as Jansen Hendriks did but to find and answer to a different question. This paper discusses contents of new films than presented in her thesis. Moreover, this research asks a complete new question and focuses mainly on the anti-colonial propaganda film. It takes a different turn while discussing the revolutionary works by Joris Ivens.

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<sup>23</sup> R. McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the struggle for Indonesian independence, 1945-49* (N.Y [etc.] 1981) 168; see also: B. Luttikhuis, & A. Moses, *Colonial Counterinsurgency and mass violence: The Dutch Empire in Indonesia*, Routledge studies in the modern history of Asia, (London 2014) and Bernhard Dahm, *History of Indonesia in the Twentieth Century* (New York 1971); and also Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia*.

<sup>24</sup> Jansen Hendriks, *Een voorbeeldige kolonie: Nederlands-Indië in 50 jaar overheidsfilms, 1912-1962* (Amsterdam 2014).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*: 387.

<sup>26</sup> Jansen Hendriks, *Een Ideaal voor Ogen: De Kwestie Indonesie in het Bioscoopjournal* (Amsterdam 1983).

<sup>27</sup> Jansen Hendriks, ‘Not a colonial war’ Dutch film propaganda in the fight against Indonesia, 1945-49’ *Journal of genocide research* 14: 3-4 (Sep. 2012) 403-418; and Jansen Hendriks, ‘Goodwill Ambassador’



Figure 1. Scene of the documentary *Indonesia Calling!* by Joris Ivens. Source: <http://earlyworks.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/196285.jpg> (16 March 2016)

There are books in German, French, Dutch and English about Joris Ivens, including *Living Dangerously: A Biography of Joris Ivens* by Hans Schoots, which is a result of ten years of research on Ivens' life, work and career.<sup>28</sup> This book along with some other biographical studies are general accounts on Ivens. Another important publication is *Joris Ivens and the Documentary Context* edited by Kees Bakker which tells the stories behind the documentary projects of Ivens.<sup>29</sup> The contribution of this study to this literature is to build a connection between Dutch colonial and anti-colonial propaganda films and one of the most creative Dutch filmmakers in colonial history. It shows how state versus personal political commitment encounter each other. In other words, it reveals how the Dutch government had questioned Iven's political ideology and built obstacles in his work; at the same time, how he had challenged the Dutch government's position in case of Indonesian independence. By investigating Joris Ivens' action and motivation behind making *Indonesia Calling*, the struggle of a propagandist in a popular social movement have been addressed. Such revolutionary characters might not be rare in history. However, we find only one revolutionary filmmaker in the history of Dutch colonial propaganda films. In my opinion, the history of Dutch colonial films is incomplete without discussing the challenges it faced as well as the works of Joris Ivens which in fact, got more attention internationally than any of those government produced propaganda films. Therefore, this thesis attempts to bring them in one frame. Finally, throwing

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<sup>28</sup> Schoots & Colmer, *Living dangerously: A biography of Joris Ivens*.

<sup>29</sup> Bakker, *Joris Ivens and the documentary context*.

light on the impact of his work on Indonesia also helps understand post-war global politics and its linkage with the Netherlands.

#### **1.4 Material and method**

The materials held on this subject in archives in the Netherlands form a part of my primary sources. *Het Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid*, *Het Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie*, *Het NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs Holocaust en Genocidestudies* and EYE Film Institute are the treasures of Dutch audio-visual heritage. *Het Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid* situated in Hilversum is the best place for finding almost all the colonial documentaries. There are also other relevant and supporting collections such as newsreels, video footages, photographs and helpful descriptions about those materials. The film catalogues and inventories of these archives give information about the names, dates and numbers of the films, their directors, producing companies and affiliation of these enterprises. Thus, these databases provide very useful data about the type, content and motives of the film creators altogether.

There are several debates on how to analyse film for academic research. William D. Baker in his article ‘Film as Sharpener of Perception’ has compared film directors with poets. Both do not let a word or a scene just “happen-in” by itself. His suggestion is to focus on the technique of the film rather than the message of the film.<sup>30</sup> Most of the people are tempted to concentrate on the story and message of the film. Thus, an audience generally overlooks the technique and styles of projecting the story which is the most crucial part of a film.

Therefore, I had to train myself to focus on the techniques. To do so, I asked questions like why that scene was there, why that music was used, why the director chose that shot and what was the purpose of that camera angle. Next, I moved on to analysis the content of the films and carefully observed the way of presenting any implicit message, techniques of portraying individual images, style of narration, the language of the actors and actresses and the art of visualising the Dutch soldiers and local people of Indonesia.

In the article ‘German Cultural History and the Study of Film: Ten Theses and a Postscript’,<sup>31</sup> Anton Kaes discusses models within the German tradition. His intention was to explore a serious, humanistic study of film historiography. He has agreed with Kracauer’s idea that films must not be separated from their political, social and cultural habitat. This thesis

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<sup>30</sup> W. Baker, ‘Film as Sharpener of Perception’. *College Composition and Communication*, 15:1 (1964) 44-45.

<sup>31</sup> A. Kaes, ‘German Cultural History and the Study of Film: Ten Theses and a Postscript’, *New German Critique*, 65 (1995) 47-58.

subscribes to the cultural historians of film studies who think film is not a sovereign creative entity, but a part of a larger matrix involving society, class, gender, ethnicity, as well as institutional need and aesthetic desires. As understood in cultural anthropology, the social power of the film lies in authority to influence perception and shape public opinion of a given society.

However, there are problems in taking films as a source of historical research. Vladimir Petric in his article 'From a Written Film History to a Visual Film History' has discussed the problems that students and researchers of film history are compelled to face. He said that most of the time the student must concentrate too much on the literary meaning of the dialogues, social significance of the characters, philosophical connotation and historical paraphernalia surrounding the film. Being more focused on the importance in a historical perspective restricts critical analysis. Because of this methodological procedure, it becomes a production of sociological knowledge rather than an analytical research. He has added that limited access for the researchers to primary sources in film archives and museums is another challenge in studying film history.<sup>32</sup> While working on this paper, I have tried to be as analytical as possible to avoid such pitfalls. Here, several English and Dutch language documentaries have been taken as a subject of operation as those were supposed to target both national and international community. The films were selected based on their topics such as military, economic, political and others. Here is a brief introduction to four major films discussed in this thesis.

#### 1. *This Changing World*<sup>33</sup>

It was a series of films. The subjects of these films were the heroism and training operations of the Dutch army, military and navy units. This series was instructed by Quispel and produced by Southern Sea Production. The first episode of this series, *Isle of Courage*, was released on 31 December 1940.

#### 2. *High Stakes in the East*<sup>34</sup>

This is one of the most iconic propaganda films by the Dutch. The subject of the film is mostly economic propaganda. Directed by John Fernhout, this film was nominated for Oscar in the year 1943. It shows the importance of various industries in Indonesia and the contribution of the Dutch colonial government to its development.

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<sup>32</sup> Vladimir Petrić, 'From a written film history to a visual film history', *Cinema Journal*, 14:2 (1974) 20-24, 21.

<sup>33</sup> <http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/collectie/details/expressie/3864908/false/true> (15 February 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Het Beeld and Geluid, Document ID 4544388

### 3. *Door duisternis tot licht*<sup>35</sup>

This film contains political and military propaganda showing the Dutch men and women as the protectors and rescuers of the Indonesians. Jan Mol and Mannus Franken made the film together. *Door duisternis tot licht* created much controversy among the Dutch colonial authorities on the issue of the portrayal of violence in the propaganda films. It had received an initial disapproval on 1946.

### 4. *Linggadjati in de branding*<sup>36</sup>

Focusing on the restoration of the war-torn Indonesia, this film presents the Dutch soldiers as friends and helpers of the local people. This propaganda film tried to show Indonesian nationalists as terrorists. It was also banned in the Netherlands in 1947 considering the possible threat of discontent among the Dutch citizens as it shows scenes of violence by the Indonesian freedom fighters in the colony.

Ivens' autobiographies are undoubtedly the best primary sources to learn about his life. *The Camera and I*<sup>37</sup>, *Autobiografie van een filmer*<sup>38</sup>, *Aan Welke kant en in welk heelal. De geschiedenis van een leven*<sup>39</sup> are three of his autobiographies which I used. Reading his articles and watching his films helps to look at his world through his lens. *Europese Stichting Joris Ivens* in Nijmegen contains a resourceful collection on Joris Ivens. Documents and materials from different parts of the Netherlands and Europe have been (and are still being) transferred to this archive. It contains a complete filmography of Ivens.

Some Dutch and English newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *De Tijd*, *De Waarheid*, *The Nieuwe Courant*, *Het Dagblad* and *Intermediair* had been analysed. It was possible to access to these newspaper articles from the online database Delpher.<sup>40</sup>

## 1.5 Structure

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one provides a historical background of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, wartime condition, Japanese occupation and the Indonesian War of Revolution. This discussion helps understand how the Netherlands attempted to stop decolonisation process and in which circumstances these films were made. Chapter two

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<sup>35</sup> <http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/collectie/details/expressie/26288/false/true> (15 February 2017).

<sup>36</sup> <http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2654-nederlands-indi-in-de-tweede-wereldoorlog/2665-linggadjati-in-de-branding-acte-1> (15 February 2017)

<sup>37</sup> Joris Ivens, *The Camera and I* (Berlin 1969).

<sup>38</sup> Ivens, *Autobiografie van een filmer* (Amsterdam 1970) (elaborated translation of *The Camera and I*).

<sup>39</sup> Ivens, Robert Destanque, & Syrier, Paul. *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal: De geschiedenis van een leven* (Amsterdam 1983) (Translation of *Joris Ivens ou la mémoire d'un regard*).

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten>

delivers the context of Dutch colonial propaganda films. An overview of the development of Dutch propaganda films, the persons involved, and the motives and actions of the government and other private companies in making these films will be discussed here. Then the discussion moves on to find the answer to the first research question. Chapter three is about the life and work of Joris Ivens. A short biography and a lengthy filmography with attention to *Indonesia Calling!* feature in it. The subject matter of the next chapter is his role against Dutch propaganda film and the aftermath of his criticism, the relationship between him and his country, and last but not the least, a study on the evaluation of his works into the complex global political situation of the twentieth century. Finally, a summary of the whole discussion and concluding remarks will be drawn with suggestions for future research on this matter.

The names of the places used in this paper are sometimes different from their modern names. For example, 'Djokjakarta' is presently spelt as 'Yogyakarta,' Batavia is known as Jakarta, and the Netherlands East Indies (Dutch Indies or *Nederlandsch-Indië* is translated as the Dutch East Indies to distinct from the Dutch West Indies) is called Indonesia since its independence. Nevertheless, Dutch East Indies and Indonesia are widely used interchangeably, at the time and now. Therefore, in this paper, both names have been used to indicate the same geographical region. Historically, from 1800 to 1942 and from 1945 to December 1949 it was called Dutch East Indies, and after the independence, it is called Indonesia.

## Chapter Two

### 2.0 Decolonisation of Indonesia

This chapter provides a historical background. A prelude of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, Japanese occupation during the Second World War, Indonesian nationalist movement and the struggle for independence will provide insights about the political development of that period. The political situation largely determined how and why Dutch propaganda films were produced. The condition in the Netherlands East Indies at that period, the policy of the government, the reaction of the Indonesian people to that policy and the connection of those propaganda films with international political context are the major themes of this chapter.

### 2.1 Coming of the Dutch

The Netherlands East Indies had been the jewel of the Dutch colonial empire since the early seventeenth-century. This archipelago constitutes the greatest prize in the South-East Asia with its geographical resources and strategic importance. Its renowned spice trade attracted European merchants to the legendary Spice Islands and the politically fragmented Javanese society gave the opportunity to the Dutch to gain an early foothold here. They established their dominance on the Indonesian seas between 1650 and 1680 through a series of wars and treaties.<sup>41</sup> The East India Company collapsed in 1798 due to corruption and incompetence. Control of the area ruled by the company was transferred to Dutch government. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Netherlands government in the Indies tried to ensure as much profit as possible for the mother country by exploiting the colonies. The infamous cultivation system implemented in 1830 was the worst feature of that process. There had been many changes in the policy of the colonial government to rule over the local people. For example, the adaptation of the so-called Ethical policy in 1902 which intended to the paternalistic liberalisation of the Dutch rule in the Indies.<sup>42</sup> They thought that they must bring up their 'child' in such a way so that it can learn to function with their help.<sup>43</sup> However, it backfired. The gradually spreading nationalist movements made it clear that the Indonesian people would be satisfied with nothing else but complete self-governance.

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<sup>41</sup> R. McMahon, *Colonialism and cold war*, 20

<sup>42</sup> Bernhard Dahm, *History of Indonesia in the Twentieth Century*, 12-15

<sup>43</sup> According to one of the Dutch politicians of the Ethical party. See: Dahm, *History of Indonesia*, 14.



