The scale of the exodus when the Dutch fled Japanese occupation in early 1942 was enormous. The whole apparatus of Dutch colonial administration was transported by ship and emergency airlifts through Broome to other ports in Australia. Fifty-seven aircraft arrived in Broome in one day; they would refuel and return through treacherous skies threatened by Japanese ‘zero’ fighters bringing files, arms and personnel. In two weeks there were 8000 refugees from the Indies in Broome. This hasty escape coincided the staging post for Japanese bombing raids on Broome and Darwin.

Within twelve months or so the Dutch were operating a number of government departments on Australian soil. Among these were the interment camps that housed Dutch political prisoners evacuated from Dutch concentration camps in western Papua, where Indonesian independence activists had been exiled since the 1920s. Australians became aware of the interment of these men when one prisoner managed to toss a note to a railway worker at Liverpool Station in Sydney: ‘...to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it ‘as it really was’, but to grasp hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger.’

Joris Ivens and Indonesia

Another office of the Netherlands East Indies government-in-exile was the Film Commissioner, speaking from his front garden at 56 Pegangsaan Timoar in Batavia (now Jakarta) on behalf of the 90 million across an archipelago from Java to western Papua, proclaimed independence over what was at that time the Japanese occupied Dutch colony of the Netherlands East Indies. These events delivered a anti-colonial movements as essential partners in a new post-war world? In complicated ways they tried to do both, what was at that time the Japanese occupied Dutch colony of the Netherlands East Indies. These events delivered a Jakarta) on behalf of the 90 million across an archipelago from Java to western Papua, proclaimed independence over

On August 17, 1945, a little over a week after American atom bombs leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the young Indonesian independence activist Joris Ivens, looking from his front garden at 56 Pegangsaan Timoar in Batavia (now Jakarta) on behalf of the 90 million across an archipelago from Java to western Papua, proclaimed independence over what was at that time the Japanese occupied Dutch colony of the Netherlands East Indies. These events delivered a major foreign policy dilemma to Australian Labour Prime Minister Ben Chifley should the Australians support their wartime European allies in representing the post-colonial nationalists to the north or should they recognise regional anti-colonial movements as essential partners in a new post-war world? In complicated ways they tried to do both, and matters unresolved at that time – West Papua in particular – continue to trouble Australian-Indonesian relations to this day.

IN MEMORIAM: CATHERINE DUNCAN

December 2006 | 27

By JOHN HUGHES

The scale of the exodus when the Dutch fled Japanese occupation in early 1942 was enormous. The whole apparatus of Dutch colonial administration was transported by ship and emergency airlifts through Broome to other ports in Australia. Fifty-seven aircraft arrived in Broome in one day; they would refuel and return through treacherous skies threatened by Japanese ‘zero’ fighters bringing files, arms and personnel. In two weeks there were 8000 refugees from the Indies in Broome. This hasty escape coincided the staging post for Japanese bombing raids on Broome and Darwin.

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...to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it ‘as it really was’, but to grasp hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger.'
Forces in context within Australia, the urgency of social justice – and in this case a specifically post-colonial complicity between myth, advocacy, nationalism, and documentary.

Within the extraordinary oeuvre of Joris Ivens’ documentary ‘Indonesia Calling’ is sometimes considered more a ‘pamphlet’ than a work inspiring nuanced aesthetic appreciation. It is an instance where the urgency of social justice – and in this case a specifically post-colonial ambition - to some extent negates the aesthetic modernism that Bill Nichols talks about as one voice in the dynamic of documentary tradition as it negotiated notions and practices of realism, modernism and rhetoric (Nichols in Baker, 1993).

Within a tradition of activism and advocacy – a tradition that focuses to some extent to the emergence of new forms of ‘apt-prop’ cinema drawing on new technologies for production, distribution and exhibition – it may be that films like ‘Indonesia Calling’ are suddenly re-released, made immediately, their militancy, their urgency and their usefulness. The old tropes, the old labels, a ‘penny dreadful’ and dormant now for some time, in the present moment suddenly regains its pertinence.

Australian filmmaker John Hughes’ new project engages with ‘Indonesia Calling’ with an emphasis on the making of the film. Fundamental differences between Australia and Indonesia and the impact of Joris from the early post-war Australian documentary film culture. The recent film ‘The Archive Project’ a feature documentary commenting the Joris Ivens footage held at Nijmegen, which includes a range of materials including Cinetext Circle, Front Feature Documentary, an Australian Teachers of Media Award, the inaugural Joris Ivens Award for Achievement, Australian Film History, Australian Film and History Conference, 2006 and the NSW Premier’s Award. Also in 2006, Hughes was awarded the ‘Stanley Evans Award for Documentary’ as a screening of the 60 year history of Film Australia, entitled ‘Moving History’, made in collaboration with the public broadcaster ABC On-line and Film Australia, can be accessed at: www.abc.net.au/technology/historical.

Recently I had the pleasure of travelling from Melbourne to Nijmegen for an introductory period of research with the EFJI in pursuit of a project concerning the making of ‘Indonesia Calling’. The project ‘INDONESIA CALLING: Joris Ivens in Australia revisits the making of the film, fills out a number of dimensions of the historical context of events, depicted and elaborates something of the legacy that this small film had in Australia for a emerging tradition of independent documentary here.

Readers will be familiar with ‘Indonesia Calling’; Joris Ivens’ twenty-minute, 1945-46 film made under very trying conditions and following Ivens’ resignation from the National Film Board, 1948-53’ as Film Commissioner for the Dutch East Indies. The EFlF Newsmagazine has published an essay related to this work; Robert Hamilton and Laura Koteka’s essay arguing that the film anticipates an Australian multi-culturalism at the time as the notorious ‘white Australia’ policy was still practised. One example (EFlF Newsmagazine in November 2005).

Another is Genda Jansen-Hendriks’ essay, (and in another register the essay from Robert Hamilton and Laura Koteva) remind us of that often complex historical complicity between myth, advocacy, nationalism, and documentary.

In particular Genda Jansen-Hendriks considers in its relationship with Indonesia Calling, ‘Through Dankness to Light’, made by Joris Ivens from the early period of the Dutch Film League avant-garde, Jan Ien and Maurits Frankum, who new up government commission that Ivens refused. She makes the point that “It is remarkable that a dormant post-world-war Indonesia does not once name the newly proclaimed republic, instead nurtured another kind of ‘secret history’. The remarkably salient memory that reappeared in the effectiveness and value of a small film, advocating independence, and performing it, in interesting times

The spooks concluded that her existence, let alone being given the fact that she was still believed with the National Film Board of 800,000 people were killed in yet more by Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling! By Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling! By Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling! By Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling! By Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling! By Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling! By Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling! By Australian citizens in the boycotts Indonesia Calling!