

THOMAS WAUGH

THE CONSCIENCE OF CINEMA

The Works of Joris Ivens
1926-1989



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THOMAS WAUGH

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The Films of Joris Ivens
1912-1989

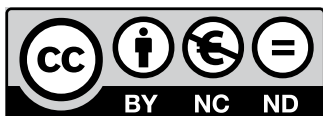
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NOTES TO THE READER

Original-language titles of films are used in the filmography and reference list as well as upon first use in each chapter, followed by standard English translation (in italics) or the author's English translation in the event that no official English translation exists, in turn followed by the director's name, date of production, country of origin, and running time in minutes, where this is not evident in the immediate context. (The only exception is Chinese-language titles.) Thereafter in each chapter, shortened versions of original-language titles, most familiar variants or standard English titles are deployed, whichever is most appropriate according to principles of clarity and convenience (for example *The Spanish Earth* is shortened to *Spanish Earth*, *Power and the Land* is shortened to *Power* and *Une histoire de vent* to *Histoire*). To minimise repetition, film citations in the text do not include data that are evident in the immediate context of the reference.

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All translations from European languages are by the author unless otherwise noted.

Citations follow the Oxford version of the Chicago date-author system, modified to minimise repetition within the body of the text.

DVD frame captures are used wherever possible to concretise points made in my filmic analysis. In addition the regular use of film posters and production stills points to the artistic and social context of certain films and periods.

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This project, as mammoth as Joris Ivens deserves, has taken more than forty years, and like all scholarly undertakings and labours of love is a collective undertaking. My ‘thank you’s’ embrace many people over those decades whom I have forgotten or are too numerous to mention. Please know that it would not have been possible without you.

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Rights holders of Ivens films, principally CAPI-Films Paris; as well as Argos Films, Paris; Dovidis, Paris; Fondation Henri-Storck, Brussels; Icarus Films, New York; Mannus Franken Foundation, Hilversum; Société franco-africaine de cinéma; National Film Board of Canada; DEFA-Stichtung; the European Foundation Joris Ivens. Rights holders whom we have not been able to trace are asked to kindly contact the publisher with any enquiries.

Archival stewards of our Ivens and Lorian legacy, in alphabetical order,

Archives françaises du film; La Cinémathèque du ministère des affaires étrangères et de la coopération, Paris; La Cinémathèque québécoise, Montreal; Chris Marker estate; DEFA-Stiftung, Berlin (especially Ralf Schenk and Günter Jordan but also Melanie Hauth, Gudrun Scherp, and Alexander Iskrow); Estate Germaine Krull, Museum Folkwang, Essen; Ephraim Smith, PhD, Heritage Productions, Fresno, CA; Impact Films, New York; Museum of Modern Art; the National Film Archive and Library, Ottawa; Philips Company Archives; Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR; especially the Nederlands Filmmuseum (the heroic late founder-director, Jaan de Vaal, his energising consort Tineke de Vaal, and I have not forgotten John Luijckx, Arja Grandia, Nico Diemer and many others) now transmogrified into the Eye Institute, ever helpful; and above all the European Foundation Joris Ivens, Nijmegen, whose amazing first director Kees Bakker made things happen, and whose tireless and visionary successor André Stufkens singlehandedly enabled and inspired this book by his generosity, erudition, omniscience, and ineradicable smile – despite everything. Out of courtesy to Joris Ivens's collaborator/co-director (1967-1989), partner and survivor, Marceline Loridan-Ivens, and in honour of her unflagging work side by side with the artist in four major works and many minor, and in accordance with the French moral authorship legal framework, I have complied with her wish to indicate her copyright claim together with that of CAPI Films Paris beneath all frame captures of films by Ivens and by Ivens and herself. Pending further determinations, this mention may or may not apply to works in public domain, claimed or shared by other rights-holders, or governed by fair use provisions in other jurisdictions. With almost no exceptions, works by Joris Ivens and by Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan-Ivens, or their preservation and restorations and redistribution, were financed in part or in whole by public funding or in the nonprofit sphere, and almost all were produced in collaboration with trusting, unremunerated citizens and subjects before and behind the camera. A fervent subscriber to the principles of fair use, copy left, creative commons, and ethical documentary, the author considers moral factors other than the intellectual property legalities of the French bourgeois republic applicable to the access to, and use, sharing, conservation, historiography, analysis, and validation of the films discussed in this book.

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FOREWORD BY ANDRÉ STUFKENS

Director European Foundation Joris Ivens

‘The next generation is sitting on the shoulder of the previous one’, Joris Ivens once said to a young filmmaker. Does this only apply to filmmakers or is it also true for film scholars? | 19

Since Ivens started filmmaking in 1927, six generations of film critics and film scholars have reflected on his films. From the beginning, the ancestors of serious film criticism, a product of the avant-garde movement, with people like L.J. Jordaan and Harry Alan Potamkin, recognised Ivens’s capacity for shaping a new kind of film with international exposure. In his famous essay, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, Walter Benjamin presented Ivens’s films as an example of the democratic impact of filmmaking in the 20th century. Later on, the legendary Jay Leyda devoted himself completing Ivens’s first autobiography *The Camera and I*. During the Cold War, French and East-German film scholars in particular started analysing Ivens’s body of work so far. They used a descriptive method augmented by some analysis, offering labels and claims for Ivens, such as ‘The Documentarist of Truth’, or either ‘The Poetic Filmmaker’ or ‘The Political Filmmaker’, thereby missing the point that Ivens was both at the same time. It was hard to keep an ideological distance to the subject to make a proper scholarly analysis. The subjective ‘Right’ or ‘Wrong’ analysis continued until the 1990s, and reached its pinnacle after the Fall of the Berlin Wall in Hans Schoots’s biography of Ivens, a book with a lot of personal projection and without any proper film analysis. There was obviously a need at that time to drag down outspoken leftist artists like Sartre, Neruda, Brecht, or Ivens, as had been the case a decade before with outspoken right wing artists like Céline, Pound, Koch, or Riefenstahl.

It was only when film studies matured in an academic context that academic discussion and analysis on Ivens’s film oeuvre started to flourish. I have always been struck by the intelligent analysis which Thomas Waugh published

in his dissertation in 1981. This was all the more astonishing because the Joris Ivens Archive was hardly accessible, incomplete, and not at all catalogued at the time. And how to read the Dutch language? Despite these handicaps this was the best text on Ivens for decades. However, Waugh's research ended with *Indonesia Calling* in 1946. As academic research on Ivens accelerated the 1981 monograph would no longer stay up to date.

The European Foundation Joris Ivens (EFJI), founded by Marceline Lorida-Ivens one year after Ivens passed away in 1989, was able to fulfil its role of fostering research by making both the paper archive and the films accessible. Since 1990, the EFJI has initiated or supported film programmes in 43 countries, restored films, and produced a DVD box with 22 films (2008). Apart from academic research, the 26 'revisit'-films that were made in 13 countries have also contributed to a higher level of understanding and analysis. Three symposia (1998 Nijmegen, 2002 New York, 2009 Nijmegen/Beijing), with scholars such as Michael Chanan, José Manuel Costa, Bert Hogenkamp, Charley Muss-er, Bill Nichols, and Brian Winston (as well as Waugh), stimulated further research. In the intervening years, Waugh's academic career has taken him to all corners of the world and made him into a specialist in global movements of alternative film. Avoiding the trap of so many documentary film scholars with a limited Anglo-Saxon or Western perspective, his global scope enables him to relate Ivens's films to filmmakers and films of almost every continent and in every decade. We cannot understand the 20th century without the visible evidence captured worldwide on camera.

In a way, Waugh is not only sitting on the shoulders of all his predecessors in Ivens studies, he is also sitting on his own shoulders, improving, expanding, and broadening his dissertation of 1981, and so coming full circle. The result is a quintessential step forward in Ivens studies. Here is a magnificent book without precedent providing the reader with an integral, complete spectrum of Ivens's film oeuvre, and at the same time with an intriguing, *provoking* view of the radical film movement of the 20th century. My word choice is deliberate here: provocation – 'pro voce' – implies generosity, stimulating the reader to speak out in his or her own voice.

FOREWORD BY BILL NICHOLS

Here, as we witness the vivid and tumultuous unfolding of a new century, comes a voice speaking to us from its past and its future. Tom Waugh's dissertation on Joris Ivens has long been one of the great pillars of wisdom on my documentary book shelf. Completed in 1981 and published only by UMI (University Microfilms Inc.) in the minimalist form that mimicked the typed dissertation itself, this 636 page opus arrived as a galvanic harbinger of the great surge in documentary film that was to take place in the 1990s and beyond.

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Like Ivens himself, Waugh was there at the start, forging a theory and practice of documentary film long before others – including myself – began to do so in the books and articles that have made this so rich and engaging a field of study. Like Ivens, Waugh's efforts did not receive the reception and did not instigate the transformations that were their due. The Cold War, for Ivens, and Reaganite conservatism, for Waugh, saw to that. But Ivens's pioneering and adventurous pursuit of strategies for the representation of reality, and Waugh's remarkable and prescient exploration of the documentary form now arrive in all their complexity and glory. Arrive as a reminder of what is lost, and, too often, repressed, and that which has yet to come into being.

Few studies balance biographical commentary, textual analysis, and theoretical conceptualization with the dexterity that Waugh displays here. He writes with his familiar mix of wit, self-deprecating humor, incisive analysis, clear-headed political engagement, and unwavering passion for his subject. Waugh traces Ivens's development over the decades that are, in effect, a summary of documentary accomplishments. And more. The penultimate chapter takes us to China – Ivens and his long-time companion, Marceline Loridan's, China – to reflect on two of Ivens's most striking films, the twelve part *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* and *A Tale of the Wind*. The first is a culmination of Ivens's efforts to combine the observation of quotidian life with insight into

how a given social system shapes and inflects such life. The second carries us beyond the realm of documentary as it is customarily imagined.

This latter move reveals Ivens's, and Waugh's, poetic powers at their greatest. Ivens reflects on his entire career and his long-term relation with China, filmmaking, and life itself. Waugh reflects on what this means for radical male filmmakers in their late period work. Comparing *A Tale of the Wind* with late works by Cocteau, Brakhage, Jarman, Broughton, Godard, and de Antonio, Waugh argues that Ivens, like the others, offers a profound meditation not simply on the vexing problems of documentary representation, but on masculinity in the male subject's concluding years, on frustration, failure, judgment, compromise, ambivalence, rage, and shame. The shame of decline and loss coupled with the fervent desire for hope and transformation. From a modest to a flamboyant style, from memory to imagination, from shame to grace, from quotidian matters of our daily bread, to transcendent questions of our ultimate purpose, Waugh, like Ivens, brings us to that precipice beyond which we can glimpse a future we have yet to attain and a past we must remember but leave behind. This is a book of great scholarship and political insight, but, even more than that, it is a book characterized by that form of generosity of spirit that defines wisdom.

Introduction

'Documentary is the conscience of the cinema', I told him. Since then I have never changed my mind.

– Joris Ivens, 1955/1982

The Conscience of Cinema is about a film mode that played that role throughout the world film industry of the 20th century. It is about an artist who pushed documentary to the limits of conscience for more than six decades. *The Conscience of Cinema* is a study, chronologically ordered, of the artistic career of Joris Ivens, the Dutch-born documentarist (1898-1989), following him through 77 years of filmmaking on every inhabited continent. Depending on who you talk to, Ivens was 'one of the greatest documentary film artists, the peer of Robert Flaherty', 'one of the great classic directors', 'a man who has laid the foundations for the cinema of the future' (Sadoul, [1965] 1972, 124-125), 'the great poet of the documentary', 'the greatest living documentarist of the 20th century' (Haudiquet, 1967), 'the most famous documentarist of the century' (Boulad, 1989), the 'filmmaker of the documentary of witness [who] occupies a special place in the cinema' (Lévesque, 1988), and 'one of the cinema's outstanding lyric poets... one of the greatest camera-eyes in the world' (Garrel, 1989). Nevertheless, at the other extreme, Ivens is taken to have 'confused ideas with art' (Grenier, 1958, 207), as a 'pseudo-poet' (Truffaut, 1966), 'the Leni Riefenstahl of Stalinism [...] a Stalinist conformist' (Waintrop 1989), such that he was 'neither a political conscience, nor an inventor of forms, but an adventurer' (Daney, 1989). *The Conscience of Cinema* endeavours to objectively adjudicate and reconcile those extravagant and contradictory claims through historicising them and understanding the images that Ivens left us on the screen. But this is also a very personal book, grounded in my own passion for documentary and for the ideals of social transformation that animated Ivens's work, as well as my own research and worldview. As a North American baby boomer film scholar, writer, and teacher for 40 years, this passion and these ideals shaped my first writings about Ivens as a grad student in the mid-seventies and have stayed with me in my second critical grappling with the 'Flying

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1. Portrait of Joris Ivens, by Chris Marker, thirty years his junior, trusted collaborator on four 1960s films (1963, probably East Berlin). © Chris Marker Estate.

Dutchman' as a senior professor on the cusp of retirement in the 21st century.

Why have I come back to Ivens after so long? For one thing the dissertation I defended in 1981, already huge, covered only the first 20 years of Ivens's career, 1926-1946. I had had to grind it to a halt in the watershed year of 1946 with more than four decades of the then still unfinished *oeuvre* left to cover. I wanted to publish the dissertation, but the Reagan-Thatcher era was not the time for a junior faculty member to publish a book on a filmmaker whose last works had branded him as a diehard Maoist. Instead, I published several excerpts and a few additional instalments in, and reflections on, the path not taken. But part of me tenaciously insisted on coming back to finish the job, to cover the remaining 43 years of the *oeuvre* of Ivens, by now a historical figure who has been dead for a quarter century.

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One of the founding parents of documentary in the silent era, Ivens's standing as the titanic genius of telling cinematic truth has fluctuated more than that of any other of that cohort; i.e. Grierson, Flaherty, Shub, and Vertov. In the decades after his death in 1989, retrospectives of his work have energized dozens of festival and cinematheque screens in 41 countries around the world: medium-sized retrospectives unfolded on every continent in such far-ranging sites as Mumbai (17 films, 1992), Yamagata (32 films, 1999), Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (19 films, 2000), New York (including many other stops on a North American tour, 16 films, 2002), Turin (28 films, 2002), Seoul (11 films, 2004), Melbourne (8 films, 2006), Thessaloniki and Athens (21 films, 2010), Maputo (20 films, 2010), and Amsterdam (both 1994 and 2008, the latter 20-film tribute timed with the release of the official four-DVD box set of the Ivens legacy). These were outdone by ambitious, comprehensive series on the occasion of the Ivens centenary in Nijmegen (67 films, 1998) and Valencia (46 films, 1998), and in Paris a decade later (50 films, 2009) (Stufkens, personal communication, 2014). The Ivens estate, directed by Ivens's lively octogenarian ex-collaborator and widow Marceline Loridan-Ivens, and the European Foundation Joris Ivens, located in the director's birthplace of Nijmegen, have helped keep the flame alive around the world.