## 2.2 Growth of nationalist movements in Indonesia

The nationalist movement was growing rapidly with the rise of a group of Western-educated elites in the Indonesian society. Ironically, Western education for local people was initially supported by the Dutch. The notion of Western ideas of freedom and social justice helped Indonesian students oppose Dutch colonial subjugation. Now they could find a direct relationship between Dutch imperialism and their economic and political problems. Moreover, the series of events in Asia like the Chinese and Indian nationalist movements, the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War, modernization of Japan and Turkey inspired Indonesians to fight for independence. The first political society which articulated the aspirations of independence was called *Budi Utomo*. Founded in 1908, *Budi Utomo* was a student group whose membership swelled to more than 10000 within a year. It received official recognition from the colonial government. This pioneering organisation lost its popularity to other more structured political organisations. Such an organisation was the *Indische Partij* (founded in 1912). This party stated that Indonesia was not, and could not be the home for Dutch. The founder, E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, a second cousin of the famous writer of the book *Max Havelaar*, Eduard Douwes Dekker, alias Multatuli openly wrote to the queen in one letter: 'No, Your Majesty, this is not your country. It is our country, our homeland. One day it will be free, free forever- we have sworn it!'<sup>44</sup> Finally, Douwes Dekker was exiled and the party forbidden by the Dutch. *Sarekat Islam* was the next popular nationalist organisation. This party was founded on the idea of Islamic modernist movement and used Islam as a core of solidarity against foreign rule. There were more radical groups like Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) which led a premature rebellion against the colonial government in rural areas of West Java (November 1926) and West Sumatra (January 1927). The failure of this revolt meant the destruction of the PKI. This time, more nationalist groups were coming forward. In 1927, The Nationalist Party of Indonesia (PNI) was founded under Sukarno, chairman of the Bandung Study Club. As soon as the Dutch government realised that the popularity of this nationalist party is threatening the colonial rule, they took repressive measures such as outlawing the PNI and sending the influential leaders- including Sukarno, Mohammed Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir to exile to distant parts of the archipelago and not to return until the Japanese occupation in 1942. The period between 1927 and the destruction of the Dutch colonial rule by the Japanese in 1942

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<sup>44</sup> K. Pelzer, MacVey, T. Ruth T & Herbert Feith, *Indonesia* (New Haven 1963) 293.

is considered as the era of repression and economic crisis.<sup>45</sup> The Dutch regime in Indonesia applied the most conservative and uncongenial policy of its history throughout this period.

### **2.3 The Second World War and the Japanese occupation**

Between 1942 and 1945 Indonesia was occupied by Japanese forces. The impact of Japanese occupation in Indonesia was crucial in both Indonesian national and Dutch colonial history. The Japanese directly helped reshape Indonesian revolutionary movements by training, indoctrinating and supplying arms to the younger generations to fight against the Dutch. However, the Japanese government had its own economic and political interests for stimulating this nationalist movement. Firstly, they wanted to establish their 'Asian brotherhood' propagandas and wipe out Western influence in Asia. Second, they needed Indonesian resources for the war. Exploitation of Indonesian labour by the Japanese was the most painful course of this period. By 1944, serious resistance against the Japanese built up initially in Java and then in other places. On the other hand, Americans also defeated the Japanese on different fronts like from the Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands and the Philippine Sea in February 1944. After the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan faced massive destruction and finally surrendered unconditionally on 15 August 1945. Two days later, Sukarno and Hatta declared the independence and the Republic of Indonesia was born. The Republican government established an administration in Jakarta. Sukarno and Hatta became president and vice president of the Republic of Indonesia. The Republican government formed a cabinet and created a parliament, which was called *Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat* or Central Indonesian National Committee (KNIP). Sutan Sjahrir became the prime minister of the Republic of Indonesia in the Second Cabinet.

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<sup>45</sup> Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia*, 227.



Figure 2. President Sukarno, Hatta and Sjahrir in a meeting. Source: [https://nobodycorpfound.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/president-sukarno-and-others-attending-a-meeting-location-djakarta-indonesia-date-taken-1946-photographer-john-florea-ea54f3ca67985ef2\\_large.jpg](https://nobodycorpfound.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/president-sukarno-and-others-attending-a-meeting-location-djakarta-indonesia-date-taken-1946-photographer-john-florea-ea54f3ca67985ef2_large.jpg) (20 July 2016)

#### **2.4 Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949)**

1945-1949 was a period of armed and diplomatic struggle between the Dutch and Indonesians. The Dutch were anxious to restore their colonial regime whereas the Indonesian revolutionaries wanted to ensure national unity and become free from colonial rule. The Dutch recognised the nationalistic aspirations of the Indonesians and responded to the diplomatic negotiations. However, they did not acknowledge the Republic on the excuse that the Dutch government is responsible for directing the development of Indonesia until they consider the Indonesians to be ready for independence.<sup>46</sup> They formed Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) to deal with civil matters of Indonesia. The Republic of Indonesia however claimed that she held the *de facto* authority over the entire archipelago and although the recognition of the independence was the *sine qua non* of any negotiation, they were ready to negotiate with the Netherlands as a particularly interested power. Lord Mountbatten, on behalf of the Allied force, treated Republican administration as the *de facto* authority.<sup>47</sup> Soon small contingents of Dutch troops started to land in Indonesia which the Indonesians saw as a threat to the nascent Republic. The Dutch colonial power eventually reoccupied it.<sup>48</sup> Conflicts broke out

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<sup>46</sup> B. Katzenstein, *The establishment of the Indonesian Republic, 1945 - 1949* (PLACE Columbia University 1960) 16.

<sup>47</sup> Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia*, 265.

<sup>48</sup> W. Henderson, *Pacific settlement of disputes: The Indonesian question, 1946-1949* (New York 1954) 7.

sporadically, mostly in Java and Sumatra. The Indonesians were not militarily powerful enough at that time. They had captured weapons by disarming the Japanese military personnel that remained in Indonesia immediately after the declaration of independence.

Diplomatic negotiations began between the Dutch and Indonesian officials. A series of meetings<sup>49</sup> went unfruitful until the *Linggadjati* Agreement. *Linggadjati* Agreement was a result of a meeting held in November 1946 between the Republican and Dutch governments. Representatives of the British government acted as facilitators. In this agreement, the Netherlands recognised, for the first time, the de facto authority of the Republic of Indonesia over the islands of Java, Madura, and Sumatra. They also agreed to cooperate in the formation of a federal United States of Indonesia consisting of three parts: the Republic, Borneo, and the Great East. Both parties agreed on establishing the Netherlands-Indonesian Union headed by the Crown which was to be formed by 1 January 1949 with its operating bodies. There were some other clauses related to disputes and arbitration.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, mistrust and lack of genuine cooperation between two parties made this peace agreement a failure.

Besides the strategic actions, the Dutch government decided to launch military operations which were itself a costly measure for war broken Netherlands economy. The first 'Police Action' by the Dutch military started on 20 July 1947 at midnight. The international community and the United Nations became indirectly involved in the conflict. The British and the Americans did not endorse such attacks by the Dutch. India and Australia also favoured the Indonesian cause which eventually pressurised the Dutch to accept a UN call for a ceasefire. The first 'Police Action' in July and August 1947 succeeded in conquering large parts of Java and Sumatra. The next course of the event was the Renville agreement which took place on an American ship called *USS Renville* in Jakarta harbour. The terms of this agreement were apparently a Dutch negotiating victory. However, this reasonableness of the Republicans in accepting it helped them winning American goodwill which was crucial in the long run.<sup>51</sup>

For the next few months, consequences and diplomatic turmoil in Indonesia led to the termination of the Renville Truce Agreement on 18 December 1948 by the Dutch.<sup>52</sup> Thus the second 'Police Action' started the next morning when the Dutch parachutists captured

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<sup>49</sup> The first meeting between Sukarno and Van Mook, the Dutch Lieutenant Governor General of NICA, and Sukarno was held on 23 October 1945, another between van Mook and Sjahrir on 17 November 1945. The Malino Conference from 16 to 24 July 1946 was considered as a puppet creation by the Dutch to prevent Indonesian independence. See: C. Wolf, *The Indonesian story: The birth, growth and structure of the Indonesian Republic* (Asia book). (New York 1948) 41.

<sup>50</sup> Henderson, *Pacific settlement of disputes*, 9-10.

<sup>51</sup> Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia*, 277.

<sup>52</sup> G. Kahin & Cornell University. Institute of Pacific Relations. Southeast Asia Program. *Nationalism and revolution in Indonesia* (New York 1952) 334-336.

Djokjakarta, the Republican capital. This time the action was more violent and hostile. There was a storm of protest all over the world against Dutch military aggression. Even though the Dutch responded to a UN call for a ceasefire on 31 December 1948 in Java and 5 January 1949 in Sumatra, the guerrilla war continued. The UN and the United States adopted direct measures against the Dutch military action and forced them to abandon the colony. Finally, the Security Council passed the resolution calling for freeing the Republican cabinet whom the Dutch captured, establishing an interim government, withdrawing the army and transferring full sovereignty by 1 July 1950.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, a ceasefire was announced on 1 August to be effective in Java on 11 August and in Sumatra on 15 August. However, intermittent clashes continued until October.

A round table conference was held in The Hague from 23 August to 2 November 1949. It was an important step towards transferring sovereignty and determining the future structure of the country. Notable members in the conference were: Mohm. Hatta, head of the delegation of the Republican government, J.H. Van Maarseveen, head of the delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Dutch minister over overseas territories, Merle Cochran, the delegation of the United Nations and Willem Drees, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands presided over the conference. They agreed to form a loose union of the Netherlands and Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI) with the Dutch Queen as symbolic head, Sukarno as President and Hatta as Prime Minister as well as Vice-President.

Finally, on 27 December 1949, the Netherlands unconditionally and irrevocably transferred complete sovereignty over Indonesia to RUSI and recognised it as an independent and sovereign state. The historical moment was observed in Amsterdam, Jakarta, and Djokjakarta. Nonetheless, the RUSI could survive intact for only a few weeks. Ultimately, on 17 August 1950, on the fifth anniversary of the declaration of independence, the whole constitution was structured, and the country was named *Negara Kesatuan Republic Indonesia* (NKRI) or the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>54</sup>

## **2.5 Conclusion**

After the Second World War, the era of decolonisation reached its peak throughout the world. The former British, French and American colonies in Asia and Africa declared independence against their colonial rulers. The people of Indonesia saw it as an opportunity to establish their

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<sup>53</sup> Katzenstein, *The establishment of the Indonesian Republic*, 57.

<sup>54</sup> Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia*, 285.

long-desired freedom. There were political tactics, diplomatic negotiations as well as the military conflict between the Dutch and the Indonesian Republic. The Dutch were anxious about losing control over the colonial regime which they had built over 350 years. The policy which they followed lacked moral justification in most of the cases. The two major armed attacks which they named *Politioenele acties* or ‘Police Actions’ to pretend that their intention regarding the Indonesian conflict was a matter of restoring law and order.<sup>55</sup> Whereas, the Indonesians saw it as massive military aggression. In this context, the Dutch government required more sophisticated policy to earn widespread support for its actions. The making of pessimistic, humanitarian propaganda films helped them to prove their goodwill for Indonesians. By constructing an image of a war-torn, haphazard land where the Dutch soldiers were helping restore peace and order, they also aimed to justify their colonial claims in front of the international community. The next chapter will discuss the development of Dutch propaganda film as a tool of colonial rationale.

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<sup>55</sup> Luttikhuis, ‘Mass violence and the end of the Dutch colonial empire in Indonesia’, 266.

## Chapter Three

### 3.0 Dutch Propaganda Films

This chapter is about the propaganda films which the Dutch government made about the Dutch East Indies from 1945 to 1950. It also looks at the history of Dutch filming in Indonesia: who made these films and what was their purpose, how propaganda films were used as a tool of colonial policy. This chapter will present a discussion on contents of some of the films. In this context, we will see the rise of Joris Ivens and his famous work *Indonesia Calling!*

A cultural historian attempts to articulate the relationship between a film and its historical and cultural context. Therefore, one must look at the larger context of colonial film trend of the twentieth century to understand the anti-colonial propaganda film. The primary purpose of this chapter is to provide an idea about the general direction of Dutch colonial propaganda films. It tries to depict how the colonial government materialised its ambition of presenting a positive impression of the colonies to the Dutch citizens as well as to the rest of the world. The contribution of the prominent Dutch filmmakers to Dutch propaganda film will be discussed. It helps us get the idea how these films function in the self-fashioning of Dutch national culture of the twentieth century. Dutch propaganda films have a long history of how and why these films were made. This chapter will study some of the documentary films commissioned by the government, military and other filmmakers and will investigate their intentions behind creating them.

### 3.1 Early phase of Dutch documentary films

The very first names which come to Dutch government film history are Louis van Vuuren (1873-1951) and Johann Christian Lamster (1872-1954). Van Vuuren was head of the *encyclopaedisch Bureau* which was established in 1910 to collect information about Dutch East Indies. J.C. Lamster and Van Vuuren realised the importance of film to record knowledge and spread it among a wider audience. He proposed to establish a separate film company operated by the government in 1912. Unfortunately, his proposal was turned down. Johann Lamster came to the Dutch East Indies in February 1912 with a special instruction from the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam. He was appointed to create '*cinematographische opnemingen*' or 'cinematographic recordings' with modern technology, namely, film. The films must cover subjects like nature, daily lives of the inhabitants of the archipelago, their tradition and culture, household and infrastructure, trade and business, agriculture, health and education and all the elements related to Indonesian society which could interest Dutch elite

society.<sup>56</sup> The targeted audience were the wealthy Dutch citizens to encourage them to invest money and migrate to the colony. This motive was different from the later period of Dutch propaganda films. This time the government wanted to display their goodwill towards the colony and other countries. At that period, there was no necessity to justify their colonial rule to the outside world. They took their colonial rights for granted. The reason, the Colonial Institute was intended to make the films attractive was to validate the existence and benefit of colonies to the metropole.<sup>57</sup> Lamster made approximately sixty short films including *Het leven van den infanterist*, *Strafgevangenis te Batavia*, *Theecultuur in West-Java*, *Agave vezel*, *De kinacultuur*, *Rubbercultuur op Java*, and *De Suikercultuur*. None of these films showed any negative elements such as poverty or distress.

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<sup>56</sup> J. Dijk, Jaap de Jonge, & Nico de Klerk, *J.C. Lamster, een vroege filmer in Nederlands-Indië*. (Amsterdam 2010) 80.

<sup>57</sup> Jansen Hendriks, *Een voorbeeldige kolonie*, 388.



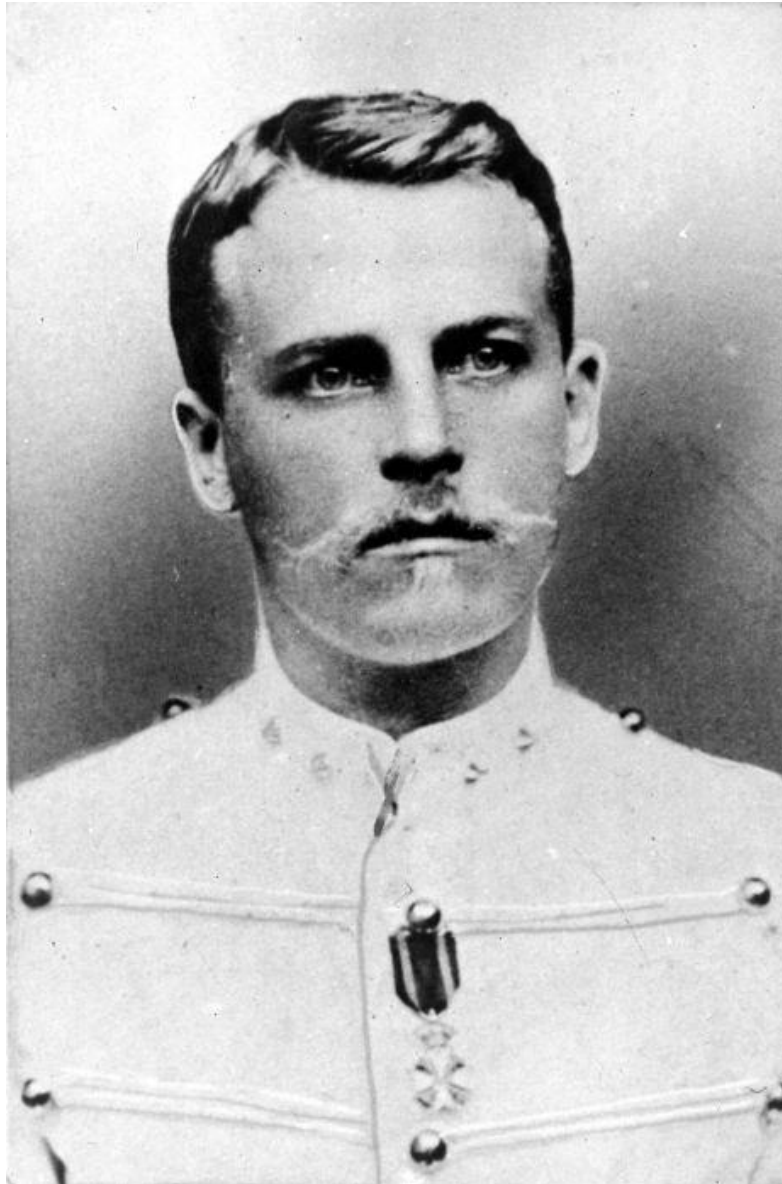


Figure 4. Johann Christian Lamster (August 2, 1872- December 26, 1954). Source: Tropen Museum. Object number: TM-10018749<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, the demand of the institute was to record the films in such a way so that it could be distinguished from the entertaining movies. Colouring of the prints or arranging a shooting set were not allowed. Due to lack of technical knowledge, the institute was unable to perceive the difficulties of filming in such ways with little resources. As a result, some of the scenes lost their context (for example, classical Javanese dance was shot in the daytime to get sufficient light, while the dance is usually performed at night).<sup>59</sup> Publicity was discouraged on the logic that they do not need any. Finally, there was a significant amount of editing like the omission

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<sup>58</sup> See: <http://collectie.tropenmuseum.nl/Default.aspx> (25 June 2016).

<sup>59</sup> N. De Klerk, '100 years of image control: The case of J.C. Lamster's films for the Dutch Colonial Institute', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 11:4 (2013) 312-321, 313.

of scenes due to obscurity or things that they did not want to show, the addition of some scenes from the institution's existing photo or footage collection, replacing some scenes with the other and so on. Thus the length and content of the original films were changed considerably by the sponsor. There were also debates in the Colonial Institution on the public screening of those films. Ultimately, there was a conflict between the Institute and J.C. Lamster when he started to take on hold in trading and to distribute his films.



Figure 5. Movie scene from *Thee cultuur in West-Java*. Image Source: Dijk, Jaap & Klerk. *J.C. Lamster, een vroege filmer in Nederlands-Indië*, 89

Meanwhile, Van Vuuren with his interest in film, hired an independent cameraman, H. Flindt without informing his superior. H. Flindt made approximately ten films on behalf of the *Encyclopedisch Bureau*. *Encyclopedisch Bureau* was abolished by 1921 due to lack of funding. It is a pity that these films originally commissioned by 'gouvernementsfilmbedrijf', i.e., by Van Vuuren are now catalogued in EYE Film Institute as being produced by a different company

(National *Filmfabriek*).<sup>60</sup> This is how the role of Louis Van Vuuren has been unrecognised in the history of early Dutch colonial film.

### 3.2 Film history from 1930 to 1945

Willy Mullens was the most remarkable Dutch filmmaker during the late twenties and after that. He made several films in the Dutch East Indies. He directed his film company- Haghe Film. The films produced by his company obtained enough publicity in the Dutch theatres as well as educational institutions. His films portrayed Dutch sea-voyage to the Indies, rail and road constructions, everyday lives of the Batak people in Sumatra, festivals in Java, trade city of Soerabaya, local traditions, mysterious ceremonies and cremation in Bali, panorama of the Dutch East Indies, documentary on Soerakarta Palace, as well as lives of the Dutch government officials in the Indies. He also made a documentary series named *L'Indonesie, Comment Elle Vit, Comment Elle Travaille* (Indonesia, How She Lives, How She Works) in the year 1920. In 1926, he made *De Pest op Java* which presented information about the spread of a pest epidemic in Java. The total length of films made by him is roughly 50,000 metre.<sup>61</sup>

*Polygoon* Film Company was another prominent film company which worked from 1917 to 1987. *Polygoon* made many films such as *Neerlands Nieuws, Wereldnieuws, Cineac Reportage, Carnaval Kerkrade, Carnaval Bergen op Zoom*, etc.<sup>62</sup> Subject materials and motives of those films were also more or less the same i.e. to display colonies as much attractive as possible and the Dutch colonial masters as helping local people in poverty and disease (if shown any).

Before the Second World War, the Dutch colonial empire was facing problem regarding public relation policy at home as well as the global threat of Japanese Empire and Nazi-led Germany. Film was chosen as a strategy to improve public relation and shield against the growth of nationalism worldwide. The idea of natural right over the colonies which the Dutch empire had believed in for a long time was being challenged in this period. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was even anxious about the criticism in the League of Nations. Propaganda films were thought to be the best instrument to defend the colonial rule.

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<sup>60</sup> These films have been kept under the title of *Molukkenreis Landvoogd*, ID 43494. See: Jansen Hendriks, *Een Voorbeeldige Kolonie*, 38-52

<sup>61</sup> See: The biography of Willy Mullens in W. Mullens, *Enkele pagina's uit mijn gulden boek over Nederlandsch Indië: filmcyclus en causerieën door Willy Mullens* (1929). Cited in Adhie Gesit Pambudi, *The Audiovisual Battlefield: The Use of Dutch Documentary Films about the Issues of Indonesia (1945 – 1949)*, (Leiden University 2012) 19.

<sup>62</sup> Nationaal Archief Den Haag (further NA), Centrale Commissie voor de Film keuring (1926) 1928- 1977, 2.04.60, inv Nr: 876.

The next important person in the history of Dutch colonial film was Huib van Mook. He became the minister of Economic Affairs of the Dutch East Indies. By this time, film technology improved a lot and Van Mook wanted to make a series of films with colour and sound and in the English language to reach international, primarily American audiences. Believing that film could be served as ‘the vital gear for a government’,<sup>63</sup> Van Mook suggested that in these films Dutch East Indies should be presented as a part of the commonwealth which is happily cooperating with the Netherlands. By this way, the Netherlands could fight against Japanese propaganda. However, his proposal was not accepted by the government until the real threat was realised in the colony. In 1941, cameraman Jaap Zindler was appointed, and at least two remarkable short films were made: *High Stakes in the East* and *Peoples of the Indies*. Both films were beautifully made in colour and served propaganda message to the audiences.

*High Stakes in the East* was directed by John Fernhout who worked as an assistant of Joris Ivens. This film received Oscar nomination in 1943. The film starts with the introduction to Java and declares that Java was invaded during the Second World War. The narrator describes in clear American accent that the wealth and resources in Java had been well maintained so far because of the ‘wise colonial policy’ and tries to argue how important the colonies are of the modern world. It uses the word ‘enemy’ to refer the Japanese. The film repeatedly claimed credit for all the prosperity in the Java by emphasising ‘Dutch plan’, ‘Dutch skills’, ‘Dutch energy development’, ‘long tradition of Dutch cooperation’ and so on. It continues with the regret that the Japanese were then enjoying the fruits of this long-term investment by the Netherlands. By showing all the industrial production in the Indies, it also mentioned how America helped to save those resources and how ironically those are being exported to Berlin and Tokyo. Perhaps, we can call it appeasing the powerful ally. Finally, it refers to Atlantic Charter and declares hope for this invasion to end. The concluding sentence said, “Thus the world would surely fly to the treasures of the islands of the ‘Netherlands East Indies’ (with extra emphasise from the narrator on the last phrase)”.<sup>64</sup> This film was widely screened in many places of North America, Australia, and Latin America. The British Press Department showed *High Stakes in the East* and *New Earth* in the *Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Inglesa* in Rio, and in one school, in Sao Paulo, and Santos. After the show, Mr. de Clercq commented, ‘It looks like excellent propaganda!’<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> NA, Kolonien/Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, inv. Nr. 3865.

<sup>64</sup> *Het Beeld and Geluid*, Taak ID 4544388.

<sup>65</sup> NA, Archief van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (Londens Archief) 2.05.80. inv. Nr. 5741.



Figure 6. A sequence from the film *High Stakes in the East*. Source: <http://www.beeldengeluid.nl/high-stakes-east-1942-0> (20 July 2016).

There was a change in foreign policy of the Netherlands after the invasion of the Netherlands by Germany, in 1940. The government in exile in London established a Government Information Service (*Regeringsvoorlichtingsdienst* or RVD) which had a film department. It had a branch office in New York which was called the Netherlands Information Bureau (NIB). In Batavia, there was another similar department called Government Information Service (RPD). RPD made some films and reports on mostly political issues and military preparations of the Dutch to fight in the colony. In this regard, the role of Jan Cornelis Mol (1891-1954) and his production company in Haarlem, Multifilm Batavia was prominent. *Gouvornements Filmbedrijf Multifilm Batavia* or Multifilm Batavia was formerly known as *Bureau voor Wetenschappelijke Cinematografie*. In the 1930s Multifilm set up a branch in Batavia. Within a decade, they produced propaganda films showing Dutch and Indonesian unity such as *Koningine Dag in Batavia 1941* and *De Marine Vliegt*. It was forced to work for *Nippon Eiga-sha*, meaning Nippon Film Company during the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. After that, it continued making propaganda films about the situation in Indonesia for the Dutch government in the revolutionary period from 1945 to 1949. This company received support from Huib Quispel, the head of Marine Information Service. *Developing World*, a weekly newsreel program starting in January 1947, was famous all over the Dutch cinema theatres. These films had an enormous impact on the Dutch society.

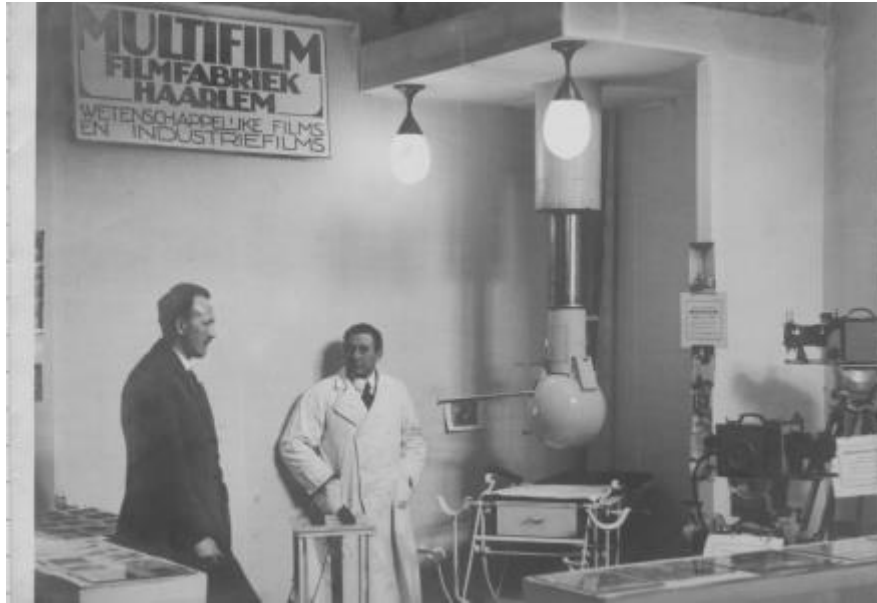


Figure 7. Jan Cornelis Mol in his studio. Source: <https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/collection/film-history/person/jc-mol> (20 July 2016)

One of the famous works of this period was *This Changing World*. It was a series of films about Dutch army, military and navy training which was instructed by Quispel and produced by Southern Sea Production, an independent Australian film company. Quispel followed the tactic of showing the names of independent companies in credit list to pretend that these were independent productions even though the Dutch government entirely funded those. Another example is *Govournements Filmbedrijf Multifilm Batavia* which often used the short name as Multifilm Batavia to hide government involvement behind the production. *Isle of Courage* (date 31 December 1940) was the first episode of this series. The film says that Dutch and Javanese army are ready to fight together for their security and then talks about ‘ABCD line’ of security (America, British Commonwealth Empire, China and the Dutch Republic) about which Australia is very much concerned. The narrator expresses that full support from the pacific neighbours Australia, New Zealand, and Malaya is imperative. Finally, it shows the celebration of Queen Wilhelmina’s birthday in the Dutch East Indies. The spirit of the gathering of Batavia is symbolised by the song ‘The Netherlands shall rise again!’ which cheers the saddened heart of the Dutch people who are under oppression in the Netherlands. Finally, it emphasizes on the firm tie between the Dutch and the races of the Netherlands East Indies and hopes that ‘...in this changing world, Queen Wilhelmina knows that the power of the might of the British Commonwealth and America will fight to protect these isles of courage.’ This film was quite popular among the Dutch audience at that time.