But the 2008 Amsterdam event unwittingly revealed the precariousness of Ivens's standing: the retrospective of 22 films quietly 'disappeared' a whole prolific decade of the native son's career, that called the 'Cold War period' in this book (1946-1956), including films that had been shown in the 1994 retrospective. This oversight followed the pattern established in the new box set itself (although Amsterdam included a Cuban and a Chilean film that had also not been included in the set).¹ But a perhaps more ominous 'disappearance' followed the retrospective: the 'Joris Ivens Prize', which had been awarded annually since 1988 at Amsterdam's IDFA, the largest documentary film festival in the world, mysteriously lost its name and thereafter became the 'VPRO

IDFA Award for Best Feature-Length Documentary'. (The Amsterdam 'disappearance', a non-unanimous decision made officially for reasons of 'branding' [Ally Derks, personal communication, February 2014],² echoed a similar occurrence in 1971 when the East German Leipzig documentary festival abolished its own Ivens prize, embarrassed that its favourite artist had veered pro-Chinese and anti-Soviet; happily the Prix Joris Ivens at Paris's documentary festival Cinéma du réel, inaugurated in 1990, the year after the filmmaker's death, has been maintained for a quarter of a century.)

In this book, I offer intensive textual and contextual analysis for each of Ivens's major extant films, as well as shorter studies of a few lost works and several unfinished projects. This author-centred approach might seem outmoded in the post-auteurist phase in the discipline of film studies in the 21st century, where detailed auteur and textual studies do not seem to be the wave of the future nor even of the present. Even when I undertook this study for the first time in the bronze age of 1974, in the shadow of the arch-auteurist Andrew Sarris at Columbia University, I already had serious reservations about the various auteur cults around me, from Hawks to Herzog. From the beginning, I insisted that this materialist one-man study would break new ground away from the established formalist and cult-of-personality models. As I wrap up this project 40 years later, certain things have come full circle. If I am contributing to a much-needed return to the old-fashioned values of textual analysis and authorial agency, intent, and tenacity of individuals and collectivities, and of individual works and sequences of works as the motor of history and culture, then all the better service to the short-attention spans of the digital generations. In the particular case of Ivens, textual analysis, a close look at what is on the screen as the primary focus of this work, may help resolve not only the contradictions inherent in a non-auteurist auteur study, but also those resonating below the surface of the above 'disappearances' and many others that punctuate the Ivens career. It may also help decipher the ambiguously fraught relationship among the artist, the audience, the party, the state, and of course the party-state.

The study assumes a contemporary relevance of Ivens's work in this 21st century. It also affirms its representativeness of both the historical evolution of the documentary film and the trajectory of the activist cultural Left during the same time. Ivens's *oeuvre* is emblematic of the response of entire generations of documentarists – radicals as well as mainstream filmmakers in what Winton (2013) has called 'the documentary of liberal consensus' – to complex and changing historical conjunctures, and the work of Ivens's major contemporaries is continuously kept in view throughout the study.

Ivens's aesthetic and ideological trajectory has its origins in the Western European avant-garde of the late silent period, and moves, stimulated by

Ivens's encounter with the Soviet social and aesthetic experiment, into the militant workers' culture of the early years of the Depression. This, in turn, leads to his immersion in the expanding milieu of the Popular Front in North America and Western Europe in the late 1930s, for which he becomes a major artistic spokesperson during its initial growth around the Spanish cause, its slump following the Soviet-Nazi pact, its renewal after Pearl Harbour, and finally its post-war rout during the Cold War. Thereafter, following the late 1950s, we traverse the era of New Waves and auteur expression in the 1960s, coloured by the New Left, the escalating opposition to the Vietnam War in the West, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution throughout the global south. This colossal movement and its sharp detours in turn shapes the seventies, and certainly Ivens's involvement in it, and finally the decade of the 1980s, heralding the end of both Soviet and Chinese aspirations toward the party-state and accompanying utopias, and the advent of globalisation – though not the 'end of history'.

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Within these successive geopolitical, cultural, and ideological historical settings, Ivens's films explore virtually all of the formal possibilities open to documentarists of the classical, direct, and post-direct periods; and of course to various combinations of these possibilities at any given moment:

Formal mode	Films	Year
modernist analysis	<i>De Brug</i>	1928
folkloric narrative	<i>Branding</i>	1929
	<i>Les Aventures de Till L'Espiègle</i>	1956
	<i>Die Windrose</i>	1957
	<i>Pour le Mistral</i>	1966
	<i>Une histoire de vent</i>	1988
essay, elemental lyricism (including 'city symphony')	<i>Regen</i>	1929
	<i>Indonesia Calling</i>	1946
	<i>Pokój zdobędzie świat (Peace Will Win)</i>	1951
	<i>Das Lied der Ströme</i>	1954
	<i>La Seine a rencontré Paris</i>	1957
	<i>...À Valparaiso</i>	1963
	<i>Pour le Mistral</i>	1965
	<i>Rotterdam Europort</i>	1966
	<i>Le Ciel, la terre</i>	1966
<i>Changhai: Impressions d'une ville (Yukong)</i>	1976	
essay, advocacy	<i>Mein Kind</i>	1955

essay, postmodern/ autobiographical	<i>Une histoire de vent</i>	1988
publicity/commission	<i>Wij Bouwen</i> <i>Philips-Radio</i> <i>Creosoot</i> <i>Power and the Land</i> <i>Oil for Aladdin's Lamp</i> <i>L'Italia non è un paese povero</i>	1930 1931 1932 1940 1941 1960
epic narrative	<i>Zuiderzee</i> <i>Pesn o geroyakh (Komsomol)</i> <i>Pierwsze lata (The First Years)</i> <i>Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes</i>	1930-1933 1933 1949 1976
socialist-realist- inspired personalised narrative (docu- drama)	<i>Komsomol</i> <i>Power and the Land</i> <i>Pierwsze lata</i> <i>Demain à Nanguila</i> <i>Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes</i>	1933 1940 1949 1960 1976
event film	<i>Pokój zdobędzie świat</i> <i>Freundschaft siegt</i> <i>Wyścig pokoju – Warszawa-Berlin-Praga</i> <i>(Freedom Tour)</i> <i>Das Lied der Ströme</i> <i>Six Hundred Million With You</i> <i>Le Train de la victoire</i>	1951 1952 1952 1954 1958 1964
agitprop activism	<i>Misère au Borinage</i> <i>Indonesia Calling</i>	1934 1946
compilation/collage	<i>Nieuwe Gronden</i> <i>Misère au Borinage</i> <i>Our Russian Front</i> <i>Know Your Enemy: Japan</i> <i>Das Lied der Ströme</i>	1933 1934 1942 1945 1954

solidarity: war	<i>The Spanish Earth</i> <i>The 400 Million</i> <i>Our Russian Front</i> <i>Action Stations</i> <i>Un pueblo armado</i> <i>Le Ciel, la terre</i> <i>Loin du Vietnam</i> <i>Le 17^e Parallèle</i> <i>Le Peuple et ses fusils</i>	1937 1938 1941 1943 1961 1966 1967 1968 1970
solidarity: travelogue	<i>Das Lied der Ströme</i> <i>Lettres de Chine</i> <i>Carnet de viaje</i> <i>...À Valparaiso</i>	1954 1958 1961 1963
solidarity: social construction	<i>Komsomol</i> <i>The Spanish Earth</i> <i>Pierwsze lata</i> <i>Pokój zdobędzie świat</i> <i>Lettres de Chine</i> <i>Carnet de viaje</i> <i>Le Peuple et ses fusils</i> <i>Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes</i>	1932 1937 1949 1951 1958 1961 1970 1976
interview film	<i>Le 17^e Parallèle</i> <i>Rencontre avec le président Ho Chi Minh</i> <i>Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes</i>	1968 1970 1976
observation	<i>Wij Bouwen</i> <i>Zuiderzee</i> <i>Entraînement au cirque de Pékin</i>	1930 1930-1933 1976
hybrids and combinations	<i>The Spanish Earth</i> <i>The 400 Million</i> <i>Pierwsze lata</i> <i>Das Lied der Ströme</i> <i>Lettres de Chine</i> <i>Loin du Vietnam</i> <i>Une histoire de vent</i>	1937 1938 1949 1954 1958 1967 1988

The chapters of this study are arranged chronologically, and each focuses on a nexus of political and aesthetic trajectories within a specific historical period. Politically speaking the filmography points to a wide array of configurations/positionings that are not only ideological but also political, in the narrow sense. For example, the book is a chronology of relationships with the state and with states, with Ivens exploring many different templates for the artist's position vis-à-vis political power; from oppositional (what Nichols [2010, 223] calls 'the political avant-garde of documentary filmmaking') to political or financial patronage, to the privileged 'apolitical' 'neutrality' of the avant-garde or traditional fine arts sector, to the fascinating alignment with certain factions within the state, itself fraught with conflicting tendencies, that come to light with *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, 1976, France, 718). The advent of the post-war world, with its subversion of earlier imperialist cultures of domination, entailed a spectrum of revised relationships with the state – which may loosely be termed postcolonial – of which Ivens must be considered a pioneer. Throughout, Ivens's political positioning inevitably sees the eruptions of censorship, everywhere along the ideological spectrum, and this also becomes a major thread of the book.

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Formally speaking each historical conjuncture implies a different entanglement with technological developments, in the first instance most saliently the encounter with the handheld, hand-wound Kinamo camera that would energize the first decade of Ivens's work and the classical documentary in general (Buckland, 2006). Next, of course, came the encounter with sound that first transformed his work with the *Philips-Radio* (Netherlands, 36) commission in 1931. On the whole, his filmography thereafter provides a varied inventory of the possible applications of sound technology, his work providing prototypes for the consolidation of the classical sound documentary. Historically, the next major challenge comes considerably later with the paradigm shift to the direct cinema infrastructure beginning in the late 1950s, with its whole panoply of visual as well as auditory potentialities, aesthetic as well as political. Ivens's exploration of this panoply comes to a climax in *Yukong*, and, demonstrating the often cyclical shape of Ivens's pursuits, is repudiated in *Une histoire de vent* (*A Tale of the Wind*, 1988, France, 78). At the same time, his production was inflected by technological shifts such as the advent of 16mm in the post-war era (Ivens's first use of the new medium for cinematography came late in 1960, but he had been distributed on 16mm since the 1930s). Each techno-historical conjuncture set up a different pattern of consumption for Ivens's work: his audiences are shown to have ranged across a whole spectrum of sociological and ideological constituencies. These ranged from the elite constituencies of avant-garde film societies, militant workers' cadres and unions, to the mass audiences of North American commercial chains and

Parisian art houses – and increasingly the unknowable demographics of television. The latter are first broached with the state broadcast networks of the German Democratic Republic (hereafter DDR), and then of Italy, with uncertain and even traumatic results, and it is only with *Yukong* that television marketing becomes a primary preoccupation, with better, though still uneven, results. Ivens's relations with these divergent audiences varied correspondingly, ranging from agitational exhortation to expository didacticism to lyrical enchantment to dramatic identification.

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In each era and accordingly in each chapter I shall present a specific chronological and spatially defined episode in Ivens's career, each with one or two exemplary major works that help define the period. For example, in Chapter 3, *The Spanish Earth* (1937, USA, 53) is presented as the most prototypical of Ivens's Popular Front-era films, but in many ways of his entire *oeuvre*: in its historical positioning at the center of the Popular Front, and in its formal composition, as a hybrid mix of the major cinematographic modes of the classical documentary, 'mise-en-scène', proto-direct 'spontaneous' improvisation, and newsreel-style, 'public events' cinematography. This film has a special place in Ivens's *oeuvre* and in documentary history, all the more since it is the title most automatically associated with the name Ivens by non-specialists, the only Ivens film to occasionally appear on 'ten best' lists, and the certainly the only one to have had a Hollywood TV movie devoted to it, albeit not an especially sympathetic one (*Hemingway & Gellhorn*, Philip Kaufman, 2012, USA, 155)! Similarly *Misère au Borinage* (*Borinage*, 1934, Belgium, 34) is presented as the special achievement of the radical paradigm shift of the early 1930s in Chapter 2, *Das Lied der Ströme* (*Song of the Rivers*, 1954, DDR, 90) dominates the Cold War trajectory of Chapter 5, and *Le 17^e Parallèle* (*The 17th Parallel*, 1968, France, 113) of the Indochina period highlighted in Chapter 7. Other chapters offer a more dispersed focus, Chapter 1 with its detailed focus on several key formative works of the avant-garde period; Chapter 4 with its eclectic focus on minor and unfinished wartime works bookended by two diametrically different major works, *Power and the Land* (1940, USA, 33) and *Indonesia Calling* (1946, Australia, 22), marking the end of an era and the beginning of another respectively. The final chapter considers the two Chinese masterpieces of the last two decades of Ivens's life, again diametrically different, but which I contend cannot be considered in isolation from each other. *Histoire* is the yin of *Yukong*'s yang (Bleekere, 2002).

All of this said, it must be acknowledged that this book also demonstrates its own yin and yang: Part I, the first four chapters covering the two first seminal decades of Ivens's career, is developed from my doctoral thesis, written in the late seventies and defended in 1981. As such it reflects both my youthful ardour for the still active but elderly left documentarist who had just delivered

what could well have been his final epic *Yukong*, as well as certain methodological tendencies of film studies in the 1970s, tilting perhaps more towards the populist newsprint *Jump Cut* than the high-theory acid-free and library-bound *Screen*. Although updated, it retains much of these period reflections and relies significantly on 1970s resources and scholarship, which I am proud to have rescued from oblivion in many cases. Much of Part II, Chapters 5 to 8, covering the last four decades of Ivens's *oeuvre*, 1947 to 1989, has been written more recently over the last several years and reflects not only some current methodological tonalities, but also more distance from my corpus as well as my distance chronologically and politically from my subject, now dead for a quarter century. Moreover, I am told that my relationship to my reader varies widely throughout the book, at moments privileging the scholarly impartiality and thoroughness of the doctoral researcher covering his tracks before his committee, at others the personable mentorship of the lecturer (I taught Ivens seminars in 2006 and 2013 and have regularly shown individual Ivens films in other courses throughout my career), at others the polemicist rushing to the defence of the beleaguered Joris, and at still others the confessor or the militant – or combinations thereof. In keeping with my heartfelt advocacy of personal, intellectual, artistic, and political histories, especially in Chapter 8, I have made a conscious decision to retain the distinct sensibilities of the two periods, the many authorial voices that my career has encompassed from my late twenties to my sixties, and the spectrum of relationships with my subject and my audience thus entailed, both scholarly and politically. This book cannot not be about history and our need to embrace and make use of history, the author's as well as his subjects'.

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One sub-theme of this book is the evolution of documentary form as a matrix of personal relationships – among filmmakers and subjects, collaborators, and audiences – one that increasingly preoccupied Ivens and his contemporaries during the classical period and inextricably shaped Ivens's *oeuvre* thereafter. Inspired by Flaherty and by Soviet socialist realism, the gradual mastery despite technological hindrances of what Ivens would call 'personalized' documentary throughout the thirties and forties – the prototype of what is taken for granted over the last generations of the character-driven 'story' documentary in mainstream and marginal documentary circles alike – is given special emphasis throughout this study. This thread culminates in the two direct-cinema epics of subject testimony covered in Chapters 7 and 8: *Le 17^e Parallèle* and *Yukong*, each with their own interactive narratives of political turbulence in wartime and peacetime respectively.

Another thread of this book on the 'Flying Dutchman', the moniker that Ivens loved from early on in his career, is flying. I am not referring to the lovely recurring aerial shots that graced many of his films from *Zuiderzeewerken*

(*Zuiderzee*, 1930-1933, Netherlands, 40-52) onwards, and culminating in the exquisitely cloud-borne *Histoire*. I am referring rather to the roving and restless intelligence and commitment that took him, camera in hand, to every inhabited continent, observing and adjusting to cultures and climates (political and geographical) of every possible stripe, collaborating within those contexts with people as complex social agents materially formed by class, gender, and spatial dynamics, and thereby sharing with us a rich and moving kaleidoscope of humanity in the 20th century. Ivens, however, stands apart from the 20th century tradition of documentary constructions of the cultural ‘other’. The tradition of the ‘other’, spearheaded most prominently by Flaherty and fleshed out by legions of ethnographers and proto-*National Geographic* ethnographers, tended to construct the ‘individual as gateway to a unified, homogenized sense of community and culture’, and often constructed “‘national character’ as a reductive, melting-pot idea’ (Nichols, 2010, 226). Ivens, our materialist poet of work, daily production, and collective struggles, while obviously not an insider – especially in relations to cultures whose languages he did not share – destabilised the boundaries of otherness, whether through his intense empathy, his skill at close observational understanding, or a personal humility and openness that came out of his political solidarity, humane disposition, and friendship with local informants.

Another theme traversing the totality of this book and Ivens’s career is the trajectory and multiple detours of what we might call the documentary industry, for want of a better word to describe this transcultural network of widely varying production contexts and economies that Ivens traversed over 60 years. Nowhere is this more evident than in, not Ivens’s trajectory of great documentaries, but in the following chronology of his dreams, unseen, censored, abandoned, shelved, and/or betrayed. No doubt Ivens is far from unique in this trail of unfulfilled enterprises – did Vertov and Flaherty, Leacock and Marker, Koppel and Patwardhan have it any worse? And did fiction filmmakers at any time between 1928 and 1989 really have it any worse than their documentary counterparts? Regardless, the trail is a rich and eloquent documentation of the diverse international spectrum of the institutions and materialities of documentary making – from the world of pedagogy, training, and apprenticeship, to financing, to production, and from technological infrastructure to the critical establishment and the festival milieu to exhibition – over this entire period.

Though Ivens was in the international critical spotlight from his very first major film, *De Brug* (*The Bridge*, 1928, Netherlands, 16), it was from the 1960s onwards that an attention to Joris Ivens in several languages and cultural contexts really proliferated, as well as an increasing visibility of his films in both special retrospectives and the normal channels of distribution. First set in

motion by the cinephile constituencies and the liberal and progressive constituencies and networks of the interwar world, Ivens's followings move through the left-aligned film cultures of the Cold War, in both East and West, and then the confluence of the New Wave and the New Left in France during the early years of the Vietnam era. Interest in Ivens became a veritable explosion after the release in 1976 of Ivens's and Loridan's most recent film, *Yukong*, a twelve-hour, twelve-part epic on the Cultural Revolution that quickly assumed a lightning-rod historical relevance equal to its artistic magnitude. Worldwide attention to Ivens peaked during the eightieth birthday celebrations centred in his native Holland in 1978, his subsequent return visit to the US, the country to which he had devoted perhaps the most prolific decade of his career, and the 1979 Ivens exhibition at the Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris, the city where he lived for the last three decades of his life. If the first part of the 1980s were a very cruel moment for the couple, as more and more information about the Cultural Revolution came to the surface and *Yukong* became increasingly fraught in many quarters, the attention did not wane but became increasingly polarised and conflicted. Though the controversies would not totally subside, resolution – salvation even – came in the last part of the decade with *Histoire* in 1988, and the all-but-unanimous honours that were piled upon it.

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The current surge in interest in Ivens, following the 2008 release of the DVD box set, is not confined to his last nor his most recent work. On the contrary, students in the digital age find his films of the classical period more and more contemporary. His films seem to have an increasing relevance to the radical political currents of our day, those mass movements that branched out from the New Left – movements enfranchising and mobilising women, racialised and other ethnic and aboriginal minorities, prisoners, environmentalists, LGBTQ's, consumers, welfare recipients, migrants and refugees, the handicapped, the elderly, the unemployed and the homeless, and workers both outside of and within traditional labour organisations – in the global South as well as the North. The proliferation of such movements in the 21st century, from the networks of 'Occupy' and anti-globalisation initiatives around the globe, to the local energies of revolutions whether orange, green, velvet, saffron, maple, 'Idle no more', Mayan or Arab, surging in springtimes and on squares from Thompson to Taksim to Tahrir to Independence. Each of these movements is accompanied by its own lively body of militant documentary for which *Borinage*, Ivens's outcry in support of striking miners, can be seen as a prototype. And each opening of a new front of international struggle sets off a wave of documentary solidarity from Western sympathisers for which *Spanish Earth*, Ivens's appeal on behalf of the doomed Spanish Revolution, will always serve as the definitive example. Similarly, every successful new social revolution inspires its corresponding series of romantic documentary visions of the

new society being shaped, for which *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, USSR, 50), Ivens's homage to the first Soviet Five-Year Plan, is the antecedent. Indeed, as documentary continues to be the first recourse of filmmakers committed to political transformation and emancipation on every continent, Ivens is a figure whose pertinence will continue to be felt. In 1979, as I was writing the first part of this book, Bard College hosted the US Conference for an Alternative Cinema, an assembly of more than 500 media activists from North America, and out of 85 screenings fully 70 presented documentaries, summing up the centrality of documentary for the New Left.

Since 1979, access to filmmaking technology for activists and documentarists has of course taken a quantum leap and the centrality of documentary to the project of changing the world has followed with its own leaps. One has only to consider the track record of 'Cinema Politica', a local initiative founded in 2003 by students Ezra Winton and Svetla Turnin to exhibit political documentaries at my Montreal university on a weekly basis, and which took off beyond all expectation to create a thriving political cinematic culture, locally and internationally. Over its first decade more than 350 screenings of political documentaries have taken place, selected from a corpus estimated to be approximately 3000 submissions (Turnin, personal communication, February 2014). The old-fashioned template, so beloved of Ivens, of bums in seats, of audiences politically constituted in public spaces who follow screenings with astute questions and comments, refuses defiantly in the digital age to go away.

In 1978, a special Ivens number of *Cinéma politique*, a French review of militant cinema, lists the major issues of contemporary radical cinema and declares the direct relevance of Ivens's work to each one:

- the relationship of form and content
- collective work
- the use of re-enactment in documentary reportage
- the role of the party, political direction, and the commissioned film
- the opposition between amateur and professional [here one might add the then increasingly important intermediate category of 'artisanal']
- the marginalization of militant cinema in relation to traditional film distribution
- exoticism, the romanticism of the distant valiant struggle, opposed to the everyday struggles, and traversed by the complex notions of cultural neo-colonialism. (Raverat et al., 1978, 10)

What is striking about this list is that, aside from a few overtones of seventies jargon, it could just as easily have been written about Ivens's work at almost any time during his career, so little have the 'issues' preoccupying radical culture changed in the intervening years. It may be even more striking that the listed

concerns can with very little change be applied equally well to the generations of political documentarists since Ivens's death, and even to those who do not consider themselves political in the narrow sense. The work of the Maysles brothers and Chris Hegedus, for example, to name just one 'apolitical' US documentary team active since the 1960s, can also be shown to be caught up, in its aesthetic and ethical problematic, with every one of these issues, except, obviously, the fourth one, in its narrow sense – unless we ponder the problematic of producers and distributors and their role in documentary activity. History does seem to have repeated itself many times, as the documentarists following in Ivens's footsteps, from Anand Patwardhan to Marlon Riggs to Jennie Livingston to Michael Glawogger to Laura Poitras to Jim Hubbard to John Greyson, moving well beyond the hegemony of the observational and interactive documentary, rediscover and re-invent *mise-en-scène*, reconstruction, interviewing, collage and compilation, and even the voice-over narration and scripting – all allegedly obsolete devices that a few 1965 observers complained that the antediluvian sexagenarian Ivens was stubbornly clinging to. The same documentarists are wrestling, at the same time, with the age-old vicious spirals of financing and distribution, tormented by the dangers of selling out to television or the Internet as if Ivens and his generation of the 1930s had never had similar debates about the Rockefeller Foundation.

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The 21st-century surge accommodates even those for whom the political, leftist Ivens, committed to political transformation, has no appeal. Even those attracted to the lyrical and metaphysical side of the filmmaker who never gave up filming the winds and the waters of the planet for 60 years yet nevertheless refused to be pigeonholed or typecast, as enshrined in his final beautiful, metaphysical testamentary film, co-directed with Loridan. Scholars and cinephiles and documentary activists are all allowed a certain fence-straddling to be sure, to choose their own Ivens, but at the same time hopefully will resist the false polarisation of the political and the poetic that dogged Ivens from the early 1930s onwards.

I would be remiss not to survey at the outset Ivens's evolving status within the discipline of film studies. In short, his reputation still seems complicated, at least in English-language film culture, by the controversy and hostility that he knew throughout his career, or worse, indifference and ignorance. Symptomatically, during the Cold War he was the only major still active pioneer of world documentary never to be included in the taste-setting Flaherty seminar, that institution of liberal US documentary culture initially organised by East Coast documentary gatekeepers Willard van Dyke, Richard Griffith, and Erik Barnouw on behalf of Flaherty's widow Frances beginning in the post-war decades and thriving to this day. Well, not 'never', since the 80-year-old patriarch

was finally invited along with *Yukong* in 1979, thanks to a new generation of programming vision (Waugh, 1995). His total exclusion from a definitive and very fat film encyclopedia (Roud, 1980) that came out as I was first writing on Ivens in 1980 was another case in point: how could there be no mention of a prolific international filmmaker, born in the same year as Eisenstein, Grierson and Buñuel and nine months before Hitchcock, who became after all the last still active survivor of the silent generation, the author of over 60 films, the subject of a dozen book-length studies, and double that many major retrospectives over the years? More recently, after his death, Ivens's standing has fared better, at least in documentary studies, if we can judge by the range of reference volumes on documentary available, such as *Imagining Reality* (Cousins and Macdonald, 2006), *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film* (Aitken, 2006), *The Documentary Film Book* (Winston, 2013), and the bountiful Finnish *Vuosisadan tarina – Dokumenttielokuvan historia* (Peter von Bagh, *The Story of the Century – Documentary Film History*, 2007), all of which provide lively, nuanced, and engaged entries on his work. Among the surveys of documentary history in English and French, those of Barnouw (1974), Jacobs (1979), Barsam (1992), Marsolais (1997), Gauthier (2002), Nichols (2010), Ellis and McLane (2005), and Aufderheide (2007) all give Ivens attention approximating his due, although only Barnouw and Nichols incorporate original research into their accounts and the 2005 duo hilariously open the trapdoor and 'disappear' the Dutchman in the 1940s, one-third of the way through his career.

Cinema encyclopedias, both in print and digital, corroborate the solidity of Ivens's standing, judging from Ian Mundell's (2005a) erudite and sympathetic Ivens profile on *Senses of Cinema*. If Paul Arthur (2003) was right that the sheer dispersion of Ivens's *oeuvre* has been an additional hurdle to his reputation, Ivens himself cannot be said to have made things easy. Granted he ensured the proper and strategic archiving of his key films during the dark days of World War II and the Cold War, in both North America and Europe. But he and Loridan's decision to yank *Yukong* from circulation in 1985, because of the post-Mao U-turn in Chinese politics, was improvident and shortsighted to say the least. After Ivens's death, the estate's piracy paranoia coupled with what I call in Chapter 8 a lingering political shame and even what more uncharitable Marxists than I might call commodity fetishism, has impeded the encounter of new generations of cinephiles, researchers, and activists with his work. One symptom of this impediment surfaced as this book went to print in 2014: *Sight & Sound* released its ten-year poll of the greatest documentaries of all time, voted by filmmakers, critics, and programmers from around the world. Whereas in the 1960s Ivens's place on such lists was secure, as evidenced by the Mannheim Festival's 1964 enthronement of *The Spanish Earth* on its list of the top twelve documentaries of all time (<<http://www.iffmh.de/>

das-festival/archiv/> accessed 17 January 2015) or by Paul Rotha's (1952, 359-380) list of 'One Hundred Important Documentary Films',³ a half-century later Ivens would find himself utterly banished from a list of a top-50 integrated list and the top-35 filmmakers' list for the first time.⁴ Nevertheless, the Internet has gone far in remedying that inherent problem in the twenty-first century, and many hope that YouTube will continue to appropriate and disseminate what the lawyers and heirs deny.

Whatever the case, almost none of the undergraduates enrolling in my Ivens seminar in 2013 had ever heard of him and were not a little surprised that a film studies BFA programme that has traditionally offered auteur curriculum on Welles, Hitchcock, Fellini, and Lynch would add an obscure Dutch communist documentarist to the list. Part of the blame for the intermittent uncertainty of Ivens's place in English-language film culture may be ascribed to the myopias and peripeteias of film scholarship itself. With regard to the field of documentary, film scholars and historians were slow to pick up speed in the seventies in re-examining the field in terms of the new methodologies developed or strengthened earlier in that decade – semiotic/structuralist analysis; narrative and genre theory; psychoanalytic approaches; formal analysis; ideological analysis; oral history; specialized technological, industrial, exhibition, and audience history; postcolonial perspectives; and most recently transnational subcultural angles linking documentary to avant-gardes and technological institutions and networks (Hagener, 2007). At first few individual documentarists or bodies of documentary were receiving definitive treatments employing any combination of these methods, but the situation soon began to change. Vertov finally received exhaustive treatment with hitherto murky areas of his career finally emerging into the light (Tsivian, 2004); *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl, 1936, Germany, 110) also was subjected finally to responsible critical and historical scrutiny (beginning with Sontag [1975]), after years of gushing. It was finally with book-length studies of anthropological film and Rouch (Eaton, 1979; Feld, 2003), of American radical documentary of the thirties (Campbell, 1982; Alexander, 1981) and of British documentary in the same decade (Sussex, 1975), with definitive studies of 'Newsreel' (Nichols, 1982), Wiseman (Nichols, 1981), eventually de Antonio (Lewis, 2000; Kellner and Streible, 2000) and above all Chris Marker (Lupton, 2005; Alter, 2006; Cooper, 2008), that documentary study eventually moved beyond the confining formats of the single-film study and the textbook survey that dominated the first thrust of film studies as an academic discipline. The study of political film itself, arguably more visible than purely documentary study, at first was dominated primarily by *ad hoc* critical principles, outdated conceptual models, and the frequent substitution of ideological fervour for ideological, historical, and formal analysis. The situation here

too has changed, thanks to original works like Michael Chanan's *The Politics of Documentary* (2007) and Jonathan Kahana's *Intelligence Work* (2008), particularly with regard to contemporary films, but also in relation to documentary history, no longer the cinema's poor cousin. In the 21st century the breadth and momentum have been exciting indeed, thanks to periodical work located in the veteran political journal *Jump Cut*, now online, and other sites, to the Visible Evidence conference network, and to the burgeoning of subfields from trauma studies to colonial histories to first-person documentary.