Most of the films produced by NIB in this period targeted with the American audience and therefore avoided using the word ‘colony’, rather presented Indonesia as a future ‘commonwealth’. Films like *Indonesian Harmony*, *The Indies are Calling!* commissioned by the Netherlands Government Information Service (NIGIS) in Australia provided the same message of harmony between the Netherlands and the Indies and appeal for fighting against the common enemy (Japan). *Indie Roept* or *The Indies are Calling!* was made at the request of Royal Netherlands Indies Army for the recruiting of army personnel in the Netherlands. Other films like *Going North*- a film showing the attack in Leyte in the Philippines and *Rescue from Shangri-la* shows Dutch army is rescuing three members of American forces from a never visited place in the Netherlands New Guinea were mentioned in the government reports (Films of importance for publicity in Holland) as examples of other series besides the liberation series of films.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.3 Propaganda films during 1945- 1949

These were the last years of Dutch colonialism and Indonesian struggle for independence. The Indonesians were determined to free their country from foreign rule. Whereas, the Dutch were still trying to restore their colonial domination over the East Indies. The nationalist movement and guerrilla warfare were stronger than ever before. During this period, propaganda strategy was encouraged both by RVD, NIB and NIGIS. All these three film departments worked in a different manner. No single line was followed. Huib Quispel tried to rebuild the film studio when he returned to Java from Australia in 1945. At that time rivalry was brewing between Charles van der Plas, a progressive civil servant and Quispel, with a more conservative view. Van der Plas appointed Joris Ivens, the famous Dutch filmmaker as the Film Commissioner for the Netherlands East Indies in September 1944. His task would be to make films on the liberation war of the Dutch East Indies. On the other hand, Quispel himself was also working on a film on the same subject with the help of a Canadian cameraman. In this power struggle, Quispel got the upper hand. Ivens had to resign just after one year when he made his film *Indonesia Calling!* because of the following circumstances.<sup>67</sup> *Indonesia Calling!* was the only anti-Dutch colonial propaganda film of this period which completely shocked Dutch colonial government and had a long-lasting impact on the history of Dutch propaganda films.

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<sup>66</sup> NA, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken Hoge Commissariaat Indonesie. Nummer toegang 2.05.189, inv. Nr. 449.

<sup>67</sup> Joris Ivens, his film career and the film *Indonesia Calling!* will be discussed in the next chapter.

Considering the growth of nationalism in the colony and diplomatic relationship with the outside world, the Dutch government, at that time, was trying to deny the spirit of Indonesian self-awareness. Therefore, the films produced by government funded companies in this period were to support colonial propaganda more than ever before. *Gouvernement Filmbedrijf Multifilm Batavia* (GFB-MB) was re-established after the Japanese surrender. This company, along with *Polygoon* was playing the leading role. The films produced by GFB-MB and *Polygoon* focused on the synthesis between East and West with the necessary presence of Dutch army for economic reconstruction, the assistance of the local people devastated by the war. Jan Mol appointed Mannus Franken to work with him. This duo made a long documentary called *Door duisternis tot licht*. The title (from darkness to light) hints at the message. It presented Dutch military as rescuing Indonesian people from wartime atrocities of the Japanese. Indonesian nationalism was pictured as Japanese propaganda and the nationalists as ‘terrorists’ or ‘collaborators’. A *Polygoon* newsreel entitled ‘The Dutch authority with joy on Boeton’ visualised such events of Dutch marine troop as heroes who were landing on an island and being greeted with joy. Indeed, many of the general audiences in the Netherlands were convinced by these films and newsreels. They were unaware of the fact that Indonesian people saw the arrival of Dutch troops as just a replacement of the Japanese occupiers. For most of the Indonesians, it was nothing new but hundreds of years of colonial experience by the same Dutch ‘masters’.<sup>68</sup> In a film called *Indonesia at Work*, such an occasion was shown with happy faces of people to greet Dutch soldiers with commentary saying, ‘After the interlude of the war, contact has been resumed, and the cooperation is continued on a renewed basis. The new workers arrive by air and by sea; Dutch men and women who will assist this country on its road to recovery and further development...’<sup>69</sup>

However, the Dutch government was unwilling to focus on the fights or military operation of the Dutch army or navy in the colony. Rather a peaceful picture of feeding local hungry people, assisting them in curing disease, helping in the reconstruction of the infrastructure of the country, the firm desire of the Dutchmen to cooperate in restoring peace and political negotiations between Dutch and Indonesian leader to reunite were to be focused on. The representation of Dutch soldiers as humane as possible was a ploy to convey the message that they were in Indonesia to rebuild the country. Any projection of violence should be avoided. For that reason, the first addition of *Door duisternis tot licht* was disapproved

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<sup>68</sup> Jansen Hendriks, 'Not a colonial war', 406.

<sup>69</sup> Jansen Hendriks, Klein, & Otten, 'The Final Years of the Dutch East Indies as Recorded by Multifilm Batavia', 77.



initially in 1946 and the finishing scene was altered with diplomatic negotiation to match with the official policy of the Dutch government.

Another film which raised contradiction was *Linggadjati in de branding* (Linggadjati in heavy weather). This film showed Dutch soldiers (both men and women) as taking part in restoring peace and helping the sick, injured, starving people in Dutch Indies in 1947 after the Japanese capitulation.<sup>70</sup> It showed Dutch troops in Indonesia, and there were scenes of fire. Lieutenant Governor-General Van Mook found it too aggressive and banned its circulation in the Netherlands. By that time the Netherlands launched their first ‘police action’ and a couple of hundred Dutch soldiers had already died in the battle with Indonesian nationalists. The issue was concerning most of the common Dutch citizens in the metropole. Questions were being asked about the justification for sending such large number of soldiers overseas just after the war when the country itself needed to be reconstructed. So, Van Mook had to be careful. From the content of this film, some misunderstanding also spread among the Indonesian audiences who thought the Dutch army set the fire shown in the film (3 minutes 50 second). Nonetheless, this film was reused in later television programs almost three decades after the Indonesian independence.



Figure 8. Still from the film *Linggadjati in de branding*. Source: <http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2654-nederlands-indi-in-de-tweede-wereldoorlog/2665-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-1> (23 July 2016)

<sup>70</sup> Part one of this documentary. Starting from one minute fifteen seconds to three minutes 35 seconds. See <http://in.beeldengeluid.nl/kanaal/2654-nederlands-indi-in-de-tweede-wereldoorlog/2665-linggadjadi-in-de-branding-acte-1> (28 June 2016).

### 3.4 Conclusion

We have seen that the Dutch government commissioned propaganda films, especially documentaries about the Dutch East Indies with some specific objectives in its mind. In the earlier phase, these films served mostly the purpose of geographical, social, cultural knowledge production about the Indies and provoking monetary investment in the colonial industries. The filmmakers and civil servants of that period worked per official policy and tried to portray the colony as an attractive and profitable place for the metropole. Political propaganda was not essential during the First World War as the Netherlands remained a neutral party.

The changing winds of the world politics on the eve of the Second World War brought changes in Dutch colonial policy. At the same time, film technology was improving and the importance of film was growing as an essential gear of propaganda for any state or organisation. Van Mook, Quispel and other key Dutch government officers gave attention to the production of propaganda films. RVD, NIB and NIGIS had three different film units and working somewhat independently (which at the same time expresses the lack of any common policy for film and media propaganda). The final phase of Dutch propaganda film production, during the Indonesian War of Independence, went through immense supervision by the authority. GFB-MB and *Polygoon* were the prominent producers of documentaries and newsreels. The subject matters of these films were carefully chosen which would bypass war atrocities at any cost and present a picture of cooperation between the Netherlands and the Indies. Propaganda films were used as a tool of colonial justification by the Dutch government as other imperial powers like the British, French and other authoritarian powers such as Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. These imperial, colonial and autocratic powers utilised film as the most powerful weapon among all the forms of media propaganda.

In general, propaganda has a negative connotation and the party who are promoting this tend to call it ‘publicity’, or ‘information’ or ‘instrument of communication’.<sup>71</sup> However, in the case of Dutch propaganda, the government itself called their policy ‘propaganda’ which is interesting. In an official report entitled ‘Note on Dutch propaganda about the Java situation’, the author says, “It is commonly said that ‘the Dutch case’ has been poorly presented abroad, that Dutch propaganda had been bad, etc. etc. ... Until now the Dutch have lacked the physical means to do much propaganda to anyone...”<sup>72</sup> Perhaps the pejorative meaning of the term ‘propaganda’ and propaganda as a policy was not the same then as we understand it today.

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<sup>71</sup> Taylor, *Film propaganda*, 27.

<sup>72</sup> NA, Hoge Commissariaat Indonesie (Jakarta), 2.05.189, inv. Nr. 449.

Some people might even believe that “propaganda for a ‘good cause’ should not be unacceptable simply because it is propaganda.”<sup>73</sup>

In this whole history of Dutch propaganda film, we have seen many famous Dutch filmmakers who had been hired by the government and fulfilled their job by the policy of the higher authority. The only exception was Joris Ivens who rejected colonial superiority of his nation over another nation and supported the nationalistic ideology of the Indonesians. Thus, he was a rare example in the history of decolonisation in the twentieth century. Again, after finding so many examples of colonial and wartime propaganda, one might wonder- did they (other filmmakers) think it as a manipulation of fact by censoring or selectively presenting only partial facts in those films? The sense of duty towards their nation defeated the ethics of journalism? In that case, can we call Joris Ivens a traitor (as he was called at that time)? Alternatively, was he proved right later? The next two chapters will discuss these points.

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<sup>73</sup> See: Taylor, *War and the media: Propaganda and persuasion in the Gulf War*. (Manchester [etc.]1992) 19.

## Chapter Four

### 4.0 The First Anti-colonial film and the Role of Joris Ivens

This chapter is a critical analysis of the first anti-colonial film in Dutch history, i.e., *Indonesia Calling!* also, a short biographical account of the filmmaker, Joris Ivens. Attention will be paid to his career, ideology and intention behind making this film from different perspectives. His affiliation with the left wing is discussed to understand the politics behind making the film. Finally, analysis of the content of the film and technique of visualising implicit messages help understand the difference with the colonial propaganda films described in last chapter.

Joris Ivens holds a special position in the history of Dutch colonial propaganda films not only because of the film that he made but also due to his activities throughout his life. While most of his colleagues of that period supported colonial propaganda, he makes a revolutionary film. How could he think 'out of the box' whereas other camera operators and filmmakers could not? Most of the filmmakers or media personnel contributed in portraying Dutch soldiers in a peace mission in Indonesia where there were examples of massive violence and aggression around them. In recent times, when they are asked to look back to those days and assess their work, their reaction is mixed. For example, Joop van den Broek, reporter of the *De Volkskrant* gave the statement: 'If I look back now at how we have worked there, I am actually shocked. It happened with a laziness and childishness of which you can say with hindsight: was that really the way to do it?' In Jaap van Meekren's opinion, there was no sense of critical journalism at that period. They had to work for the fulfilment of their duty. Censorship by the authority was regularly ensured even for those who were working under independent companies. Cameraman Charles Breijer, who worked for *Multifilm Batavia* said that he had a sense of solidarity with his compatriots.<sup>74</sup> With all these examples, Joris Ivens is a sharp contrast to his contemporaries. Was it just his political ideology that drove him to support Indonesian nationalist aspirations or he could foresee the downfall of colonialism with the turn of the century? Here, we throw light on the most interesting and controversial character of Dutch film industry.

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<sup>74</sup> Hendriks, 'Not a colonial war', 408.

#### 4.1 Early life of Joris Ivens

On 18 November 1898, Joris Ivens was born as George Henri Anton Ivens in a Dutch family of photographers in Nijmegen. He was the second son of Kees Ivens and Dora Muskens. Perhaps, he owed a revolutionary spirit and a passion for photography from his family and ancestors. His paternal great-grandfather, Heinrich Ivens was involved in the revolutionary movement of 1848 in Efferen, a few miles Southwest of Cologne.<sup>75</sup> Both his grandfather, Wilhelm Ivens and father, Kees Ivens were involved in photography. His father owned a chain of a photographic shop named Capi which was a photo-technical agency and dealer in photographic articles. Therefore, it is not much surprising that he made his first film at the age of thirteen about Indians and a farmer's family entitled *De Wigwam*.



Figure 9. Joris Ivens as an Indian in the film *De Wigwam* (1912) Source: A. Stufkens, W. Gosselink, P. Prooijen, & Nijmeegs Museum 'Commanderie van Sint Jan'. *Rondom Joris Ivens, wereldcineast: Het begin, 1898-1934*. (Houten: Nijmegen: Het Wereldvenster; Nijmeegs Museum 'Commanderie van Sint Jan'. 1988).

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<sup>75</sup> Family data is derived from genealogical research carried out by Hans Ivens in 1939-1940, UN. Cited in Schoots & Colmer, *Living dangerously*, 12.