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Thanks in part to the visionary efforts of first the Nederlands Filmmuseum and its founder Jan de Vaal (1922-2001) and later the Ivens Foundation, to the 21st-century renaissance of documentary itself (viz. the box office success of Michael Moore and others, within proliferating networks of documentary festivals), the present state of Ivens literature has moved beyond early shortcomings in the study of documentary and political film. Most of the full-length works are documentary collections of texts by and about Ivens from a wide range of viewpoints and sources. The formats of these collections vary from the annotated filmography (Delmar, 1979) to the *Festschrift* (from the East German State Film Archive, 1963). Also of value are the major works of the pioneering Zalzman and Wegner from the 1960s, alongside the special issue of *Cinéma politique* mentioned above (Raverat et al., 1978).

Works that came out after Ivens's death include the fine, rich anthology in English assembled by Kees Bakker (1999b) from the Ivens centenary conference in Nijmegen in 1998, by far the most useful source in English with its combination of original Ivens texts, reminiscences by co-workers from Italy and Berlin, and focused contemporary critical and theoretical pieces from everywhere in Europe and North America; and a similar but slimmer volume in German (Barbian and Ruzicka, 2002). Stufkens's (2008) excellent, authoritative book accompanying the DVD box set, in Dutch and German only, bolsters the solid periodical literature and book chapters adopting a wide range of perspectives (Musser, 2002; Costa, 2002; Gunning, 2002, 2009; Arthur, 2002; Waugh, 2004; *Studies in Documentary*, 2009). The documentary collections in various languages have the obvious value of introducing the lay reader to many interesting primary sources, and serve as works of reference as well as of popularisation. The simple service of translation thus provided is indispensable because of Ivens's work in so many different cultural contexts.

Of critical monographs on Ivens, Grelier's (1965) is the most systematic auteurist view of Ivens (or at least of Ivens up until *Pour le Mistral* [*For the Mistral*, 1965, France, 33]), convincingly pointing to iconic play with the four elements and the human struggle against nature as being at the centre of Ivens's visual and dramatic repertory. The book is now badly dated, vague, and superficial in its textual analysis, and contains almost no contextual study of Ivens's

work nor any reference to the evolution of the documentary form alongside Ivens's career. Furthermore, Grelier's adulatory attitude clouds his historical and analytical lens. From the following decade, came a more contemporary version of a similar approach in Carlos Böker's 1978 dissertation, *The Mythical Presentation of a Dialectically Interpreted Reality*, a 200-page holistic survey of the entire Ivens corpus. Böker views three different formats of Ivens's *oeuvre* – the war film, the work film, and the lyrical film – as variations of the same basic struggle myth. However, Böker, an old comrade/student of Ivens from Santiago in the previous decade, did not profit from the discipline's growing sophistication in the application of mythic and narrative models to film (the bibliography mentions Lévi-Strauss but not Todorov or Propp), nor from any contextual or formal study of the individual films. An equally serious flaw is the author's apparent view of Ivens's utterances of the last 50 years as a static body of film theory with direct descriptive applicability to the films, rather than as a group of evolving aesthetic conceptions with widely varying practical and political relations to the work that accompanied them, from pedagogy to publicity. (Theses by Tendler and Cassiers are conscientious recapitulations of the available material.) A recent slim volume by the Flemish philosopher Sylvain de Bleekere (1997) is unique in its attention to a single film, Ivens's last, and in its exploration of a metaphysical Ivens that earlier treatments of Ivens's pantheism had barely dared imagine of the stout communist.

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The large group of ideological treatments of Ivens's works, invariably from a Marxist or left viewpoint more or less coinciding with that of their subject, are usually weakened by the adulatory tone already mentioned. Though Ivens cannot be responsibly discussed without a full and sympathetic understanding of the ideological underpinnings of his films, a scholar's uncritical and ahistorical assumption of these – or of some inflection of them – has the ultimate effect of the further ghettoisation if not marginalisation of Ivens's work. Most of the ideological treatments of Ivens have been innocent of an understanding of the complexities of filmic form or of film history, like many political and sociological studies of film before the seventies. They likewise do not profit from 1970s refinements in discourse about the relations between form and ideology in systems of visual representation. Most surprisingly, such studies often lack even the most rudimentary precision in their historical perception of the evolving ideological context of Ivens's work: can it really be possible, for example, that my 1981 dissertation was the first work on Ivens to mention the Soviet-Nazi Pact of 1939 and its obvious effect on the ideological backdrop to Ivens's films? Otherwise, the ideological studies vary widely. On the one hand there is the blinkered partisanship of Hans Wegner (1919-1984), Ivens's official East German interpreter (until Ivens quietly burnt the bridge to Moscow in 1968 after the Czech invasion, whereupon, no less quietly, Ivens suddenly

disappeared from the Eastern Bloc pantheon and Wegner quietly sat on his archive until his death). On the other hand, readers may choose between the view by the Dutchman Han Meyer of the filmography as a climactic build-up towards Ivens's intervention in Vietnam (1970), and the sectarian hagiography of the West German Klaus Kreimeier (1977). The sincerity and frequent insight of the ideological treatments are undeniable but their efficacy as historical or critical analysis is not always clear. The generally high quality of the *Cinéma politique* special issue (Raverat et al., 1978), highlighting the best interview ever with the political Ivens, led by a West German radical collective, and the careful, meticulously researched but politically sympathetic contributions of Dutch historian Bert Hogenkamp over the last 25 years, combining political respect and meticulous research, are of great importance for this reason.

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Many of the individual milieus around the world where Ivens left his footprint have produced robust literature on his contribution to local film histories and cultures, from Belgium (Hogenkamp on *Borinage* and the Dutch films, 1977-2001) to Germany (Jordan and Schenk, 2000; Jordan, forthcoming) to Chile (Panizza, 2011). In many cases this literature is cinematic, from John Hughes's (2009) dazzling videographic and archival exploration of Ivens's Australian context and legacy to Ephraim Smith's (2008, 2013) diptych on the US Film Service episode in 1940 and the stout Ohio farm family it transformed – to mention only two English-language projects (Stufkens, 2004). In fact there are 26 and counting documentaries on Ivens that focus on the filmmaker's intersection with moments and movements in national and regional film histories around the world, or in part on Ivens's career as a whole, as well as eleven works that count as fiction: the largest group is from the Netherlands unsurprising (a total of 15 films), but also represented are from Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Spain, USA, Vietnam, and both West Germany and the DDR; most are adulatory with one important exception, a Dutch exposé of Ivens's and Loridan's alleged passive complicity in the abuses of the Cultural Revolution during the making of *Yukong* (Seegers, 2008; see Appendix 1 for complete list of what the Ivens Foundation terms 'revisit films'). Focused print scholarship that has emerged around the regional and historical epicenters that Ivens passed through, from a new generation of researchers, has been dynamic and original, from Stacey Guill (2009) on the Hemingway connection to the Spanish Civil War to Susan Martin-Marquez (2015) on Latin American committed art. The Netherlands and France have of course been prolific but so have Italy (two fine volumes in Italian by Ivens's old collaborator Virgilio Tosi [2002a, 2002b], a memoir and a festival catalogue anthology, plus a documentary!) and China (two edited volumes, a film, and an international conference). This output testifies among everything else to the strong impact that Ivens had on his host cultures worldwide. (The Beijing volume [Film Archive of China 1983]

is especially valuable because of its hitherto untranslated contributions by Ivens's collaborators over many years, and more than one documentary exists here as well). These works may lack the advantage of a systematic and expansive overview that I am endeavouring to achieve in this book, but they are a corrective to an earlier generation of studies that were sometimes overwhelmed with hagiographic generalities, and even worse occasionally lacked accuracy, and were sometimes infected by tiresome name-dropping.

A separate, invaluable category of literature is the well-filled catalogues for retrospectives from Paris's Centre Georges Pompidou (Passek, 1979) to the Yamagata documentary festival (Bakker, 1999b) to the US tour of 2002 (Stufkens, 2002). The definitive filmography from the Nederlands Filmmuseum (1978), *Joris Ivens 50 jaar wereldcineast*, is constantly updated online by the Foundation.

As for biographical work on Ivens, Hans Schoots's comprehensive if controversial biography of Ivens, *Living Dangerously: A Biography of Joris Ivens*, appearing first in Dutch (1995) and then in English (2000), changed the landscape of Ivens studies. Notwithstanding his irrepressible hostility to his subject's politics and his staggering cinematic illiteracy, not to mention Loridan's withdrawal of her support for the book late in the process because of its 'very polemic' and 'destructive' nature (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 363), Schoots added immeasurably to the field through his extensive primary research, especially in personal correspondence (though archival sources in Asia and Latin America were unfortunately not consulted), plus interviews with major collaborators around the world still surviving in the 1990s (again with the almost total exception of those in Asia and Latin America). His work added to the autobiographical and biographical components of the above collections, of which Zalzman's (1963) and Wegner's (1965) were the most substantial in French and German respectively.

Otherwise, despite the fact that Ivens's first autobiography *The Camera and I* was written in the forties, it was updated with valuable documentation when it was finally published in 1969, and remains an indispensable resource that has lost none of its value and charm over the years – moreover it does so in its Dutch and German versions as well as the original English one. The book is undoubtedly among the best dozen autobiographies by filmmakers, balancing the personal sincerity of the anecdotal with precise technical and historical information, and interlacing the chronology with a self-analysis that is as astute as it is simple and clear. A considerable amount of published interview material became available in the 1970s and 1980s to bring *The Camera and I* up to date: the 1978 collection by Claire Devarrieux for *Le Monde* is the most extensive, but those by the German periodical *Filmfaust* (translated for the aforementioned special issue of *Cinéma politique* [Raverat et al., 1978]) and

in English by Gordon Hitchens for *Film Culture* are also excellent. *La Mémoire d'un regard*, (1982) by Ivens in collaboration with Robert Destanque, originally cinematographer on *Le Ciel, la terre* (*The Threatening Sky*, 1966, France, 28) and later one of the Paris circle of *Yukong* collaborators, stands as the final, definitive autobiography, full of biographical and artistic detail despite a few lapses, but has unfortunately never been translated. Schoots enjoys pointing out minor inconsistencies in the Destanque volume, but one reason it is so important is that the earlier biographical chronologies and collections tend occasionally to contradict each other on details and to contain errors, hearsay, and myth. *Mémoire* gives the final version on many of these – at least to the extent that Ivens's slightly diminished memory in his eighties allowed. One trivial but symptomatic example of the risks of biography and filmography dependent on several generations of secondary sources⁵ is the amusing metamorphosis undergone by the name of Ivens's writer for *Action Stations* (1943, Canada, 50), the distinguished Canadian novelist Morley Callaghan: although Zalzman called him 'Morlin', Grelier offered 'Malcolm' and this was dutifully repeated by Delmar, Devarrieux, and, astonishingly, the otherwise meticulous definitive filmography from Amsterdam (Nederlands Filmmuseum 1978).

This book owes a huge debt to this rich multi-lingual literature, endeavours to build on its strengths, and is also designed to compensate for its gaps, which, though present in the other languages, are particularly critical in English. My basic framework is a critical account, biographical only insofar as Ivens's life path intersects with his creative work, a chronological ordering of Ivens's career, 1912-1989 (I will touch on Ivens family home movies and juvenilia but emphasize his adult work). This framework within an illustrated full-length volume allows me to attain a level of detail and comprehensiveness that other studies have fallen short of because of their necessary brevity and superficiality, and the frequent second remove of their sources. For this purpose, research at the Joris Ivens Archives, first in Amsterdam at the Nederlands Filmmuseum and now in Nijmegen, has been essential, as have been intensive screenings at cinemathèques in New York, Montreal, Ottawa, East Berlin, and Paris, as well as the Netherlands, plus interviews and correspondence with Ivens himself and with about a dozen former collaborators.

Within this general chronological framework, my analyses proceed systematically through a study of three interlinked areas of film practice – production, text, and consumption. Thus, a detailed formal and thematic analysis of each film is connected to the political, cultural, technological, and economic contexts of its origins and inscription, and of its reception. Much existing Ivens literature has a flaw common in film scholarship, a mystification resulting from the neglect of one of these three key areas, as well as of the

connections among them. No reader will be surprised, however, that the area of consumption or reception receives the least detailed analysis in this work. The reader will find that much of the data on audience and reception is either anecdotal (suggestive reminiscences by Ivens and others of specific spectators' responses, for example) or generalisations about the scale of the films' outreach whether through theatrical or parallel networks, especially in the case of state-sponsored films from Canada and the USA (six million viewers for *Power!*) to the 1950s Soviet bloc and Cultural Revolution-era China. The lack of data in this area is the chronic plague of film studies. It is all the more critical in this case of Ivens's career since he himself could not always follow up with the post-production dissemination of his work, and sometimes took sitting down the horrendous things that happened to his films once finished, mostly censorship, active and passive, from the frying pan of political to the fire of commercial censorship. Moreover much contemporary work, mine included unfortunately, often does not make use even of resources when they are available, for example market surveys or audience analyses.⁶ Here is an important subject for future research in documentary history since my own frustrations in this area will be evident.

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The choice of Ivens as a subject for a historian of the documentary film assumes not only the contemporary relevance of his work, but also that it has a central importance to the history of the documentary, a certain representativeness of the evolution of this art form. This assumption is basic to this book. Ivens's work is emblematic of several generations' response to changing and complex conjunctures of political, cultural, technological, and economic forces. One evidence of this emblematic stature is Ivens's adaptation to the cultural and political contexts of almost 20 different countries in order to make his films – from his native Netherlands to the People's Republic of China – and the strength of his constituency in several other countries and regions in which he did not make films such as the UK, West Germany, Indonesia, Latin America, and Japan. One implication of my perspective is that the theme of 'innovation', a premise of much Western art, cultural, and cinematic history, is in the background of this study. Although to be sure Ivens did pioneer many aesthetic elements of the political documentary, and I will argue many cinematic practices from the solidarity genre to the transcultural bridge, I view him more as the representative or spokesperson for the succeeding artistic consensuses of this period rather than as a trailblazer outside of or in advance of those consensuses. As such, continuous reference is made in this study to ongoing theoretical debates within the intellectual communities of which he was a part, and to the work of his major contemporaries. Indeed, as regards the latter, Ivens's career crossed paths with that of virtually every significant contemporary documentarist, including the pre-war luminaries Walther Ruttmann, Jean Vigo, Luis

Buñuel, Dziga Vertov, Esfir Shub, Robert Flaherty, John Grierson, Alberto Cavalcanti, Henri Storck, John Ferno, Basil Wright, the American radicals of the WFPL, Nykino, and Frontier Films, Pare Lorentz, Boris Karmen, Stuart Legg, and Frank Capra. After the war the next generations of French documentarists from Yannick Bellon and Gérard Philipe to Chris Marker, Agnès Varda, Pierre Lhomme and Étienne Becker all the way to Nicholas Philibert all benefited from working with him. Along the way the Italians Gillo Pontecorvo, the Tavianis, Tinto Brass, the Cubans Jorge Fraga and José Massip, the Chileans Sergio Bravo, Raul Ruiz, Patricio Guzman Lozanes and others, the Dutchman Tom Tholen, the Vietnamese Xuan Phuong, and the Chinese Yang Zhiju and Li Zexiang, became the beneficiaries of his mentorship, training, or collaboration. Moreover, throughout his career Ivens's specific contribution to formal film education in the US, Poland, the DDR, China, and Latin America, and his service to associations and strategic international alliances of documentarists⁷ as well as festivals around the world, as board member, executive, frontperson and juror, confirms our sense of him as global facilitator and catalyser of documentary production, collaboration, and networks.

In fact, the only major documentarist with which Ivens did not actually cross paths in the pre-1945 era (other than the Britons Jennings and Watt) was Leni Riefenstahl, but this latter avoidance is of course as crucial as the links with the others. Ivens's great anti-fascist work, *Spanish Earth*, the first prophecy of the conflagration to come, stands symbolically with *Triumph of the Will* at the opposite poles of the 1930s, both ideological and artistic.⁸ For this reason, there are frequent references to *Triumph of the Will* in Chapter 3, which dissects *Spanish Earth* at some length, one of Ivens's key films of his career, with its hybrid form in itself an emblematic catalogue of formal possibilities. My analysis of this film strengthened my already strong conviction that the likening of leftist documentary to fascist documentary, the cinematic indexes of one so-called 'totalitarianism' to another – even of left 'propaganda' to right 'propaganda' (a comparison that Schoots makes), requires at the least an analytic laziness that I will not tolerate. To compare fascist iconography to that of the Popular Front, stamped materially and verifiably on the screen by, as Badiou puts it in the context of the War on Terror but applicable to this problem, 'a promise of universal emancipation supported by three centuries of critical international and secular philosophy that exploited the resources of science and mobilized, at the very heart of the industrial metropolises, the enthusiasm of both workers and intellectuals' is in fact worse than lazy:

Lumping together Stalin and Hitler [is] already a sign of extreme intellectual poverty: the norm by which any collective undertaking has to be judged

is, it was argued, the number of deaths it causes. If that were really the case, the huge colonial genocides and massacres, the millions of deaths in the civil and world wars through which our West forged its might, should be enough to discredit, even in the eyes of 'philosophers' who extol their morality, the parliamentary regimes of Europe and America. What would be left for those who scribble about Rights? How could they go on singing the praises of bourgeois democracy as the only form of relative Good and making pompous predictions about totalitarianism when they are standing on top of heaps of victims. (Badiou, [2008] 2010, 3-4)

I vividly remember my meetings with Ivens in 1976, 1978, and 1981, a generous and friendly elder, patient with the questions he must have heard hundreds of times. I understood then as now the charismatic effect he had on the generations of young filmmakers whom he mentored and on critics and activists alike. In October 1978 at the launch of *Yukong* at the Cinémathèque québécoise I arrived in what I thought was plenty of time only to find the huge auditorium mobbed and already sold out. In a panic at the vision of my dissertation flying away on wings of misfortune, I hovered around and discovered hidden on the inside of a circle of tall, crazed fans the calm, diminutive white-haired icon, buttonholed him and pled with him for help getting into his screening. '*N'ayez pas peur*', he told me resting his hand on my arm, clearly remembering me from our first encounter in Paris two years earlier, '*on va régler ça*', and he did set it right, and I stayed for all four screenings. My interviews with him on those occasions I found less than paradigm-shifting in terms of concrete data – he had clearly done too many thousands of interviews with uninformed journalists over the decades and to my mind was not clearly distinguishing his memory of his work from what had been written about his work, moreover offering the basic introduction and plot summaries rather than the more detailed material of interest to a specialist (fortunately the archives were there to confirm and document the facts). Moreover, to my annoyance he had not yet broken the habit of caution in talking about his party affiliation. But it was the encounter and the relationship that were more essential. I delivered my dissertation to him in person in Paris after my successful defence in 1981 and did not hear again from him until 1984, long after the disastrous termination of his project on Florence and the publication of his final memoirs: his letter sent from the couple's flat on rue des Saints-Pères, impeccably typed by a secretary on onion-skin as usual:

Dear Thomas, For a long time, I did not hear from you. I suppose that you are still teaching in Montreal. Please give me some news about you, and tell me about the work you are doing. I myself am working with Marce-

line Loridan, on a new big film project in China, which will be filmed in the spring of next year. It is the kind of imaginary film, with also some realistic sequences. It is about the Civilization of China, a kind of cinematographic poem and certainly not a didactic documentary. The Wind, will be used, as visual vehicle. The Wind, as you know, is an old friend of mine, whome I met in 'THE MISTRAL'. Hoping to lear (sic) soon from you, with my all best regards. Joris Ivens.

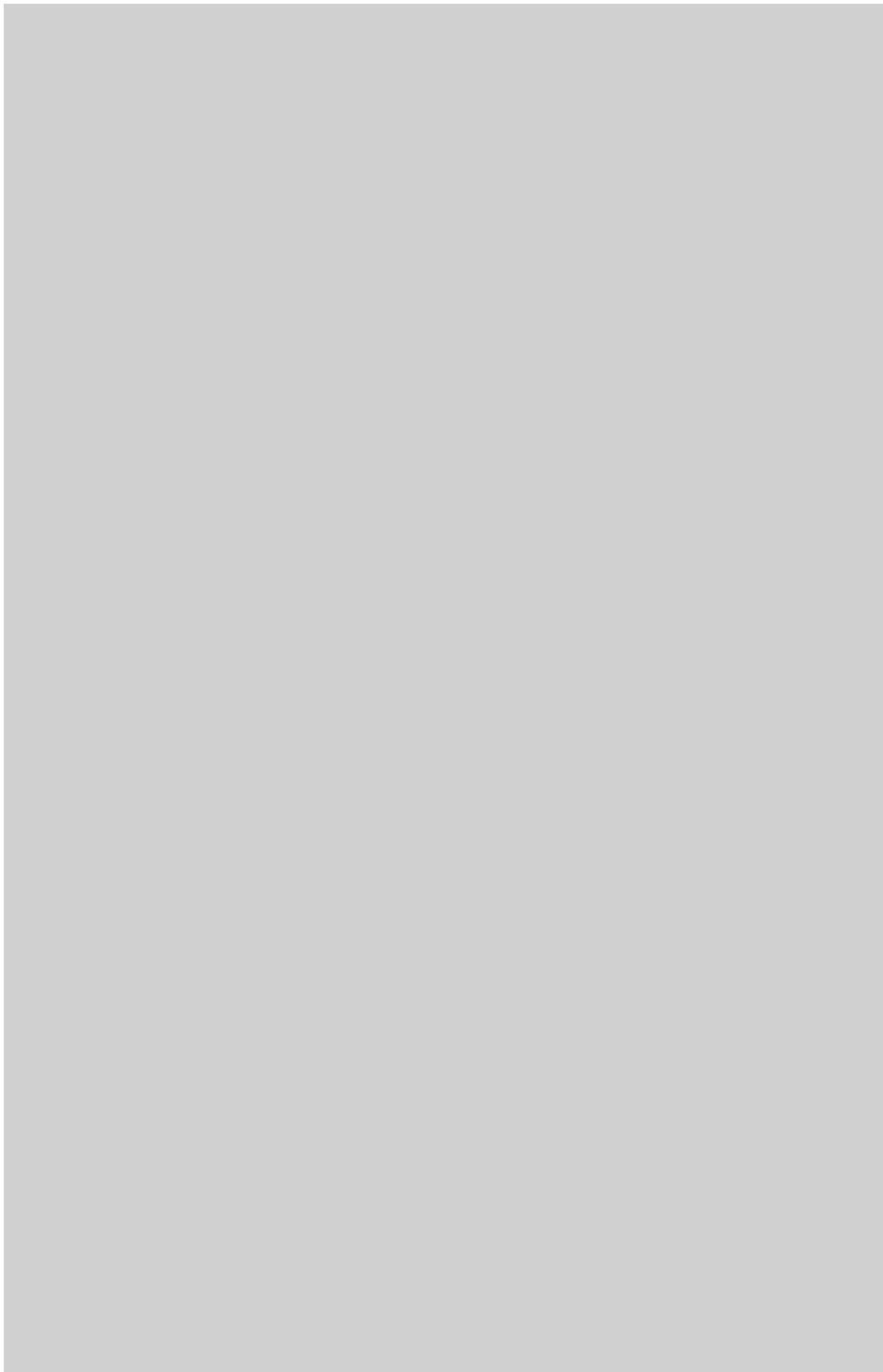
I treasure this simple letter – so much that I presume to publish it here – and that year I published my definitive treatment of *Spanish Earth* in my anthology on committed documentary, and was otherwise busy publishing other shards of my Ivens research in *Cineaste* and *Jump Cut*, licking my wounds as every academic publisher in America laughed my pitch into the trash, and went on with the rest of my career.

48 | In offering this study of Ivens's *oeuvre*, then, I come back to *régler ça*, to set it right and finish the job, finally to reciprocate the relationship undertaken so long ago. I offer not only an author-centred study of the evolution of a great artist, unjustly neglected in English-language film studies – and I defiantly affirm this old-fashioned reading as a departure point, refusing to throw the auteur baby out with the bathwater of mystificatory pre-*Screen* pantheon studies I was taught at Columbia. I also offer a passionate book about the history of documentary film, a form and calling that Ivens was at the centre of for more than 60 years. In his 1982 autobiography, Ivens remembered a certain moment of crisis at the midpoint of that history when the advent of television had imposed a certain '*banalisation* of information' upon the culture:

In 1955 or 1956, at the Cannes festival, a reviewer for *LAurore* had written with a certain spiteful anger that the documentary film was the poison of film programmes. I couldn't prevent myself from replying to him that it was the other way around: 'Documentary is the conscience of the cinema', I told him. Since then I have never changed my mind. (Ivens and Destanque 1982, 257)⁹

In borrowing this phrase as the title of my book, I endorse this conviction and this riposte. The following fresco paints a trajectory of similar confrontations by generations of committed documentarists with the shifting political and cultural problematics of six decades of the cinematic century, generations of cinematic poison-bearers for whom Joris Ivens was both the flagbearer and irrepressibly the conscience.

PART I



2. 'Avant-garde'. Poster for screening of *De Brug*, Nice 1931, in shorts programme by Belgian, German and French avant-gardists, organised by film club led by Jean Vigo. Spectators are invited to come to applaud or to hiss. Original in colour. © European Foundation Joris Ivens (EFJI), Nijmegen.

Ivens and the Silent Film Avant-Garde 1926-1929

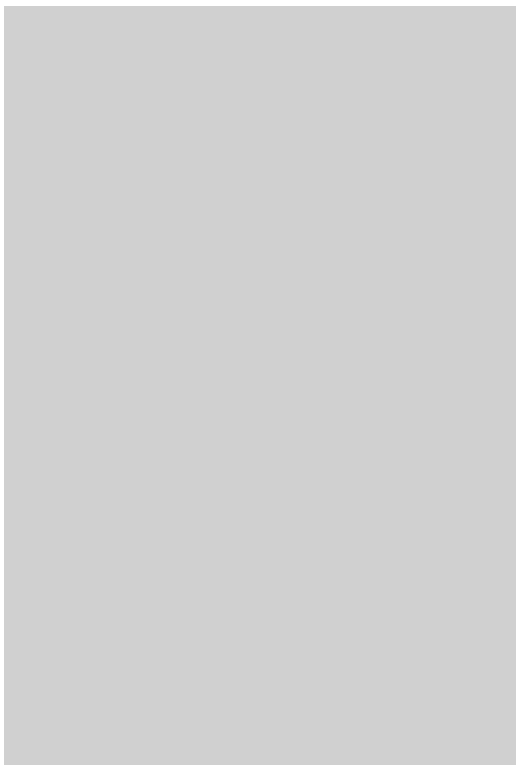
Joris Ivens, the arranger of all this orchestration appears to me to be one of the visual musicians of the future.
– Germaine Dulac, 1929

Joris Ivens's first memoirs, *The Camera and I*, were recorded with the assistance of Jay Leyda between 1942 and 1944 and finalised by Leyda for their 1969 publication. Looking back in the enforced idleness and exile of wartime Hollywood, Ivens offered an almost idyllic account of his childhood, his Dutch and German education, and his coming of age as a filmmaker in Amsterdam in the late twenties.

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Before we endeavour to understand the Amsterdam cultural and social milieu into which the 28-year-old Ivens arrived in 1926 to take up the administration of the Amsterdam branch of his father's photographic supply business and embark on his six-decade-long professional film career, we must first linger briefly on his adolescence. This is not to duplicate biographical details, which Schoots has already covered fully, but to synthesise the remarkable research that Stufkens (2007, 2008) and others have done on Ivens's artistic, religious, and cultural influences in the Nijmegen roots of his photographer father and grandfather Wilhelm and Kees Ivens, and on the thirteen-year-old Joris's remarkable initiation as a filmmaker in the 1912 amateur production *De Wigwam*.

It is true that Ivens the future artist can be seen in the indulgent 'bourgeois liberal' childhood that Ivens reminisced about for Leyda and forty years later for Destanque (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 24). He can also be seen surrounded by the prosperous, tightly knit family, whose melodramatic gestures and faces, made up in the 1912 theatrical manner, are preserved in that ten-minute miracle of archival perseverance also known as *Brandende Straal (Flaming Arrow)*.¹ He can also be seen in the charming 'curtain calls' the boy wonder in his Sunday best takes in a stop-motion epilogue to the movie. This accomplished home movie pastiching folklore about virtuous and evil Indians, virtuous white settlers, horses, and of course whispering woods and meadows, was



3. *De Brug* (1928): Ivens in action with his Kinamo on the Rotterdam bridge. Production photo, 1928, by partner Germaine Krull. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © Photographische Sammlung, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

developed by the precocious boy with a 35mm cinematograph (plus an assistant or two) from his father's shop. *De Wigwam* recycles fodder from European pulp fiction and imported American movies about frontier adventure that he had absorbed as a middle-class Dutch child in the first decades of the century and of the cinema. The plot shows a bourgeois white family's toddler daughter kidnapped by a bad Indian 'Black Eagle' whose son had been insulted by the Teddy-Roosevelt-look-alike white paterfamilias, but she is finally rescued by a good Indian, 'Flaming Arrow' (played by Ivens of course), who shoots Black Eagle dead in the process, and restored to her home with a harmonious and conciliatory denouement ensuing in front of Flaming Arrow's eponymous wigwam, implausibly erasing the murderous hatred that had unleashed the plot. It all seems to be a rehash of Thomas Ince's kidnapping melodrama *The Heart of an Indian* (1912, USA, 20), which had premiered that winter and is likely the film that Ivens is documented to have attended wearing a cowboy hat at Nijmegen's local cinema (van der Maden, 1988, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 32), perhaps with elements thrown in for good measure of Griffith's *The Adventures of Dollie* (1908, USA, 12), wherein the kidnapping of the little girl is this time

perpetrated by vengeful ‘gypsies’ instead of a vengeful ‘redskin’. In any case, child abductions and happy endings were standard tropes of the early narrative cinema, and the formulaic nature of the boy’s first plot and its prophetic overtones of future Ivensian morality, optimism, and elemental dramaturgy (Stufkens, 2008, 35) are of less interest than the movie’s flickering splendour as ‘family entertainment’ (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 29). Its elusive documentation of juvenile creative ease, intuition, pleasure, performance, and the boy’s birthright entitlement as a confident wielder of photographic technology is prophetic to say the least. The latter would be honed by subsequent family movies after the war, in 1920, 1922, 1925, and 1927.