Figure 10. Joris Ivens shooting with his camera. Source: <http://capifilms-loridan-ivens.com/gallery/> (15 May 2016)

The first noteworthy film was *The Bridge* which he made in 1928. It was a film about the movement of Railway Bridge across the Koningshaven in Rotterdam. In the meantime, he got his education from Rotterdam, received training as an officer in the Mounted Artillery in Northern Brabant and then photochemistry in Berlin, camera construction in Dresden and lenses in Jena. In Berlin, from 1921 to 1924, he studied photographic technique and took the apprenticeship in some photography laboratories. He had a period of personal turmoil and was ‘tremendously confused’ at that time.<sup>76</sup> His intimate friendship with German photographer Germaine Krull had an impact in his life.<sup>77</sup> When Ivens was on the way to move towards Communism, reading Bukanin, Marx and Lenin, Krull was already a dissident of Communism. Bukanin was recommended to him by another significant friend Arthur Lehning. Thus, he was being attracted to radical ideologies in his early twenties. In 1927, he became co-founder of Film Liga together with famous Soviet producer Sergei Eisenstein.

When he devoted his attention to film at the age of thirty, some good films came out. *The Bridge* attracted national and international attention and made him the pioneer of Dutch filmmaking. After *The Bridge*, he made short films like *Breakers* and *Rain* (1929). *Rain*

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<sup>76</sup> Schoots & Colmer. *Living dangerously*, 22.

<sup>77</sup> They got married in 1927 but by that time, their relationship was about to end. Germaine received Dutch citizenship through this marriage.

(*Regen*) is a poetic and creative presentation of rain in Amsterdam and an example of popular City Symphony film. He made this film together with another famous Dutch filmmaker Mannus Franken. The beautiful composition of city life with melodious music made this film pleasant to watch. Then he made two films named *Pile Driving* and *Zuiderzee* which were part of a long documentary for construction workers' union. He went to the Soviet Union in 1930 and befriended with Vsevolod Pudovkin and Eisenstein. He became a communist there.<sup>78</sup> Next, comes the first Dutch artistic sound film: *Philips Radio*, also known as *Industrial Symphony*.

#### **4.2 Formation of his radical ideologies**

Gradually he was becoming a passionate filmmaker as well as an activist. He was making friends or at least, political allies in the Dutch Communist party after joining the Association for People's Culture (the *Vereniging voor Volkscultuur* or VVVC). VVVC aimed at producing socialist propaganda via cultural means, with special attention to film. The argument of Lenin as the film being the most important of all art, recognised propaganda value of cinema in the Communist movement even more. This is an important point to be noted that Hans Schoots has remarked, by working for the VVVC, Ivens started following the motto: 'everything for the party, but nothing in the name of the party'.<sup>79</sup> His contact with communism had a profound impact on his works. His experience in Moscow was mixed. At the public screening of his films like *The Bridge*, *Rain* and *Zuiderzee*, he received both praise and criticism. One of the comments was that 'Comrade Ivens is proud of the fact his film depicts neither managers nor engineers, but only workers. He had to go against the Social Democrats to achieve this, and in Holland, it is seen as extraordinarily revolutionary'.<sup>80</sup> At that point, he had to choose between carrying on his work compromising with the capitalist condition and following a revolutionary path. In USSR, he expressed his helplessness as a radical film director in his country by saying that people could not expect a Dutch film director to depict what he saw because he might be thrown out of his country immediately. His final remarks were, either the circumstances in the Netherlands would change, or he would have to leave the country. All these statements indicate the growing distance between the state policy of his country and his ideology. Gradually he was becoming a seriously committed member of the communist party. His contribution was

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<sup>78</sup> The communist newspaper *De Tribune* called him 'comrade' which technically confirmed that he became communist.

<sup>79</sup> Schoots & Colmer, *Living dangerously*, 48.

<sup>80</sup> Schoots & Colmer, *Living dangerously*, 61.

not as an activist, but as a filmmaker and he had done much work for the Dutch section of International Red Aid and the Friends of Soviet Union.<sup>81</sup>

#### **4.3 Before making *Indonesia Calling!***

During his second visit to Moscow in 1931, he became convinced that USSR could offer him greater opportunities in the film than his father's company. The next film named *Song of the Heroes (Pesn O Gerojach)*, or *Komsomol* came out in 1932. The story was about the construction work of a new blast furnace in the industrial city of Magnitogorsk, in the Urals. This film set off a debate about his style which was heavily 'documentarist'. The form dominated the content. One can observe Ivens' struggle in his films during the thirties so that material does not overshadow the political perspective. *Song of the Heroes* received much criticism in USSR for not following Socialist Realist line. In 1933, he made the *New Earth (Nieuwe Gronden)* which showed the construction of a dam. He made the film in collaboration with Hanns Eisler.

Next, comes one of the most important films in his career as a radical filmmaker, *Borinage* (1934). It was about a miner's strike in the Borinage region of Belgium. Later he mentioned this as a path changing film of his career. It was first screened in Belgium and then in the Netherlands. Even though it was not banned in the Netherlands (actually, it was never presented to the Central Board of censorship), it led to the separation with his fatherland, and he also departed from Film League aesthetics with this film. The country and the press were hostile to him and apparently shut the door on him. Joris calmly let the Dutch express their dissatisfaction and turned his back on them. He left the Netherlands for the Soviet Union to be faithful to his promise to his communist friends. After the making of *Borinage*, he devoted himself completely upon his political enthusiasm.

Almost nothing is known about his stay in Moscow from his autobiographies. However, it was clear that during the years in Moscow (1934-1936), he failed to launch any new film project (perhaps due to some obstacle imposed by Soviet bureaucracy). His health deteriorated. The financial condition was also meagre. He wrote in his biography that they (He and his then partner Anneke van der Feer) maintained a miserable living status there, but according to him, that was the rule of Moscow!<sup>82</sup> It is still questionable whether he had to move to the United

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<sup>81</sup> Ivens, Robert Destanque & Paul Syrier. *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal*, 99.

<sup>82</sup> Ivens & Destanque, *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal*, 99.



States to find a way out from Stalinist terror in January 1936. He moved just before the ‘great reign of terror’ (1936-1938).<sup>83</sup>

#### **4.4 His work in the USA and relationship with the government**

In the United States, he managed to find financial support to make a film on Spanish Civil War. This film, named *The Spanish Earth* (1937) was a project which intended to help American fundraising send ambulances to Spain. The film was political, based on the conflict between the democratically elected republican government and the rebels backed by fascist Germany and Italy. Ivens found John Frenhout as his cameraman and Ernest Hemingway as a right partner who wrote the script and also narrated in the film in the English version. It was edited by Helen van Dongen, who was his girlfriend at that time. In this film, Ivens presents war as a theme for the first time. This film was reviewed in the *New York Times* as “Mr. Ivens’ camera argues gently and persuasively, with the irrefutable argument of pictorially recorded fact, that the Spanish people are fighting, not for broad principles of Muscovite Marxism, but for the right to the productivity of a land denied them through years of absentee landlordship”.<sup>84</sup> It also reports that Hemingway's narrative turns it into a ‘propagandist effort’. These three films - *New Earth*, *Borinage* and *The Spanish Earth* - made him famous as a militant filmmaker. They are the cinematic response to political issues. Elements of documentary argument, reportage, the montage of pre-existing footage and fiction are combined in these films with the mastery of their maker.

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<sup>83</sup> In the Western world, Robert Conquest's book *The Great Terror* popularized that phrase. See: R. Conquest. *The great terror: Stalin's purge of the thirties* (Harmondsworth 1971) 285.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D0CE3D71E30EE32A25752C2A96E9C946694D6CF&> (Date: 24 May 2016).



Figure 11. Joris Ivens with Hemingway during the filming of *The Spanish Earth*. Source: <http://www.albavolunteer.org/2012/11/what-did-hemingway-do-to-save-the-republic/> (25 May 2016)

The next film named *The 400 Million* (1939) was about the struggle of the Japanese in China. The starting message says that it is not an isolated conflict: a fifth of the world population is there and the outcome is vital to the history of humankind. With this film, his long relationship with China started, even though his stay in China was frustrating. He described that he had ‘one hundred times more difficulties in China than Spain.’<sup>85</sup> His more general aim of making this film was ‘to tell America about a China which they had never before been told about truthfully and completely.’<sup>86</sup> Ivens was happy with the response from the audience. He wrote in a letter dated 26 September 1939 that he was somewhat relieved at the reception of *The 400 Million* in New York and Hollywood.<sup>87</sup> The film was almost unscathed by the censorship and was temporarily banned only in Pennsylvania. Film critic Pare Lorentz commented that Ivens was a talented and courageous Dutch filmmaker who is risking his life in the middle of many problems in the war zone. However, in the end, he called the film confusing because of the poor composition of scenes and narration which was a result of little interaction among the team members.<sup>88</sup> The film was called a good art and a good propaganda. Being a communist,

<sup>85</sup> Joris Ivens, draft of letter to Herman Shumlin, n .d., c. winter 1938-39, JIA.

<sup>86</sup> Joris Ivens, *The Camera and I*. [ Jay Leyda, ed.] (Berlin and New York 1969). 141

<sup>87</sup> Joris Ivens, Mannus Franken, Henri Storck, Marceline Loridan, Jean Rouch, & André Stufkens, *Joris Ivens, wereldcineast*. (Parijs, Hilversum 2008) 250.

<sup>88</sup> Ivens, Franken, Storck, Loridan, Rouch, & Stufkens, *Joris Ivens, wereldcineast*, 251.

his involvement in American government film projects is surprising. Especially, as the World War II was coming closer, such activities were dangerous. For his contradictory involvement, he became subject to suspicion by both FBI and the communist party.

He made *Power and the Land* in 1940. This is one of the films which placed him on the peak of success in his career in the USA. It is a study of rural American electrification. The location is Ohio where he staged a family called 'Parkinson family' to show the hardship of life without electricity. They already had electricity but acted by remembering the harshness of previous days without electricity. Ivens successfully presented all-American values of family, hard work and self-help in this film and it maintained a critical reputation as a 'New Deal' documentary.<sup>89</sup> Pare Lorentz, the producer of *Power and the Land*, was the father of this genre. Rural Electrification Administration (REA), part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded this film. Its remark, 'The farms are left in the dark— [in 1940,] three out of four farms are left in the dark in this big, inventive country. Seems wrong somehow.' had a strong appeal to the society.<sup>90</sup> This film finds a space in American life amenable to socialist ideas.

After this film, Ivens achieved the reputation as a talented filmmaker in the USA. In the same year (on 10 May 1940), the Netherlands was invaded by Germany. There was ideological split between the leftists in America on the question of giving away neutrality or adapting the new Soviet policy. Naturally, Ivens took the side of going with Soviet policy. In 1941, he made a 38-minute long film named *Our Russian Front*. This film was completed a few weeks after Pearl Harbour attack and eventually was box office super hit.

However, his success in the film did not make him immune to the suspicion of the FBI. No matter how much he tried to prove his loyalty by saying he offered his assistance whenever needed, FBI kept following him for several years. In Ivens' FBI file, containing 650 pages, he had been described as a 'one of the most dangerous Communists in United States' who was 'strongly suspected of being a Soviet espionage agent'.<sup>91</sup> In January 1945, when he applied for the re-entry permit before flying to Australia to make a film for the Dutch government, he was refused.

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<sup>89</sup> <http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/great-directors/ivens/> (24 May 2016).

<sup>90</sup> <https://grunes.wordpress.com/2007/11/06/power-and-the-land-joris-ivens-1940/> (24 May 2016).

<sup>91</sup> The Director writing to SAC, Miami, 16 May, 1962. Office memorandum 40-69173, M. Ladd writing to the Director, 15 March 1945. Letter (author and addressee blacked out), 19 November 1946. All: FBI. See: Schoots, & Colmer, *Living dangerously*, 189.

## 4.5 Making of *Indonesia Calling!*

### 4.5.1 *The proposal*

*Indonesia Calling!* is a film, which Ivens called his ‘second *Borinage*’. The paradox was he had never been to Indonesia, and now he was supposed to make a film on that. This film, which he later considered as one of his most famous works, eventually changed his life. It was an inescapable fate for him. As he put in his biography, Indonesia had remained an abstract entity to him since his childhood. He saved tinfoil in his chocolate bars for the colonial works of his country. However, neither the stories of his neighbours suggesting natives as ‘anxious monkeys’, nor the colourful maps of the land where every Dutch could make a fortune attracted him to (former) Indonesia.<sup>92</sup> In 1932, he wanted to go there, but Her Majesty denied him the right for being a suspicious communist. Now, after thirteen years, the invitation came with all its surprise to him for making a film about the Dutch East Indies FOR the Dutch. This film ultimately went down in history as the ‘first anti-colonial film’ in the world.

After the successful exhibition of *Our Russian Front* in New York, Joris Ivens returned to Los Angeles and started a full-time job. Suddenly, one day he received an ‘urgent service call’ from the Dutch government. Initially, the news was shocking for him. He did not feel any such great commitment to Holland anymore. The telegram from San Francisco was sent by the Vice-Governor of the Dutch East Indies. At the first instance, Ivens thought he was not compelled to follow the order to meet him. Then he wondered whether it is a challenge or opportunity. In their meeting, Vice-Governor Van der Plas proposed him a job as the ‘film commissioner’. Not impressed so much by the post but by the progressive words of Van der Plas, Ivens took the offer into consideration. A real new Indonesia had to be built, and that required concerted action, he thought. They sounded optimistic while saying, ‘We think, something great in history will happen, the liberation of a great people. We want that filmed by an artist, by a man of vision, imagination... who knows how to film world events and give them perspective.’ ‘We want you. Your government wants you.’<sup>93</sup> Ivens was even assured about the liberty of the people of the Dutch East Indies by saying that Indonesia would surely become a democratic state, but they were not ready yet, and they had to help them in that. Ivens was given the responsibility to make educational and informative films. Final remark was that they thought he would be ‘the right man in the right place’.<sup>94</sup> It was proved later only that Joris Ivens and the Dutch colonial government had the different ambition about Indonesia.

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<sup>92</sup> Ivens & Destanque, *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal*, 220.

<sup>93</sup> Schoots & Colmer. *Living dangerously*, 187.