4. *De Wigwam* (1912). Young Ivens as ‘Flaming Arrow’ tells the settler family how he rescued their daughter from the now dead Indian. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Stufkens (2002) has convincingly laid out Ivens’s genealogical heritage, two generations of photographers whose vision of the Nijmegen regional landscape, with its architecture, rivers, and woods, left traces on their son/grandson’s cinema, of their conservative Catholic mysticism that would show up in both the filmmaker’s almost pantheistic, elemental iconography of nature and even his final encounter with Chinese metaphysics. What Stufkens (2008, 34) calls the Ivenses’ ‘family tradition with the mechanical eye’ embodies ‘in the space of three generations, the organic transition between 19th-century photography and 20th-century film – with a well-nigh genetic preference for documentaries’ – and more concretely encourages us to see echoes in Ivens’s film of the Rotterdam bridge, subject of the mature filmmaker’s first film in 1928 as we shall see, of the young filmmaker’s father’s stately photographs of Nijmegen’s urban landscapes.

I confess I am more interested in the adult Ivens’s studies of economics in Rotterdam, and of photographic technology in Berlin and in the factories of Jena and Dresden, and how these respites from the bourgeois happy family of Nijmegen must have prepared him for his career in important ways: Ivens’s

later political development can be traced to his involvement with student politics in Holland, his exposure to the dynamics of factory organisation and the union movement in Jena and Dresden, and even his participation in the Sacco and Vanzetti agitation (c.1925) upon his return to Holland. Moreover Schoots ([1995] 2000, 21-33) provides rich documentation of Ivens's engagement with avant-garde, bohemian, anarchist, and eventually communist subcultures first in Germany and later in Paris – crystallised in his affair, beginning in 1922, with bisexual German avant-garde photographer Germaine Krull, and their later marriage of convenience in 1927. She was an influential and frequent artistic collaborator who was likewise involved in all those overlapping circles from Moscow to Paris to Amsterdam and seemingly had a finger in every pie in the capitals of Europe. It is unclear to what extent the roots of Ivens the eventual militant filmmaker of the 1930s lay in these initiations. Even, if as Ivens maintains, he was involved in the study of the Marxist classics and immersed in Weimar culture during the years of his education, the period before Ivens's return to Amsterdam seems just as important as one of technical rather than ideological or aesthetic apprenticeship. Stufkens (2007) affirms the continuities between Ivens's genealogical and local cultural heritage and the career of the future documentarist (after all his father Wilhelm had attended the first Dutch demonstration of the Lumière's *cinématographe* in Amsterdam in 1896), but this is not at all inconsistent with the above sense of a radical, bohemian breakaway from – if not renunciation of – the Nijmegen Ivens legacy. Most major artists within 20th-century modernist currents inhabited such contradictions – and inscribed them into the tensions and energies of their works.

The three major early films – *De Brug* (*The Bridge*, 1928, 16), *Branding* (*Breakers*, 1929, 42), and *Regen* (*Rain*, 1929, 16) – can best be seen in relation to the specific nature of Ivens's interaction with dissident elements of Dutch society during those years, as well as the outgrowth of his earlier individual and familial history, as Schoots and Stufkens have emphasised. That is, we shall see these films in terms of an overlapping centrifugal network of cultural and political relationships: Ivens's evolving identification with the artistic, political, and intellectual avant-garde of the Netherlands and Western Europe, this avant-garde's place within transnational social, technological, and cultural networks and institutions as a whole (Hagener, 2007), and Ivens's growing links with the Left. These films reveal two major dynamics: an affinity with the avant-garde insofar as they are works of an essentially modernist inspiration, and dominated by analytic, 'formalist' modes in harmony with avant-garde movements such as constructivism; and at the same time an intrinsic alienation from that constituency, visibly growing from one film to the next in anticipation of his eventual break with the avant-garde insofar as they also express

in varying degrees a humanist, non-modernist sensibility, legible in various filmic modes that are narrative, lyrical, and realist, rather than analytic.²

It is not surprising that tensions arose almost immediately after Ivens's return from his studies between the expectations of the Ivens family and Joris's bohemian, intellectual, and political inclinations. It was inevitable that his primary interest in the complete array of cinematographic equipment at his disposal was to be personal and artistic, not commercial, and that the company he sought out in Amsterdam was that city's robust avant-garde community, artists, poets, and intellectuals like those he had known in Germany and Paris, also frequented at the time. Still his relationship with this community cannot have been one of total identification, but was more likely one of mutual complementarity: educated in the social sciences and technology, his commitment to the avant-garde must have been that of the enthusiastic amateur and personal acquaintance, at least at first. Ivens's companion from those years mentioned most often in his memoirs was Hendrik Marsman, the Dutch poet, critic, and novelist, a self-styled 'vitalist' who was one of the principal spokespeople for the young Dutch intelligentsia of the period, both in his critical writing and his poetry. The former was published primarily in his journal *Het Getij* and *De Vrije Bladen*. Ivens's reminiscences of their intense canal-side or cafe-table conversations create a vivid sense of the provincial intellectual milieu, characterised by both languor and ferment, which Ivens found in Amsterdam in 1926. Although Marsman's greatest influence was due to his criticism, it was his poetry that Ivens admired most. Marsman's poetry is notable for the feeling of the sea in its rhythms and moods; Ivens was to attempt to capture this feeling in *Branding*, as well as in innumerable mature films. A few years later, Marsman's updated version of *The Flying Dutchman* became the basis of a scenario, contemplated but never realised, by Ivens and Mannus Franken.³

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Ivens's relationship with Krull was important, as Schoots ([1995] 2000) and Stufkens (2008) have elaborated: a professional photographer with anarcho-pacifist convictions, Krull was known chiefly for stark, constructivist-inspired photographs of machinery and buildings. Those published in her 1929 collection, *Métal*, would show, in retrospect, a strong affinity with Ivens's sensibility as expressed in his first film, and her presence during the production of *Brug* and *Regen* as well as two other minor works *Zeedijk-Filmstudie* (*Zeedijk Study*, 1927, Netherlands) and *Études des mouvements à Paris* (*Movement Studies in Paris*, 1927, Netherlands, 6) is well documented (Stufkens, 2008, 41-43).⁴ Krull would be present during, and was no doubt an uncredited participant in, the shoots for Ivens's productions through the end of the decade. Although it will probably never be possible to speak precisely of influence exerted one way or another, the congruence of their interests, and the resemblance of these

interests to many of the preoccupations of twenties avant-garde culture in general, are remarkable (Krull, 1929).

Ivens went through several girlfriends during those years, and his most important affective allegiance at the time was not to Krull and not expressed within the formality of marriage. His most significant companion was probably Anneke van der Feer, another artist, whose reputation as a figure and portrait painter, an engraver, and woodcarver was modestly established in Amsterdam and Paris. Once more it seems to be a case of close artistic affinity, in this case borne out by Ivens's future career: Van der Feer's specialisation included scenes of harbour life and working men. These themes would also prove to be of considerable interest to Ivens, who lived with Van der Feer in Amsterdam during the late twenties and took her to Moscow with him once his career as a filmmaker expanded beyond the Paris-Berlin-Amsterdam circuit. It is interesting to note Van der Feer's interest in traditional artistic media and subject matter, in apparent defiance of the most visible preoccupations of the circle in which she and Ivens moved.

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Another Dutch artist, a social realist painter named Charley Toorop, renowned for her stylised presentational portraits and figure studies, less politically explicit than those of the communist Van der Feer, was also a close friend. It is interesting, as Stufkens observes (personal communication, June 2014), that Ivens experienced the 'enormous' influence of 'three strong women, who at that time shaped with much courage and trouble a new model for the female artist, denying traditional artistic roles' and sharing his 'political left leaning'. This book will often ponder Ivens's proto-feminist themes and iconographies as well as working relationships with women throughout his career, and the question of the significance of these early friendships is key. In any case, Toorop prevailed upon Ivens to try to interest her fourteen-year-old son in film as a final solution to his adolescent restlessness. Ivens recruited the boy as an assistant on *Branding* and *Regen*, and this assistant, Johnny Fernhout (1913-1987, or Ferno, as he was eventually to call himself), was later to become a major persona of the autobiographies, Ivens's cameraperson and close collaborator for his finest films of the thirties as well as credited co-director for *The 400 Million* (1939, USA, 53).

Two of Ivens's other associates within the Amsterdam avant-garde were also to become co-workers on Ivens's films: Jef Last, whose love story about an unemployed sailor was the basis for *Branding*, and, more importantly, Manrus Franken, Ivens's co-director with the same film and also *Regen*.

It was within this circle of intellectuals and artists, then, that Ivens intensified his relationship with film, the commodity he already had mastered technically, and saw it in a new light – as an art form with infinite potential as a medium of personal expression and formal investigation. Of course it had

been increasingly fashionable among the European intelligentsia to look at film in this light ever since the war; it is ironic that at this very point this conception of film itself was beginning to be challenged fundamentally by a new wave of intelligentsia, including Grierson, among others, in a way that would have much more to do with the ultimate direction of Ivens's contribution to the medium. In any case, the principal locus of the cultural, personal, and political influences that shaped the early works of Ivens was the Amsterdam film society known as Filmliga, founded in 1927. The formation of this body is given considerable space in Ivens's autobiographies and biographies alike. As recalled in *Camera* (Ivens, 1969), he had quickly familiarised himself with the demands of the business in his charge, and almost as quickly had lost interest in the after-hours socialising and advocacy which should have been his duty as an enterprising businessperson, instead moving in the company of the intelligentsia who became the core of Filmliga.

Those artists and intellectuals whom Ivens found so fascinating as a young businessman and technician were equally attracted to him as the source of technical knowledge about the new art form. In constant touch with other European avant-garde film scenes, the Amsterdammers became enthusiastic not only about the non-commercial, experimental films coming out of Paris and Berlin, but also about the progressive studio films that were being produced as well, particularly in Germany and the USSR. They were particularly envious of the flourishing distribution systems for both varieties of films in Paris and Berlin. It was only a matter of time before the Dutch, traditionally closely in step with similar communities elsewhere in Europe, would attempt to imitate, according to local needs, the specialised exhibition systems for 'art' films in existence elsewhere.

The story behind Filmliga's founding is one of the most repeated anecdotes from *Camera* (Ivens, 1969, 20-21). The attempted suppression in Amsterdam of Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mat* (*The Mother*, 1926, USSR, 89) by Dutch censors, the setting up of a private screening for Ivens and his friends in the Amsterdam artists' club De Kring, the Mayor's private dinner with the Queen in the Royal Palace interrupted by the police asking him to stop the screening, and his delightfully astute reply that a private screening for a group of artists could hardly pose a threat to the state. Filmliga was inaugurated at that point to facilitate future screenings of all foreign films of interest to the artistic and intellectual community, not just those considered subversive. The impetus to form the film society arose more from the issue of artistic freedom than of political freedom.

It was 1927 that saw the formal inception of Filmliga (Linssen, 1999), and the beginning of its publication of the same name, an astonishingly incisive film journal that was to appear continuously, despite growing ideologi-

cal schisms, as often as eight times a year until 1933. The founding members of the Filmliga, in addition to the artistic circle already sketched, included a number of prominent critics, among them Menno ter Braak, the most eminent Dutch critic of his day and one of the young Ivens's most thoughtful interpreters, and L.J. Jordaan, who was an ardent champion of the independent avant-garde cinema in his weekly column for the *Groene Amsterdammer*. Ivens was listed officially as the Filmliga's technical adviser. The original organisers of the Filmliga were amazed by its early success – 2500 charter subscribers and an eventual expansion into other cities of the Netherlands.

58 | Ivens himself in *Camera* suggests an extremely helpful socio-political analysis of Filmliga, and by extension its kindred network of avant-garde film circles across Europe that formed the constituency for 'art films' and thus became the constituency for Ivens's early work as well. Ivens's comments, benefiting from the hindsight of a later ideological vantage-point, suggest the contradiction within the Filmliga milieu that eventually led to his second renunciation, in a way as radical as that with his family: his disengagement from the 'art film' problematic and his personal disassociation from Filmliga. Of the Filmliga's original conception, he states:

We had no great social urge to show these films to large audiences, it was the selfish wish to see them ourselves. It was only later, after the idea proved a success and we suddenly saw that the need was greater than we had realized, that we adopted a more social attitude towards the Filmliga. However, our purpose was non-political, and always primarily aesthetic. (Ivens, 1969, 20-21)

Filmliga's original manifesto of September 1927 (reproduced in Ivens, 1969, 21-22; MacKenzie, 2014, 525) provides more information about the appeal of the organisation for Ivens. The document's principal posture is a vehemently anti-popular elitism. It speaks of 'the herd, commercial clichés, America, Kitsch', stresses its own appeal to 'limited audiences', and dwells on the distinction between 'movies' and 'film'. It was not the only time that this tired semantic distinction has justified an 'art film' movement. It is important to point out, however, that the six films which were listed across the top of the document were, with one exception, all feature-length narrative films that can hardly be considered avant-garde in the normal sense of the word: *Die Nibelungen* (Fritz Lang, 1924, Germany, 288), *The Big Parade* (King Vidor, 1925, USA, 140), *Bronenosets Potemkin* (*The Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925, USSR, 66), *Ménilmontant* (Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926, France, 38), *Mother*, and *Variété* (*Jealousy*, E. A. Dupont, 1925, Germany, 72). The manifesto also promised old films of Chaplin and Asta Nielsen. The tastes of Filmliga's con-

stituency, it would seem, leaned as much in the direction of prestige studio films, such as those of Lang, Vidor, Dupont, and the Russians (who were after all building on the legacy of Griffith), as to the various kinds of non-narrative, experimental, and 'pure' cinema also well known in the milieu. This relatively popular orientation, masked by the jargon of the manifesto, is no doubt responsible for Filmliga's success beyond the inner core of the group, rather than its proclaimed 'belief in the pure autonomous film'.

In short, Filmliga's conception of film embraced a good many movies. And the two films Ivens mentions having minutely analysed and charted on his home editing-table during their Filmliga runs were narrative features from the USSR, *Arsenal* (Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 1929, 70) and *Potemkin*, both ultimately relying on the basic Griffithian narrative lexicon. On the other hand, the abstract or non-narrative films that Ivens also recalls admiring, those by Ruttmann, Hans Richter, and Viking Eggeling, glowingly referred to in *Filmliga* as 'pure cinema' or 'absolute cinema', terms of reference basic to most avant-garde movements of the day, are not mentioned as having received the same analysis. Furthermore, of the city films alluded to in *Camera*, it is Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (*Nothing But Time*, 1926, France, 45) that Ivens remembers liking most. There is no record of this in *Filmliga*, though there is an enthusiastic review by Ivens (1927b) of Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grossstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, 1927, Germany, 65), another major city film. It is significant that Ivens should remember the former, since *Rien* is notable as the single film from the city film cycle most clearly structured on narrative principles and dramatic characterisation (though *Berlin* of course has its narrative moments). Finally, *Turksib* (Victor Turin, 1929, USSR, 57) is also given special mention in the memoir, a repository of Soviet cutting to be sure, but at the same time a conservatively shaped, epic documentary narrative, without question an antecedent of *Zuiderzeewerken* (*Zuiderzee*, 1930-1933, Netherlands, 40-52).

Ivens's three early films, *Brug*, *Branding*, and *Regen*, conceived at the time in terms of the current notions of 'pure' or 'absolute cinema', were in fact constructed more upon the traditional narrative principles of the fictional feature than upon the abstract, modernist structures suggested by these notions. As films they had more in common with the representational realist and humanist stance of artists like Pudovkin and Vidor, or the lyrical sensibility of Dovzhenko, than with the formal experiments of Richter and Eggeling, etc. These decisive aspects of the early Ivens films – their narrative structure, their realist and lyrical orientation, their humanist sensibility, and their consequent popular accessibility and appeal – form the continuity with Ivens's later works, and furthermore contain the seeds of Ivens's eventual divergence from Filmliga.

The basic contradiction within the orientation of the *Filmliga* membership was an interest on the one hand in the great works of narrative realism of the silent period, from *The Big Parade* to the red parade (*Mother*), and on the other hand in abstract, experimental, 'absolute' works of the modernist avant-garde. This contradiction has been formulated somewhat differently by Ivens's East German biographer-critic, Hans Wegner (1965, 17). He sees it as the logical incompatibility of an interest in the Soviet film with an interest in apolitical modernist avant-garde films in the West – the former a formally conservative tradition insofar as it retained the narrative project, the realist posture, and the traditional socio-political framework of popular appeal, but (most important for Wegner) a tradition with a progressive ideological foundation; and the latter a tradition that rejected all of these features. Decades later, Nichols (1999, 2001) updates and complicates our view of the evolution of documentary realism beginning around this time and its political and artistic relationship to its modernist roots, with Ivens, Kasimir Malevich, and John Grierson exemplifying the volatility of a relationship that ranges from fusion to opposition, from syncretism to radical shifts. Suffice it to mention here that Ivens would increasingly experience a widening divergence between the two poles, with his instinctive leaning toward the realist option, while an inner core of *Filmliga* was increasingly attracted over the years to the non-narrative, abstract film, and eventually articulated an outright animosity to *Misère au Borinage* (*Borinage*, 1933, Belgium, 34) and Ivens's Soviet sympathies of the early thirties. The inherent conflict within the original *Filmliga* constituency was, however, less a question of logical incompatibility than a reflection of the ideological eclecticism, self-deception, and incoherence of most cultural avant-gardes in Western capitalist society between the wars.

The early issues of *Filmliga* vividly document not only these contradictions within the organisation, but also much about Ivens's specific interests at the time. From the first he was primarily interested in the narrative cinema, and the major goal in his self-directed apprenticeship was the development of editing skills in the construction of narrative continuity. An article by Ivens (1927a) in the first issue of *Filmliga* entitled 'Film Technique: Some Notes on the Sequences of Images in Film', reveals the scope of his investigations in that area. The article first outlines three parameters of the tempo and rhythm of a film sequence, shot duration, direction of movement within a shot, and graphic composition of a shot, all in relation to each other. Ivens then praises the 'absolute cinema' for its discovery of a whole new terrain for experimentation with such construction, but deplores the relative scarcity of such experimentation: 'Only in the absolute film is a very tight and mathematical development of the image sequence possible' (Ivens, 1927a, 6). However, Ivens then proceeds to recognise that 'non-absolute' films also can be char-

acterised by such tight image continuity. The rest of the article is devoted to a demonstration of the mathematical precision of the street fight sequence from *Mother*, giving exact details and measurements for a short sequence of shots in terms of his three parameters. Before closing, he speculates that the visual and psychological laws of cinematic continuity will soon be developed, probably by a German, and that directors will provide answers for the still unanswered questions. A footnote provides detailed measurements for a rather intricate montage sequence from Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927, France, 240).

A second instalment in what was apparently planned to be a regular column entitled 'Film Technique' appeared in the third number of the same year entitled 'Notes on the Two Images in a Strip of Film' (Ivens, 1927c). It consisted of a short discussion of the mechanics of retinal overlap in the perception of motion pictures, and points out for the interested reader a dissertation by one Dr. H.C. van der Walls on such optical illusions.

A somewhat less theoretical article (Ivens, 1927b) appeared, however, in the second number, a report from Ivens during one of his visits to Berlin. This was the first of a number of such reports contributed by Ivens over the next five or six years, not only from Paris and Berlin, but eventually from the USSR as well. Ivens reports from Berlin that he has established contact with a number of groups similar to Filmliga, and suggests the importance of continuing such contact for the exchange of experience and lessons in the effort to stay independent of the powerful studios. The article includes an enthusiastic report of Ruttmann's latest film, *Berlin*. Ivens admires it especially for having gone beyond Ruttmann's earlier 'absolute' films in its apprehension of the ordinary things of daily life, and for combining these within a dramatic whole without the resources of fiction. Ivens was inspired by this example and Stufkens (2008, 47-48) provides more detail of Ivens's enthusiastic 1927 visit to Ruttmann in Berlin right after the premiere of *Berlin*, identifying several 'visual quotations' of the German film in *Brug*, which the Amsterdammer undertook immediately upon his return. It can be argued that he inflected his own first city film *Regen* in this direction as well, lauded in almost identical terms two years later. Coming back to 1927, Ivens's article goes on to praise a number of foreign films currently playing in Berlin, most notably two Soviet films of special merit, Abram Room's *Tretya meshchanskaya* (*Bed and Sofa*, 1927, 95), and Lev Kuleshov's *Po zakonu* (*By the Law*, 1926, 80), both narrative features. These demonstrate for the author once more the 'superiority' of current Soviet films; his single reservation is in regard to the over-naturalistic tone of the acting in the two films. Ivens concludes his article by speaking excitedly of a performance of Toller's *Hoppla, wir leben!* (*Hoppla, We're Alive!*) at Piscator's theatre, of Gance's *Napoléon*, once more, with its innovative use of triple projection,

and of various editing experiments he had witnessed in studios in Berlin and Dresden (Ivens, 1927b, 9).

Neither here nor at any other point in his career was Ivens primarily a theorist. The three articles are all principally oriented towards the practical. The theoretical discussion of editing, for example, seems to be an offshoot of the author's own self-education in this craft, distinguished neither for its originality nor for its sophistication. His major interest, as revealed in these three samples of his writing from this early period, was how to make a film – the development of a comprehensive aesthetic system to account for his art would hardly ever interest him except as an afterthought (insofar as the absence of an articulated system can be considered a kind of system). The connection between his work and their ideological foundation has also always been largely unarticulated (except in the realm of praxis) and instinctual, whether that foundation has been the avant-gardism of the twenties or the militant radicalism and the conciliatory populism of later periods.

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The Amsterdam Filmliga provided the forum for many of Ivens's encounters with the pre-eminent film artists within the cosmopolitan avant-garde milieu. Visitors to the Dutch film society included Ruttmann, René Clair, Jacques Feyder, Germaine Dulac, Cavalcanti, and the three major Soviet artists, Eisenstein, Vertov, and Pudovkin, most of whom, it could be said, had the artistic intelligentsia of Western Europe as a primary constituency. Films screened at the bimonthly meetings or discussed in the journal included the avant-garde works by Richter, Eggeling, Kirsanoff, Léger, and Man Ray, as well as those of the visiting directors. Ivens would often serve as host to the foreign guests and would show them his latest work-in-progress: his presentation of the unfinished *Regen* to Pudovkin during the latter's visit to Amsterdam in early 1929 so impressed the Russian that the direct result was his invitation to Ivens to the USSR. Ivens's cluttered editing room on Het Singel became a gathering place of sorts for Filmliga adherents and foreign visitors; frequently onlookers, both artists and critics, would participate in the editorial decisions in the process of being made.

The Dutch intelligentsia in particular were taken with Ivens, that native son who received rave reviews in the major artistic circles of Western Europe. Prior to Ivens, the only noteworthy Dutch filmmaker had been a scientist named J.C. Moll who specialised in microscopic films of crystals; otherwise Dutch cinema had been as colonised as any national cinema of the period.⁵

The Dutch press, therefore, covered each new Ivens film with a special indulgence. In the avant-garde art journals as well, at home and abroad, a vigorous dialogue continued through the last years of the decade about this new Dutch artist: the French critics in particular were fond of relating him to the tradition of Dutch realist painting, not without a trace of condescension.

The foremost voices of avant-garde criticism sooner or later paid him homage in print: he was discussed by Dulac, Harry Alan Potamkin, Béla Balázs, Léon Moussinac, Richter, Jean Epstein, Florent Fels, the London Film Society, as well as by the Dutchmen Ter Braak and Jordaan. Ivens's particular prominence in Paris may have been due to the existence of prosperous *rive gauche* art houses that programmed his films.⁶ In London and other cities, it was more likely to be a film society like Filmliga that provided a showcase for *Brug* and *Regen* among their Eisenstein and Vertov programs.

Ivens's films from this period are products of this milieu and gestures toward this constituency, but he would soon move decisively and irrevocably beyond this framework. The allegiance of the avant-garde audience to Ivens, particularly that of its Dutch component, would prove surprisingly tenuous. The Dutch intellectuals were catholic enough in their tastes to admit the dubious ideological premises of the Soviet artists to their screens, so long as they were suitably obscured by innovative cutting, but as soon as the same themes appeared in the work of their compatriot, their enthusiasm would wane dramatically.

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The contradictions in Ivens's short-lived relationship with the avant-garde can easily be read in the layers of conflicting texts that constitute the films of the period. The following analyses of the three major films – *Brug*, *Brand-ing*, and *Regen* – reveal both Ivens's affinity with the avant-garde and his divergences from it; they also reveal, on the one hand, an anticipation of the thematic and above all the stylistic preoccupations of the mature Ivens, but, on the other hand, a very clear coherence as a unit quite distinct and anomalous within Ivens's *oeuvre*.

It is not difficult to catalogue the ways in which these films do anticipate the mature work of Ivens, and Ivens's past biographer-critics have amply demonstrated this continuity (Grelier, 1965). They have quite perceptively accumulated a whole repertory of recurring motifs, stylistic tendencies, and other elements of Ivens's mature *oeuvre* that are traceable in the three early films in varying degrees: the genius for seeing the beauty of the ordinary day-to-day world, the sensitivity to the expressive details of a concrete landscape, the talent for linking these details with an epic overview, the insight into the role of the natural elements in the human cosmos and of the human presence in the natural environment, and the attention to the lyrical or connotative potential of surfaces, reflections, and shadows. It is even possible to point out signature tropes that will recur throughout the entire *oeuvre* – a water surface punctuated with drops, an insert-shot of a child or group of children at play, a movement from a close-up detail to a panoramic landscape. And, of course, there are the specific themes to which Ivens will return, with slightly varied emphasis, as he matures: in *Brug*, the functionality of the machine and the

ultimate human and social reference of that functionality; in *Branding*, the themes of social injustice, of exile, of harmony between human preoccupations and the cosmos, and the reliance on the dramatic authenticity of the non-professional actor; in *Regen*, the beauty of everyday objects and settings (though surprisingly the future Ivensian iconography of labour, present in the first two works, is absent in this film).

64 | The list is accurate as far as it goes. However by isolating several of the more prominent characteristics of Ivens's film language and themes, this approach neglects the totality of Ivens's work. It neglects both the unique, specific implications for each film of his relationship with the changing circumstances of film production and consumption at each point throughout his career, and the fundamental continuity of this relationship. The former will emerge from the individual analyses of each film, but in the meantime it is possible to generalise about the latter. In general, the early period's reliance on the aestheticised language of the late twenties avant-garde is consistent with the continuous tendency throughout Ivens's career to rely wholeheartedly and unquestioningly on the current lexicon of his specific cultural environment, of the community within which he is located, and of the constituency to which he addresses himself, whether that will mean the populist rhetoric of New Deal America, the mass choreography of Cold War Eastern Europe, or the direct cinema of the late sixties in the West. Frankly imitative, uninterested in the fetishised innovativeness of modernism once he is detached from its influence, and fully confident in this principle of popular accessibility, Ivens from the very beginning has been, despite his many innovations, a formal conservative. The modernist overlay and the deeper narrative structure of the early works are both reflections of this insistence on communicating directly with his constituency in whatever film language was currently in vogue.

In the face of this deep, underlying continuity, many of the apparent thematic resemblances between the early work and the mature work seem rather superficial. The auteurist catalogue of Ivensian motifs must be carefully qualified. In *Brug*, for example, because of this film's distinct context and constituency, the mythologisation of steel and structure is clearly quite different in its emphasis from similar themes in the epic Dutch construction films of the next four years, and even more so in the socialist realist works, *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, USSR, 50) and *Pierwsze lata* (*The First Years*, 1949, Bulgaria/Czechoslovakia/Poland, 99), in which industry and scaffolding are unambiguously subordinate to their social reference and not subjects in themselves. Similarly, in *Branding*, the simple study of social inequality, a feature of the story on which it is based, seems more metaphysical than political and is almost peripheral to Ivens's interest in the ocean and the dunes, not a basic preoccupation as in *Borinage*. And the cityscape of *Regen* is markedly different

in its inflections from those superficially similar cityscapes of 30 or more years later such as *La Seine a rencontré Paris* (*The Seine Meets Paris*, 1957, France, 32), ...*À Valparaiso* (1963, France, 27), *Pour le Mistral* (*For the Mistral*, 1965, France, 33) and *Changhai: Impressions d'une ville* (*Shanghai: Impressions of a City*, 1976, France, 60), where natural phenomena provide the focus for detailed study of the economic and social life of a community, rather than serving as a source of fascination in themselves. Nature as the raw material and crucial setting for the human struggle scarcely enters Ivens's 1929 perspective of rain – the water trickling down the irrigation trough of *The Spanish Earth* (1937, USA, 53) seems to have no relation to the aestheticised object of *Regen*. The specificity of the work of Ivens at the end of his twenties will be apparent from the following detailed examination of the three early films and the contradictory artistic impulses and contextual forces that shape them.