<sup>94</sup> Ivens & Destanque, *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal*, 221.

#### ***4.5.2 Expectation versus Reality***

Ivens and Van der Plas signed the contract on 28 September 1944. For Ivens, he was going to work on a film to convince the Dutch and the Indonesians that ‘in the Indonesia of the future they could and would have to work together by complete equality, mutual respect and mutual appreciation’ as stated in his contract.<sup>95</sup> In reality, the situation was different which he would perceive only after reaching Australia. He was refused entry into the war zone of the Pacific because of his status as a suspicious person. As soon as he travelled to Columbia Camp in Brisbane, he realised that the Dutchmen staying there were eagerly waiting to go back to the colony and reoccupy the plantations and mines and resume their pre-war lifestyle. There was already a split between Colonel Simon Spoor (in charge of NEFIS) and Van der Plas on the issue of appointing such a controversial personality in Dutch official function. However, Van der Plas and Van Mook were in his favour.

#### ***4.5.3 Making of the Film***

Ivens moved his film unit to Sydney. Initially, his plan was to make a feature film in black and white and two short films in colour. More short films would follow as there had been a contract with Dutch Minister of Education P.A. Kerstens for making a series of twenty educational films. In Sydney, he met many influential leaders and workers of the Communist party including the secretary of Indonesian Seamen’s Union. Within a year, Ivens sensed that Indonesian independence was around the corner, rather from being far away. Moreover, there was an anti-Dutch feeling in Australia as Prime Minister Chifley and his government took the policy of non-cooperation with the Dutch nationals and the trade union movement was sympathetic to the Indonesian independence movement. Everything went in favour of the freedom of Indonesia. It was only the Dutch who wanted to keep their colony ignoring the real condition. His strongest supporter, Charles van der Plas was becoming more isolated. Nonetheless, Ivens renewed his contract for another year as he already had so many plans for it and he wanted to do something for his country.<sup>96</sup> He had contact with Republican Indonesians and came to the conclusion that it was an authentic liberation struggle which deserved his support. The Dutch government was using propaganda to justify their colonial rule and portray Soekarno and other Indonesian leaders as Japanese collaborators. Ivens was not convinced with this propaganda. He was looking for a plot for his film about Indonesian struggle for

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<sup>95</sup> Schoots & Colmer. *Living dangerously*, 188.

<sup>96</sup> Jansen Hendriks, *Een Vorbeldige Colonie*, 209.

independence. He found the appropriate story right in front of the window of their rented flat in Elizabeth Bay where he and his then partner Marion Michelle were staying. The Dutch ships were preparing to sail to Dutch East Indies, but the Waterside workers started a strike preventing all ships from sailing from the Australian ports. One of the demands of the boycott was that the Netherlands had to recognise The Republic of Indonesia, which was next to impossible for the Dutch at that time. Australian and some other foreign trade union movements participated in the boycott and supported Indonesian struggle for independence. Ivens with his partner and colleague Marion Michelle made the film based on what they saw right in front of their nose. *Indonesia Calling!* took birth in Australian harbour in 1945 and became a story of 'ships that did not sail'. The film was sponsored by Waterfront Unions Australia and produced by Australasia Film Syndicate. In this film Joris Ivens worked as the director, Marion Michelle as the photographer, Katherine Duncan (an Australian actress, playwright and radio scriptwriter) as the scriptwriter, Peter Finch as the commentator. As reported by Catherine Duncan, she had to write the script 20 times before it was finally approved by the narrator, Peter Finch. Finch, an Australian radio actor, was hired for a one-hour studio session and they had to finalise the script for narration within that time.<sup>97</sup> Other members of the film crew were Canadian cameraman Donald Fraser and his wife Joan Fraser, who was one of the film's editors; John Sendoek, the sound technician, was a former Indonesian political prisoner of the Dutch, John Heyer, Arthur Higgins, Alex Poignant, Ken Coldicutt, and Harry Watt.<sup>98</sup> John Sendoek also performed in the Javanese dancing sequence in the film.

It was not possible for Ivens to shoot the film openly. Ivens was still working for the Netherlands East Indies. Therefore, many of the shots were taken by Michelle.<sup>99</sup> Some of the shots were taken at a moment's notice. In the post-production, both Ivens and Michelle edited those enacted shots by Michelle in their cutting room. Financial crisis and scarcity of camera equipment were acute. Ivens and his film unit were not looking for any financial profit from the film. In fact, Ivens and his group gave free labour for the whole project. Ivens did not spend Dutch government's money for making the film. Although, later on, the official report of NIGIS claimed so.

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<sup>97</sup> <http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/film-history-conference-papers/ivens-indonesia-calling/> (20 July 2016).

<sup>98</sup> A. Stufkens. *Joris Ivens: Wereldcineast*. 283 – 319.

<sup>99</sup> Catherine Duncan, 'In Relationship with Paul Strand and Joris Ivens; The legacy today', *European Foundation Joris Ivens newsmagazine*, 9 (November 2003) 19.

#### 4.6 Content of the Film

The content of the film supports Indonesian struggle for independence. The introductory message says that the people of Indonesia were fighting at that time against Dutch blockade, forced agreement and unprovoked military aggression. Nothing can defeat Indonesian people from their struggle for 'real freedom' and 'true national independence'.



Figure 12. Poster of the film *Indonesia Calling!* Source: <http://theartofvisionganz.blogspot.nl/2014/10/indonesia-calling-joris-ivens-1946.html> (1 June 2016)

In the beginning, it talks about the historical background of the War and long-term relationship between Australia and Indonesia. The Indonesian people were returning to Java, and before they leave, the secretary of the Australian trade union movement hands over a flag to Indonesian colleagues as a symbol of solidarity for their struggle on behalf of the trade union. Indonesians expressed their gratitude and reaffirmed the spirit of their fight. 'May Australia and Indonesia be united forever...Indonesia *Merdeka!*' the man said. Then the narrator tells us that the real story of this film is the story of ships that did not sail. It emphasised the relationship between Indonesia and Australia and their struggle against the common enemy, Japan. Now these people were fighting for their independence, it said, 'The voice of Indonesia Calling' and played the radio announcement of the proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesians looked very jubilant to hear that. The Indonesians present in Australia expressed their loyalty

and took an oath to sacrifice their lives for freedom. A beautiful, traditional Javanese dance performance a part of the celebration followed afterwards. Next morning 72 million people took an oath to defend freedom with their lives. Then it focused the economic impact of colonialism. The Dutch colonisers deprived Indonesian people of the benefit of their agriculture, rubber trade, oil refineries and other wealth which amounted to 32 million pounds or 100 million dollars a year. After the end of the war, the Dutch colonial government wanted to reconquer their treasured islands (the colonies), and for that, they needed ships which were docked in Australia, continued the narrator. Those ships were also necessary to carry soldiers and arms to break the back of the young Republic by killing people. So, the workers launched a strike and participated in the direct action. The boycott spread all over the port. They shared their plan with Australian workers and ‘spoke in a language that workers of every country understand’. Gradually, a huge procession started and the leaders pointed to the Atlantic Charter, World Trade Union Congress, and freedom of all nations and thus urged for support for Indonesian independence. They did what was in their hand; blocking the sailing of Dutch ships. The Dutch declared those ships as mercy ships carrying food and medical supply to escape the outrage of the workers. The Australian Prime Minister Chifley’s statement published in the newspaper the *Daily Mirror* is displayed on the screen. It said, “arms, munitions loaded on ‘Mercy Ships’”. Moreover, the radio announcement from the Prime Minister was ‘You fought for your freedom, let the Indonesians have theirs.’ Sixteen hundred armed Dutch soldiers were stuck on the port and one Dutchman, who spoke for the workers of the Netherlands also supported Indonesian freedom. A man is seen writing the slogan on the wall: ‘1938: No scrap for the Japs, 1945: No arms for the Dutch’.



Figure 13. Movie scene from *Indonesia Calling!* Source: <http://sensesofcinema.com/2009/miff-premiere-fund-post-punk-dossier/indonesia-calling/> (1 July 2016)



However, they were ready to let the ships sail if assured that they would not carry any arms to use against the Indonesian people. However, they never got that assurance. They painted all the Dutch ships black as a display of black ban. Soon the British, the American, the Chinese, the Indian, the New Zealander and the Canadian workers and crew also joined them. All along the waterfront, the ships were stopped. The nationalist leaders from all over the world such as Jinnah, Nehru and Gandhi from India as well as leaders of the Soviet Union and the Philippines protested the use of arms to suppress Indonesian people. In their opinion, Indonesia had already proven that they could govern their country. The ban was running its course smoothly. Suddenly news arrived at the office of the Indonesian Seamen's office that a Dutch ship had sailed with an Indian crew on board. The people present at the office immediately rushed to stop the ship. They tried to convince the Indian seamen by saying 'brothers, Indonesia's fight for independence is your fight' and requested to stop the engine by speaking in the Indian language.



Figure 14. Still from *Indonesia Calling!* Source: <https://www.idfa.nl/industry/tags/project.aspx?id=abc7b841-9a47-4d69-9144-fcc2f63ccb60> (1 June 2016)

Initially, they went away, and the Indonesians were upset. However, to their total surprise, they found that they came back after a short while. What a moment of joy! The Indonesian independence committee thanked them gratefully for their heroic act. Jim Hilly, the General Secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation, gave a speech where he reaffirmed their support to destroy Dutch imperialism. His presence gives the film an extra attention. After that people from India and China contributed to Indonesian fund with one thousand one hundred pounds. Then a procession of Indonesians and their allies moved forward together by singing

Indonesian national anthem. The film ended with this symbolic expression of Indonesia as an independent republic. The duration of the film is 22 minutes and 52 seconds.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter tells the story of the first anti-colonial film in the world. To understand a film, one must understand the filmmaker. Perhaps, Joris Ivens had been one of the most controversial figures in history. If we try to look at the wider context of Dutch documentary films in the twentieth century in general, we may agree that modesty, discretion, artistry, and intelligent observation had been the virtues of them. Ivens had been the founder and the opponent of these traditional values simultaneously.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, after the discussion about the colonial propaganda films by the Dutch government produced at that period in the previous chapter, we easily see the sharp distinction between Joris Ivens' and others' work. According to Peter Cowie, Ivens work scorns the objectivity of the *genre*, and he presents what he observed with his eyes. As Ivens said in *The Camera and I*, 'The newsreel tells us *where-when-what*; the documentary film tells us *why*, and the relationship between events.' His life had been dramatic in many ways. In this chapter, his early life, some glimpses on his other works and an elaborate analysis of his famous anti-colonial film *Indonesia Calling* has been discussed. The next chapter will continue with the impact of the film and aftermath of this film. The ups and downs in his relationship with his fatherland had always been a matter of concern by his followers. Some people detest him, and some others worship him. However, it is true that he had the courage to do what he felt was right. Ivens was a man with a cause, and he was ready to sacrifice everything to reach the goal he knew to be just. He could convince Soendardjo, an Indonesian political prisoner and Soeparmin, the secretary of the Indonesian seamen's union to join his film crew. The inspiration was mutually shared among them. Now, the question comes that what happened afterwards? What was the impact of this film? The next chapter will focus on these issues.

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<sup>100</sup> P. Cowie, *Dutch cinema: An illustrated history*. (London, The Hague 1979) 27.

## Chapter Five

### 5.0 The Aftermath of *Indonesia Calling!*

After the analysis of the film *Indonesia Calling!* and the life of Joris Ivens, now the discussion continues about the aftermath of the film. Naturally, it led to an unpleasant outcome immediately which meant a split between Ivens and the authorities of the Dutch government. This chapter focuses on Ivens relationship with his country with a discussion on his life and the films made by him after *Indonesia Calling!*

### 5.1 The aftermath of *Indonesia Calling!*

#### 5.1.1 Reaction of the colonial government

The response of the colonial government was obviously negative. NIGIS took Joris Ivens and his film as a serious issue. In an official report entitled ‘Notes regarding matters concerning film and photo distribution’ long discussions are found in this case.<sup>101</sup> The contact between him and Van der Plas in the United States was considered as an ‘illogical contact’ and ‘outside the knowledge of NIGIS’. It says that he was supposed to make some documentary films depicting the liberation and rebuilding of the Netherlands Indies. However, no assurance was given (in the contract) that those films would be made in time or would be suitable for the world market. The report called Ivens’ title, ‘Film Commissioner of the Netherlands East Indies’ as ‘ostentatious’. It also says that in keeping with the contract, Ivens could disconnect his work from the film activities of NIGIS but a system of mutual co-operation would exist. However, Ivens had undermined the confidence of NIGIS personnel by his underground action (shooting his anti-colonial film secretly). Finally, the report expresses disappointment on Ivens management skill and political motivation ‘although he might be a great cameraman’. The next sections of the report discussed how unreliable he was throughout the period. All his past records including those of being refused by the Allied Command of General MacArthur as War correspondent to enter the operational areas, reports of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, and refusal to get re-entry permit for the United States were analysed. By referring to these reports, it was made clear that these authorities knew better than Van der Plas what difficulties could be expected from a communist. The report also mentioned the idleness of Ivens project and called him a ‘muddler’. There was also disappointment about the financial expenditure of the film project by Ivens. They called it a ‘bottomless pit’. The team took

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<sup>101</sup> NA, Hoge Commissariaat Indonesie (Jakarta), 2.05.189, inv. Nr. 449

advantage of the voids in the contract between Van der Plas and Joris Ivens and used much money from the government. The total amount of hotel expenses and ‘representation’ by Ivens and his co-operators was some ten thousand of guilders which came from the treasury of the Netherlands East Indies government. The Head NIGIS reported that he was apparently making common cause with the Indonesian strikers and deserters in Australia. He even invited some of these Australian communists to his flat for the farewell party before his departure for the Indies. Now it had been discovered that throughout the whole period, he was giving his professional assistance in making a film dealing with the ‘Fight for the liberty of Indonesia’. The NIGIS authority thought that they were still lucky that Ivens had already resigned. Otherwise, he and his ‘protector’ Van der Plas could cause more trouble, not only regarding information but also politically.

It is understandable why the Dutch colonial authority was so angry about the activities of Ivens. If he had spent Dutch government’s money to make a film against their cause that had been a serious violation of the contract and ethically unfair.<sup>102</sup> The film was a mystery at the time of its shooting at the harbour. Later it became apparent that he shot the film while he was still in the service of the Dutch government. It was a tense time for both parties. Ivens realised that it was high time that he resigned from his official post before he would be dismissed. On 21 November 1945, he publicly announced his resignation. He sent a telegram to the authority in Batavia explaining his situation. It said that he was unable to carry out his assigned duty as Film Commissioner because of the changed circumstances in Indonesia. This telegram emphasised the importance of peace in South East Asia and building up a future Indonesia based on a relationship of mutual respect and equal cooperation between the Dutch and the Indonesians. It mentioned particularly the Atlantic Charter which ensured the right of each nation to choose their government. In the concluding remarks, Ivens expressed his solidarity with the will of freedom and independence of the Indonesian people and commented that the present position of the Dutch government was serving only a small group of people in Holland.<sup>103</sup>

Shortly afterwards, he held a press conference to let the world know about the situation. There he explained to the journalists why he made that movie and what his position was on the issue of Indonesia. He said that he came to know of the evil design of the Dutch colonial government and there was no democracy and equality of people in Indonesia. Ivens also spoke

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<sup>102</sup> There are different opinions on this matter.

<sup>103</sup> Schoots & Colmer. *Living dangerously*, 202.

of his personal belief and the motto of his work. He said that while working as a documentary filmmaker in the Netherlands, the United States, Spain, China, Russia, Canada and anywhere else in the world, he had always focused on serving the ideals of freedom and democracy. The purpose of the film was also to serve the war effort of the United Nations and establishing a lasting peace in the South-East Asia. It also represents the future Indonesia which should be based on Western ideas of democracy and freedom by Atlantic Charter. The Atlantic Charter expressed the right of each nation to choose their government and in his opinion, Indonesian people had every right to get the effective application of the Charter to get their independence. The attitude of the Dutch government did not reconcile with this until then, and as an artist, he had never done any artwork which was in contradiction to his belief and principles, and he would not that do in future as well. Finally, Ivens said that as a Dutch citizen, he believed that the great democratic tradition of the European people must be applied in the Far East and which would allow good understanding between two (groups of) free peoples and would serve the interests of both parties. He believed that the current attitude of the government of Dutch East Indies served the interest of only a small group of people in the Netherlands. In his opinion, the effective application of the Atlantic Charter in Indonesia would bring peace and could benefit the prosperity of the world and the neighbouring countries; Australia could be particularly benefited.<sup>104</sup> The news was published in many newspapers including the *New York Times* with the headline 'East Indies aide quits in protest'. The report said that Joris Ivens resigned and stated that 'I do not agree with the policy of the Netherlands East Indies Government of Indonesia'. They called it the first reported resignation of an important employee over the Government's policy.<sup>105</sup>

The reaction from Van der Plas and Van Mook, who had put their trust in Ivens, was nothing but painful silence. Other colonial officials in Australia were furious at him, and he was officially declared as a 'traitor to Queen and country' by Press chief Alfred Schuurman. He mentioned that the press conference of Ivens took place exactly on the same day when Queen Wilhelmina restated that Indonesia would become an independent member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Thus, he showed his distrust to the goodwill of his nation and supported Indonesian demand by rejecting Queen's proposal.

Another accusation against him was that he had performed a criminal act by using Dutch official resource to shoot *Indonesia Calling!* and started shooting while he was still in

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<sup>104</sup> Ivens. *Autobiografie van een filmer*. (Amsterdam 1970) 152.

<sup>105</sup> *The New York times*, 22 November 1945, page 10.

the service of the Dutch government. He had abused the country's taxpayers' money paid to him as salary and the equipment served to him. Fred Daniell and Van Hubert Quispel had such opinion. This accusation was not entirely true. It is true that he took first a few shots before resigning. However, the camera and film stock which he used initially were provided by an Australian government body. Later he borrowed a very basic and less functional Kinamo hand camera which was not a Dutch property. However, he continued to receive his salary as a Film Commissioner and carried out his responsibilities until 21 January 1946. During the last two months of his service, he also contributed to the development of the educational program as an employee of the colonial government.<sup>106</sup>

### **5.1.2 Release of the film**

*Indonesia Calling!* was released on 9 August 1946 in Sydney without the name of the creator. Some Dutch officers wanted to disturb the viewing but were impressed by the film. Joris Ivens boasted that it was the 'first labour film in Australia'. Two copies of the Malaysian version were sent to Java by the ship named 'Manoora', where those would be copied and sent to Djokjakarta. Unfortunately, there was a problem in finding the commercial distributor to display the film in their theatres. The whole team ran completely out of money and Ivens could not even pay his employees. Ivens never anticipated that the situation could be so bad. It got even worse with the news that The Commonwealth Film Censorship Board had imposed a ban on the export of the film showing the reason that 'it would offend the people of a foreign country'.<sup>107</sup> This ban meant no money from foreign lands as well. Moreover, the situation was at its worst with the critical health condition of Joris Ivens. After finishing the film, his health condition deteriorated. An attack of asthma prevailed and floored him. The treatment was not satisfactory and eventually he went into a coma. Finally, he survived with the help of his friends and doctors.<sup>108</sup>

However, good news came from the ministers of Australia. Ivens' friends, i.e., Eddy Allison and Jim Healy made some ministers watch the film. They called *Indonesia Calling!* a 'hot potato' and promised to lift the ban after the upcoming election in September. There was a debate in the parliament on this issue. Premier Fraser said in the parliament that he had watched the film and found no communist propaganda in it. Three months later, the Labour Party won the elections. So, by November the film got permission to be exported to the United

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<sup>106</sup> Schoots & Colmer. *Living dangerously*, 204-205.

<sup>107</sup> A. Stufkens. *Joris Ivens: Wereldcineast*. 304.

<sup>108</sup> Ivens & Destanque, *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal*, 233.

States as well as in Britain. One of the first countries to buy the film was the Soviet Union. Reports came in the newspapers of the Netherlands about the film.<sup>109</sup> Per Aneta, it was shown at the Standley Theatre in New York and would continue its premiere in England, France and Poland.<sup>110</sup> The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Indonesia, Mohammad Hatta wrote a note of thanks to Joris Ivens for his solidarity with the new-born Republic. A radio announcement from Indonesia said that ‘the Indonesian people fighting for their independence thanked the Australian labour union and port workers who have sent us a film about the strike in Sydney.’ Ivens was more than happy to hear this message.<sup>111</sup> He was also very satisfied to receive letters from his Indonesian friends later about the good reception of the film in different places. One comment was that *Indonesia Calling!* would be screened every day in their village. Some of them mentioned that *Indonesia Calling!* played a direct role in the struggle for their independence.<sup>112</sup> In the upcoming days, Ivens developed a detailed plan for the organisation of Indonesian film industry. In his letters to the Prime Minister Sjahrir, he explained the key features of the plan such as First, foundation of Indonesian National Film Board and connecting it with an International Film Bridge to campaign for support from international artist community; Second, making educational and instructional films, formation of mobile projection and so on. Unfortunately, the plan was shelved, and Ivens could never visit Indonesia in person.

## 5.2 Ivens’ relationship with the Netherlands

‘This is not an anti-Dutch film; this is an anti-colonial film’ Joris Ivens said about *Indonesia Calling!* However, the Dutch colonial authority was not ready to accept that. They saw it as Ivens’ expression of doubt on the good intention of the representatives of his nation. In February 1947, he went to Amsterdam. He met his fellow filmmakers and artists, exchanged views on the international status of documentary films during that period but tried to avoid any contact with Dutch authorities. The members of the CPN were more interested in *Indonesia Calling!* than he had expected. Most of the newspapers were quite positive about him. However, Ivens’ impression was not good enough. He wrote about that time later in his memoir, ‘I could not stay in Holland for long. I was a pariah, a traitor. With my resignation, I had snubbed the Queen, with *Indonesia Calling!* I had betrayed my country. I was attacked and

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<sup>109</sup> See: *De Tijd*, Saturday, 21 December 1946, page 4. & *De Waarheid*, Saturday, 21 December 1946, Page 4.

<sup>110</sup> *The Nieuwe Courant*, Wednesday, 24 December 1947, Page 3.

<sup>111</sup> A. Stufkens. *Joris Ivens: Wereldcineast*. 235.

<sup>112</sup> Ivens & Destanque, *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal*, 235.

slandered from all sides. Even the Dutch Communist Party disagreed with me. To them, I was nothing more than an adventurer.’<sup>113</sup> Screening of the film was banned in some film festivals. For example, in 1948, it was removed from Locarno film festival after the intervention of the Dutch side. As soon as they learned that *Indonesia Calling!* was a ‘political propaganda’, which also contained some ‘glaring inaccuracies’, the film festival committee decided to remove it from the program.<sup>114</sup> Even in 1962, long after the independence of Indonesia, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Luns refused to send representatives to a film festival in Dutch Film Day in Munich, West Germany when he came to know that *Indonesia Calling!* would be shown there. The relation between Ivens and the Dutch authorities remained uncomfortable during the Cold War period because of his activities in the Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain. He even faced a problem with the renewal of his passport. The Dutch embassies granted only a three months’ extension or a *laissez-passer* to him. This obstacle hindered his movement. He could not even attend his mother’s funeral when the news of her death reached Poland. He wrote about this incident that as far as the Netherlands was concerned, he was still considered as a traitor and a dangerous man whom they mistrusted.<sup>115</sup>

In the meantime, he continued his work in Poland, Yugoslavia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and other places in the Eastern Europe. After the completion of *The First Years* (1949) in Poland, he signed a contract with the DEFA studio in Berlin. He made the *Song of the River* which he called ‘the most anti-bureaucratic film than ever imaginable’.<sup>116</sup> He won World Peace Prize in 1955. While making *Till Eulenspiegel*, he spent more time in Paris than in Berlin. He also shot films in France, Italy, China, Cuba, Mali and Chile. Ivens came to the Netherlands again in 1959 to join the Arnhem Film Festival. It was the first festive occasion to repair the relationship between him and his fatherland. He was invited there to celebrate the screening of his great Cannes festival prize-winning film *La Seine. A Rencontre Paris* (1958). Most of his colleagues in the Dutch Film League appreciated his work. Many of them still remembered him as the maker of the great films like *The Bridge* and *Rain*. However, his revolutionary zeal was revived in 1960. The tide of decolonisation was at its height during that time. The victory of anti-imperialist movement was present in Asia, in Africa and Latin America. Moreover, from 1965 to 1970 he devoted himself in support to the liberation of Vietnam and made films like *17e parallèle: La guerre du peuple* (17th Parallel: Vietnam in War) and *Loin du Vietnam*

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<sup>113</sup> He wrote in his memoir *La memoire d’un regard* which is translated in Schoots & Colmer, *Living Dangerously*, 213 and Bakker. *Joris Ivens and the documentary context*, 187.

<sup>114</sup> Friday, 23 July 1948, 3e Jaargang No.240 *Het Dagblad* page 2

<sup>115</sup> Ivens & Destanque, *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal*, 246.

<sup>116</sup> Schoots & Colmer. *Living dangerously*, 244.



(Far from Vietnam) against the American war of aggression, the same way he did in 1946 supporting Indonesian war of independence against the Dutch aggression.

The next occasion for coming back to his homeland was in 1964 to celebrate his sixty-fifth birthday. The NFM (Netherlands Film Museum) organised a retrospective of Ivens' work. The NFM played a crucial role in the publicity of Ivens' works as most of those were not circulated in theatres or by any commercial distributors. He continued his work per his political ideology just like before. The relationship with his motherland always remained critical. Even though most of the newspapers kept writing about him, mostly positive, there was no ease in the relationship with the government body. For example, before accepting the invitation to come to the Netherlands in 1959, he asked for the guarantee from the government that he would not be held hostage! On the one hand, in the year 1969, he was offered to make a short film by the Minister of Culture, Marga Klompe. The film had to be about the Netherlands, and it could agree with his view.<sup>117</sup> With much caution, he submitted the synopsis of the plan of the film *The Flying Dutchman*. On the other, he was disgusted with the critical remarks by Minister de Koning on his film *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* At the presentation ceremony of the Dick Scherpenzeel Award in 1978. It could be clearly seen that the government had 'something' against the filmmaker. Nonetheless, the discussion on Joris Ivens and his work went on, and a group of young Dutch filmmakers of Dutch Film Museum, under its director Jan de Vaal could find inspiration from his work.

The last phase of the relationship between Ivens and his country was remarkable. Finally, the ice was melting from both sides. In 1985, the Minister of Culture, Elco Brinkman of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) went to Paris with a team to hand over the 'Golden Calf' award (the culture prize of Dutch Film Festival) to Ivens personally. At that time, the minister finally made the historical comment regarding Ivens' position in the case of Indonesia. His speech read:

Although your professional colleagues can outline your qualities as a filmmaker better than I can, I would like to like dwell on one aspect of your work. Namely the strong social conscience and the political commitment that have characterised your work through the years. From your involvement with the subject of your documentaries, you derived a capacity, sometimes far ahead of others, to recognise the historical significance of political and social developments and capture it on film. This

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<sup>117</sup> Bakker, *Joris Ivens and the documentary context*, 190.

involvement and commitment have added a dimension to your work that has definitely contributed to the genuinely exceptional position that you, as a Dutch filmmaker, occupy the world...Shortly after the war, your support to Indonesia's right to self-determination and your film *Indonesia Calling!* brought you into conflict with the Dutch government. Now that we have the opportunity to meet each other, I do not want to ignore the past. The Netherlands raised diverse obstacle to your work as a filmmaker. I can say now that history agrees with you more than with your opponents at that time.<sup>118</sup>

It was the most important recognition of his film *Indonesia Calling!* and the long-awaited approval of his ideology. In the past, he asked many times for public reparation from The Hague. He demanded that the government must openly admit its mistake and apologise for all the harassments they caused by confiscating his passport. It never happened to him until then. It was more like a psychological or emotional matter than political. So now, when the occasion came that the Dutch extended a hand of friendship after over forty years, he accepted it immediately. The joy was multiplied with the news that the Production Fund and Dutch Television were interested in providing three hundred thousand guilders in the making of his next film about China, *The Wind*. There were some criticisms in the Netherlands of this reunion. Michel Korzec and Hans Moll wrote in *Intermediar* that Ivens had provided propagandist assistance to two mass murderers (Stalin and Mao) by making films like *Song of Heroes* and *600 Million with You*.<sup>119</sup> Thus Ivens had remained a controversial figure in the Netherlands even after the reconciliation with the government authorities. Some critics went further to comment that, at the beginning of his career he made great films like *The Bridge*, *Rain* and *Zuiderzee*. After that, he sold his soul to the devil (communism) and could never anything worthy again. Therefore, little could be learned from Ivens.<sup>120</sup>

### 5.3 Conclusion

This chapter focused on his life and work afterwards *Indonesia Calling!* with attention to his relationship with the Netherlands. This discussion makes it clear that his urge for standing beside peoples' struggle was not limited to this film only. Hans Schoots, in his biographical work on Ivens, has portrayed the struggle throughout his life. Being a communist, he had

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<sup>118</sup> Speech Minister Brinkman on the presentation of the Culture Prize on 11 September 1985, *Cinematheek journal*, (October 1985), 5-6.

<sup>119</sup> *Intermediar*, 4 October 1985.

<sup>120</sup> Bakker, *Joris Ivens and the documentary context*, 194.

devoted his life to making films wherever there was a revolution. He had documented people's fight for the right of self-determination throughout his life, all over the world. It would be unwise to judge his idea of nationalism compared to his contemporaries. He was far ahead of his time. The downfall of imperialism was just a matter of time, and he could perceive the wind of change better than his contemporaries. The question remains, 'why only him?' Why not any other filmmakers appointed by the Dutch colonial government? It is a difficult question to answer without analysing the lives and works of others. Therefore, we leave this issue for future research. However, perhaps, his extensive experiences while working in many different parts of the globe made him aware of the tide of anti-colonial aspiration in peoples' mind. Moreover, the idea of socialism helped him think beyond national borders.

From the research on his autobiographies, I think, the union of working class people and their victory over the elite government were the driving force of his artistic works. In Ivens, one just does not see his work; but his ideology, his cause and his struggle to defend that cause. He had received enough recognition for his work in his lifetime. His 'anti-colonial propaganda film' *Indonesia Calling!* got more attention in international media than all the colonial propaganda films commissioned by the Dutch government. He was awarded the World Peace Prize in 1955, won a Golden Palm at Cannes and the Golden Gate Award in San Francisco in 1957, the International Lenin Prize for Science and Culture in Moscow in 1967, an honorary doctorate of the Royal College of Art in London in 1978, was made Grand Officer of the Republic of Italy and was presented with the golden medal 'For Merits for the Beautiful Arts' in 1985 by the Spanish King Juan Carlos, the Che Guevarra Prize in Cuba in 1987, was awarded the 'Golden Lion' for his complete oeuvre at the Venice Film Festival in 1988<sup>121</sup>. It is unfortunate that he had been misunderstood in his country for more than half a century. Finally, the happy reunion happened in 1985, and he was honoured in his fatherland. In 1988, he was made a citizen of Nijmegen. The next year, Ivens was decorated with a Knighthood in the order of the Dutch Lion. He died of a heart attack brought on by kidney failure on 28 June 1989 in Paris.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> <http://ivens.nl/en/biographie> (27 July 2016).

<sup>122</sup> The *New York Times*, 30 June 1989. <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/30/obituaries/joris-ivens-90-dutch-documentary-film-maker.html> (29 July 2016).

## Chapter Six

### 6.0 Conclusion

The history of Dutch propaganda films is an integral part of the history of Dutch colonialism. This paper focused on both propaganda and anti-propaganda films to get a complete picture of it. The main research question was why Joris Ivens made *Indonesia Calling!* To answer that question this paper discussed the history of propaganda films from different perspectives. It considered the political situation in Indonesia, the rationale of the Dutch colonial authority for commissioning propaganda films, and Joris Ivens' life and work. There could be three possible reasons why he made the film. He needed the money, or he wanted to make a positive contribution, or he wanted to protest colonialism because of his involvement in the left-wing politics. From his autobiographies, it seemed that though he was not financially solvent at that time, neither the money nor the post of a 'Film Commissioner' was the main reason of interest to him. He was not aware of the real intention of the Dutch in the case of Indonesia before going to Australia. His intention to accept the job of a film commissioner was to do something for his country and support another nation on the eve of their new journey as an independent republic. However, we must keep in mind that Ivens, as a communist, had made critical movies before *Indonesia Calling!* and based on that expected to have freedom in making this movie. The official reports of the film and media propaganda department of the NIGIS show the anger and disappointment of the Dutch colonial government about Ivens after he 'betrayed' them. This situation was a result of the contradiction between Joris Ivens' ideology and the policy of the Dutch government in exile at that time.

Going back to Thelma Herman McCormack's three phases of social development to determine the role and motivation of a propagandist, we can say Joris Ivens' activities lie on the second category of motivation. In this stage, "the propagandist working without formal directives depends on cues from the environment when he makes decision about where and how to assert himself".<sup>123</sup> He was a highly motivated communist propagandist. He did not have much plan before starting the job. Once he was there, he carefully evaluated the situation. After finding favourable signs in the environment, he chose the situation in which he would appear and by what seemed expedient then. He wanted to press the Independence movement of the Indonesians with his revolutionary movie. His target was to attract international audiences even

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<sup>123</sup> McCormack, 'The motivation and role of a propagandist'. *Social Forces*, 30:4 (1952) 388-394, 392.

though the immediate outcome might be predominantly hostile. Joris Ivens did not have a large group of followers, rather a group of motivated supporters. He also looked forward to achieving popular support from the people who were yet to make up their minds. Ivens was a risk taker. He was the first to make an anti-colonial film. In Thelma Herman McCormack's theory of the motivation and role of a propagandist, such risk-takers are found in the second stage of the development of a social movement. The delegates found at this stage are skilful enough to carry on complex responsibilities of political advocacy.

In summarising Joris Ivens' motivation and role as a propagandist, several things come out. He did not come from a working-class family and there is no evidence that he made films for money. His financial needs were secondary to his political idealism. The intensity of his motivation helped him disregard the immediate consequence of his action. Ivens was ready to accept the unpopularity in his fatherland because of his aggressive assertion as a propagandist. Any social movement demands some degree of creative activity from its descendants. He used his creativity as a filmmaker and protested colonial propaganda with his anti-colonial film. His determination and adventurous nature made him pioneer in this field since he had no precedent to guide him.

To locate Joris Ivens' motives, this study throws light into the life and career of Joris Ivens to understand his political ideology which drove him into making this film. It also describes the difficulties faced by him because of his revolutionary activities. He was a well-known communist and most of his films focused on working class people or oppression of individuals anywhere in the world. *Indonesia Calling!* was not his first film on this subject. Films like *The Bridge* and *Borinage* were based on similar topic. *The Spanish Earth*, a film made for supporting Spanish Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, was one of the most important films in his career. Despite his reputation as a filmmaker in the United States, Ivens was under the suspicion of FBI for being a communist agent. It is surprising that the Dutch colonial government appointed him as a 'film commissioner' to make a series of educational films about the East Indies for them. We do not know what was in Van der Plas's mind when he said 'You will be the right man in the right place', but considering the outcome, Ivens turned out to be the most unfortunate choice for that post. They must have expected Ivens to fulfil their agenda of making films showing a good impression of the Dutch in colonies like other filmmakers of that period. According to Ivens' biography, he thought that the Dutch were now intended to hand over their power to the people of Indonesia and his film would encourage them on that new journey. Unfortunately, the real condition was different which he realised only after reaching Australia. Instead of helping the Indonesians to prepare for self-governance,

the Dutch were eager to restore their power in the colonies. Moved by the plight of the Indonesians, Ivens soon became sympathetic to their struggle for independence. Especially, after the declaration of independence by Sukarno and Hatta on 17 August 1945 followed by the surrender of the Japanese, he decided to make a film for their cause. Therefore, this study concludes with the hypothesis that Joris Ivens made *Indonesia Calling!* as a protest imperialism. This film is also a demonstration of his left-wing ideology with the support of Australia. Mapping the role and motivation of Joris Ivens, who was a well-known communist and anti-colonial propagandist, is the major contribution of this thesis.



Figure 16. Indonesian Peoples' procession for independence in 1945. Source: <http://www.pauldoolan.com/2011/06/joris-ivens-and-legend-of-indonesia.html> (14 July 2016)

In *Indonesia Calling!* the presentation of an international solidarity among different nationalities symbolised the brotherhood of various countries in the fight against imperialism.<sup>124</sup> This film had a significant impact on the people of Indonesia. It also let the world hear the voice of the Indonesian people. The film was completed under various obstacles starting from extreme Dutch surveillance to the refusal of the film supplier, Kodak, to supply film to Ivens. He was aware of the possible harassment from his Dutch authorities, which might result in not only his dismissal from the job but also his arrest or even exile. Therefore, he resigned and released the film without exposing his name. Nonetheless, this led to a split with his country which lasted for more than half a century. Ivens had always declared that it was not a film against the Netherlands, rather a film against imperialism. He noted in his diary after the first screening of *Indonesia Calling!*

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<sup>124</sup> A. Stufkens, *Joris Ivens: Wereldcineast*. 314.

It's not a personal story, but personal photography. [...] The strength of these quiet Indonesian people as they stand before the KPM building, refusing to sail, to work, to do anything. The masses fully in step with the Tanah Merah heroes, with the French and Russian Revolutions. [...] Never before have I been so aware of the renewal of the link between artist and audience. We were on trial that evening, and our testimony would be judged, not only by the small group of 25 witnesses, but by the whole Indonesian people. Before such an audience there could be no excuse [for the] lie, the half-truth, or the failure to comprehend the struggles and aspirations of a nation occupied for more than 300 years.<sup>125</sup>

By analysing the newspaper reports in the United Kingdom and the United States, it became clear that *Indonesia Calling!* received more attention in international media than any other colonial propaganda films commissioned by the government. The film was presented in many film festivals despite objections from the Dutch government. Presumably, none of these films was made to earn a profit. It was more about political propaganda than the financial investment. It appears from a letter written to his mother that he was deeply saddened by the fact that he was considered as a traitor in his fatherland. Unwelcomed in the Netherlands after being banned from the USA, still he continued making films per his communist ideology until his death. His life was full of uncertainty. Regardless his strong affiliation with the Soviet Union, he found it difficult to live in Moscow. So, Ivens had to deal with a feeling of statelessness all his life.

It might not seem so surprising considering the global political turmoil of the period that he had been subjected to such suspicion and harassment like any other Communists of the Cold War period. He was treated as *persona non-grata* in the Netherlands and renewal of his passport was repeatedly refused. It was considered as an attack on the freedom of expression and freedom of movement of an artist. His relationship with his country has remained complicated throughout his life. Even the Dutch Communist Party disagreed with him and thought him to be a mere adventurer.<sup>126</sup>

The press was not that hostile to him. *De Waarheid*, *Het Parool*, *Het Vrij Volk* and *Algemeen Handelsblad* published positive reports on him during his visit to the Netherlands two years after making the film. So, the accusation that he never received proper recognition

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<sup>125</sup> Drew Cottle and Angela Keys, 'From Colonial Film Commissioner to Political Pariah: Joris Ivens and the Making of *Indonesia Calling!*', *Film & History Conference Papers*, 41 (November 2006), see: <http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/film-history-conference-papers/ivens-indonesia-calling/> (20 July 2016)

<sup>126</sup> Schoots & Colmer, *Living Dangerously*, 213.

in his country is not completely true. The role of NFM was significant as none of those films made by Ivens in the sixties and seventies could be displayed in Dutch theatres. NFM showed some of his films in their exhibitions. So, he could only stay alive in Dutch audiences' mind through the museum.<sup>127</sup> The reconciliation with his country happened on the occasion when he was awarded the 'Golden Calf' in 1985. The Dutch Minister of Culture, Elco Brinkman presented to him with proper apologies for all the injustice against him aftermath of the film *Indonesia Calling!* He asserted that history is now more on Ivens side than his opponents of that time. It was the greatest relief in Ivens' life.

Joris Ivens' life and work are earning revived attention in recent years. Since the Netherland's cultural institution and The European Foundation Joris Ivens (EFJI) had dedicated their enthusiastic attention to the management of the Ivens' archive and promotion of his works at home and abroad, researchers became interested in learning about different aspects of his life. This study particularly suggests understanding the context of his work. Therefore, it discusses his anti-colonial film *Indonesia Calling!* in the broad background of other colonial propaganda films. It helps get the complete picture of Dutch documentary film trend in the colonial context. On the other hand, the discussion on colonial propaganda films cannot be comprehended properly without knowing about the challenges it faced. It might be the task of the future historians to evaluate the lives of other filmmakers of that period and try to find out why it was only Joris Ivens to revolt against Dutch colonial propaganda. The contribution of the current research is to combine colonial and anti-colonial propaganda films in one frame and draw a life sketch of one of the most controversial and talented filmmakers in the history of the Netherlands.

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<sup>127</sup> Bakker, *Joris Ivens and the documentary context*, 190.



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