DE BRUG

It is perhaps no more than an accident that *Brug*, of all the filmic exercises undertaken by the young camera enthusiast in his first working years in Amsterdam, should have reached such a stage of completion that we now know it as Ivens's first fully realised work. Many of the other exercises that Ivens undertook during those years remained unfinished fragments and have not survived. According to Ivens's recollections of the non-extant subjectivity exercises, compiled in a *Kinoschetsboek* (*Film Sketchbook*, 1927, Netherlands), and to other brief accounts of them, they were largely inconclusive self-training exercises. His first project, ten minutes of rushes of the interior and clientele of a waterfront bar belonging to Juffrouw Heyens, the mother of a sculptor friend of his, appears to have been among other things a test of his new German camera's mobility. The one surviving item, *Études*, is comprised of four minutes of movement studies shot in 1927 in the streets of Paris, a city that Ivens increasingly frequented and inhabited briefly with Krull. Preserved by the Cinémathèque française and included in the 2008 box set, *Études* offers shots of traffic and tramways that have as much in common in their approach to *Brug*, with their bold diagonalism, kinetic energy, and taste for striking angles, as to *Regen*, the city film whose subject is superficially similar. At least one narrative edit and a recurring vignette of a burly horseback traffic cop anticipate future interests as well, but for Stufkens the work is very much about the 28-year-old's here-and-now energies, as reflected in quasi-Futurist musings in a personal letter: 'You know what it's like in your car, the bliss of travelling at speed, and you don't want that speed in your own inner life?... No half measures. I wanted to shout: all the way... go for it... you have to run, we

can be horses...’ (10 November 1928, JIA, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 44). A 1928 screening of the material led to a very positive assessment by a reviewer in the Dutch publication *Focus* (1 April 1928, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 45) as an ‘outstanding [...] extraordinary work of films’. No doubt this 1927 sketch has symbolic importance, other than its training role, because of its realist attitude in its exploration of a physical and human environment and its anticipation of the *mise-en-scène* and proto-direct ‘spontaneous’ modes that Ivens would later perfect as elements of his classical hybrid style.⁷

5. *Études des mouvements à Paris* (1927).
Point-of-view tracking shot through the traffic in the city he would permanently adopt thirty years later. DVD frame capture.
© CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Another exercise, now referred to as the *Ik-film* undertaken by Ivens and his actor friend Hans van Meerten in the winter of 1928, was an experiment in the ‘subjective camera’, presumably deriving from a number of similar experiments in the German commercial cinema of the period, for example *Variété*, as implied in a footnote to *Camera* (Ivens, 1969, 43). This exercise included a sequence in which the camera ‘drinks’ a glass of beer, and another in which the camera walks with the aid of a mechanical dolly that Ivens designed to simulate the rocking motion of the human walk. Other studies mentioned in *Camera*, or in other works on Ivens, seem to have been motivated by similar interests in technical possibilities, including the ‘subjective’ project focused on skating. ‘Subjective’ shots of one kind or another, whether shot/counter-shot point-of-view shots or a moving-camera take implying movement through a space, were included in all three of the early films.

Brug seems to have started out as one of these exercises and was brought to fruition as a completed film and found an audience almost as an afterthought. It is probable that the coherence implicit in the subject matter itself, rather than any particular technical gimmick or theoretical concept, is what ultimately gave the film its inspiration, its unity, and the momentum that led to its full realisation and an audience. According to Ivens’s recollection in

Camera, the choice of a bridge as the film's subject was more or less arbitrary. The impulse that led to the film was a desire to study movement and rhythm in a controlled situation without the risks of human intervention. The bridge seemed merely a suitable setting for such a study:

I sought a subject for a more thorough study of the ABC of movement and rhythm, not trusting myself with the complexities of a story or the movements of human beings. When my friends heard what I was looking for – an inanimate, subject with a wide variety of movement and shape – Van Ravenstein, a railroad engineer, suggested that I look at a railway bridge over the Maas River in Rotterdam.⁸ The middle part of the bridge moved up and down between two towers to let ships pass underneath and trains pass overhead. This was exactly what I wanted.

For me the bridge was a laboratory of movements, tones, shapes, contrasts, rhythms, and the relations between all these. I knew thousands of variations were possible and here was my chance to work out basic elements in these variations. In all the films I had seen at the Film-liga I noticed a rich variety of images and of expression; but in talking with the people who made the films, I got the feeling that they were working without enough technical and artistic knowledge. What I wanted was to find some general rules, laws of continuity of movement. Music had its rules and its grammar of tones, melody, harmony, and counterpoint. Painters knew what they could do with certain colours, values, contrasts. If anyone knew about the relation of motion on the screen he was keeping it to himself and I would have to find out about it for myself. (Ivens, 1969, 26)

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The modernist thrust of this account of a novice's search for the ground-rules of an art form is readily apparent: in addition to the goal of technical apprenticeship elaborated here, there is also a validation of formal investigation as an end in itself, the basis of much modernist culture of the first half of the 20th century.

The finished film does indeed fulfil this end, and lends itself readily to a modernist reading. Certainly the contemporary audience saw it in these terms, as a significant contribution to the modernist enterprise of the French, German, and Soviet experimenters whom Ivens and Film-liga admired so much. For this audience, Ivens's talents as a storyteller, as a *metteur-en-scène*, and as a spontaneous 'documentary' observer of the world were all overshadowed by his analysis of movements, rhythms, and structures. Dulac's (1929) reaction was typical:

I have seen a moving symphony, with harmonies, accords grouped in diverse rhythms, I've felt a theme whose sensitive resonance goes beyond the object. Forces that are assonant, dissonant by choice, the opposition or the grouping of the harmonies, the architecture of masses by the shot angles, rhythms by the cadence of the measure. Joris Ivens, the arranger of all this orchestration appears to me to be one of the visual musicians of the future.

Ivens's own contemporary discussion of the film fully supported a reading such as Dulac's and emphasised his modernist theoretical base, analytical goals, and unwittingly of course, the contradictions in his own approach to the subject and the film. In a 1928 article, Ivens begins by recapitulating his commitment to some of the ideals of twenties modernism:

68 | The film *The Bridge* was finished at the beginning of this year. The bridge at Rotterdam served as its subject. The multiple movements that occur when this powerful iron construction is raised and lowered offered a broad field of action for a film in which *I wanted to examine the possibilities of composition of movements*. I wanted to go further in the domain of film that is located between documentary actualities or the technical instruction film, and that which is called the acted film. My project was to make, with the material offered by the bridge and the trains, *without a true action or story*, a film which would hold the attention of the spectator. Furthermore I had the intention of making a title-less film, and I was thus forced to *concentrate completely on the purely visual elements of the film*. (Ivens, [1928] 1965, 141, my emphasis)⁹

This concentration relies heavily on Ivens's developing editing skills. For Ivens, as for many independent filmmakers of the late silent period, editing was an intrinsic element of filmmaking: the division of labour among the various crafts was a feature of industrial filmmaking that independents fully adopted only in the late thirties. Ivens's amateur status also encouraged the central place of editing in his work: as with his Soviet contemporaries a few years earlier, time at the editing table was more affordable than the extra stock required by other approaches to filmmaking based on long and multiple takes. His editing studies of such films as *Potemkin*, *Arsenal*, *Mother*, and *Napoléon* had a decidedly practical orientation. The system employed for sketching the editing techniques of Eisenstein and the others became incorporated into his own methodology as editor: 'I made a rough sketch of every shot on a film card with arrows indicating the movement within the shot, and then arranged these cards before I cut my precious film strips' (Ivens, 1969, 28). Today *Brug*

reads like an exuberant textbook of the virtuoso editing of Ivens's mentors in both the USSR and the Western European avant-garde. Many of the cuts are flamboyant articulations of contrasts in scale (a skyline vista punctuated by vertical crane structures, cut to an extreme close-up upward pan along rivet heads in a steel girder), contrasts in direction of movement within the frame (slow descending track of the lowering ballast weight of the bridge, cut to a view of the end of the bridge span rising), graphic echoes (a head-on close-up of a round railway coupler, cut to a lateral view of a wheel), or of contrasts in kinetic or rhythmic configuration.

However skilful this repository of modernist cutting is, an impressive achievement for an amateur's first film, perhaps even more impressive is the kind of editing-within-the-shot that is also central to the film's analytic orientation. This achievement clearly stems from the long hours of obsessive observation that Ivens has described in *Camera*. Many of the film's articulations of contrast in scale, composition, and movement, are realised without a cut, either with the aid of a smooth, concise tilt or pan, or taking advantage of the movement of the object itself. An example of the former is a tilt up from close-ups of girder joints to a vista of the whole city horizon. An example of the latter is a shot capturing simultaneously the foreground rising of the bridge span and the background lowering of the ballast weight. Some shots are an even more intricate orchestration of various movements: in one, as a girder rises toward the camera, striped shadows move across it, and then another shadow coming from the opposite direction covers it completely. Other shots exploit the foreground-background play already mentioned as a framing device, as in a shot where a huge foreground wheel in the bridge mechanism provides a rotating frame between its spokes for another rotating wheel in the background. Other intra-shot analytic articulations occur through the juxtaposition of camera angles, points of view, surface textures, etc. In short, the film reveals quite as much editing done by Ivens perched on the beams high above Rotterdam as in the Amsterdam editing room.

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6. *De Brug* (1928): 'a laboratory of movements, tones, shapes, contrasts, rhythms, and the relations between all these'. Frame enlargement. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



There are specific technical factors involved in this particular achievement of editing-within-the-shot. The camera used by Ivens during the Amsterdam years, and often thereafter, was the small portable 35mm Kinamo, pioneered by one of his teachers in Germany (Buckland, 2006). The importance of this camera in the non-commercial filmmaking of the late silent period cannot be exaggerated – it permitted the young filmmakers to shoot in the streets with a spontaneity and mobility that the larger studio-oriented cameras could not achieve. It was also suitable for small budgets because of its simplicity and minimum of gadgetry. No doubt its limited magazine capacity contributed to the interest of many cineastes in Soviet-style cutting. Interestingly enough, Boris Kaufman was one of the first to exploit the possibilities of this camera in France, though his wildly hallucinatory handheld pans for Vigo in *À propos de Nice* (1930, France, 45) have more in common with Ivens's 'subjective' exercises than with the precise analytic movements of *Brug*. In any case, the image of Ivens balanced on the bridge scaffolding with his Kinamo is crucial to an understanding of Ivens's artistic evolution, because it is linked directly to the two major cinematographic modes of Ivens's mature hybrid style: the 'spontaneous' mode and the *mise-en-scène* mode. The Kinamo, in permitting Ivens to tilt the running camera up instinctively to catch an unexpected burst of smoke from a train, an example recalled in *Camera*, was instrumental to the aesthetics of spontaneity that for some observers have established Ivens as a precursor of direct cinema/*cinéma vérité*. Ivens's limited initiation into this mode in *Brug* would be considerably expanded in the two subsequent films with the greater opportunities for on-the-spot decision-making created by human subjects, and even more so in later works. As Ivens would comment to an interviewer at the time of *Regen* the following year, 'I deliberately used a small camera with takes limited to 25 metres [c. 55 sec.] in order to be resolutely free in my movements' (Fels, 1929a, 303). On the other hand, the Kinamo facilitated the careful observation of the pro-filmic event and meticulous organisation of a take according to the event's intrinsic structure rather than according to the demands of tripod and setup. (Certain longer takes of slow-moving parts in *Brug* were done with CAPI's American DeVry, also a small portable camera [Stufkens, 2008, 49]; this approach would evolve into the *mise-en-scène* mode of the mature period.) The skills of observing inanimate structures acquired during *Brug* would later be employed in the filming of animate subjects.

An examination of *Brug* in its totality, however, reveals a realist narrative text submerged by, and in contradiction to, the dominant formalist-analytic text. This text is imbued with the documentary sense of the bridge not only as an abstract 'found' sculpture but also as a point of convergence of numerous social and environmental forces of the real world. The submerged text also renders in narrative terms the slow inexorable movement of the raising and

lowering of the bridge, never lost sight of despite the artist's digressive emphasis on microcosmic detail. The realist narrative text did not attract contemporary critical comment, but is strikingly discernible in the attention to the bridge's context through foreground-background play, and, most importantly, in the use of conventional narrative and expository structures and codes to give chronological shape to the actual first-up-then-down event being recorded. Such contradictions were by no means rare in the late twenties avant-garde; they have already been remarked in the eclecticism of the tastes of the Filmliga constituency, and are also visible in, say, Krull's vacillation between such strikingly disparate subjects as constructivist-accented machinescapes and folkloric landscape and portrait work, or, for that matter, in the 'realist' texts within the classic works of literary modernism such as Joyce's *Ulysses* or Eliot's *The Waste Land* (both 1922). In fact, the tension between the different texts may be responsible, as in those literary works, for their enduring force.

Ivens's 1928 article, which appeared in the Dutch *Cinema en Theater*, proceeds, after its elaboration of *Brug's* modernist conception, to reveal how from the very inception of the project, its representational narrative text was structured with quite conscious intent; that is, the shooting was guided by a written scenario and the editing was based on narrative conventions. Ivens offers his readers at this point a summary of the scenario that outlines in a straightforward, linear manner the opening and closing of the bridge:

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- Opening title
- Introduction (Diagram of the bridge, panorama, bridge, the construction engineer Joosting, the camera with which the shooting was accomplished)
- Beginning (going through the bridge)
- Coming and going of trains on the bridge
- Construction of the bridge [the ironwork is presumably meant here]
- Approaching the bridge on a train
- The train halts
- Raising the bridge
- Boats passing through
- Lowering of the bridge
- Green Signal
- The train going through the bridge
- Passage of the train on the bridge
- End (passage of absolute film). (Ivens, [1928] 1965, 141-142)

The diegetic progression of the film, based as it is on this 'scenario', proceeds through a conventional beginning, middle, and end in a manner of which even

Aristotle could be proud. This overall narrative shape has a specific graphic manifestation as well: 'Needless to say, the vertical movements are dominant when the bridge is rising and lowers, and horizontal ones dominate when the boats are passing, with, however, indispensable variations'. Some of the shots of the denouement in fact are the exact reverse of the shots of the opening movement. Ivens's ([1928] 1965, 142) discussion even proposes the standard narrative device of suspense as one of his architectonic goals: 'During the passage of the boats, the film shows from time to time a train waiting. Thus the spectator doesn't leave the subject and is anxious to see if other boats are passing, and presently he will be happy when the bridge closes again and the train is able to continue' ([1928] 1965, 141-42).

7. *De Brug* (1928): 'treating the bridge in human terms of reference'. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



This conventional narrative orientation is consistently discernible at the level of microcosmic narrative units in the film. For example, Ivens's instinct to show the functional working of the structure and his insistence on treating the bridge in human terms of reference (whether conscious or not) leads him at crucial points to insert shots of the bridge engineer working the lever that activates the mechanism, or of the signal man giving the signal to the train to proceed. These inserts, in combination with the shots that precede and follow them showing their effect, create short narrative syntagms, each with a distinct structural autonomy. The following rather intricate narrative sequence is elaborated in full because it demonstrates not only how Ivens exploits narrative expectations in this particular film, but also suggests the borrowed narrative techniques on which he would rely within the framework of documentary for the rest of his career:

1. high angle tracking movement of the rails, apparent optical movement in
2. signal down
3. train decelerates, approaching camera – a short shot

4. close-up of hand flicking switch
5. closer view of 3, emphasis on coupler as train comes to a halt
6. lateral view of the same, slight overlap chronologically, and continuation of the same action
7. head-on close-up of coupler approaching camera
8. halted wheels, same scale as coupler, a visual echo
9. smoke from the chimney stack
10. steam from wheel
11. tilt down a control panel
12. longer shot of control panel
13. closer shot of same again
14. signal man on the telephone
15. huge wheel
16. signal man cranks handle of phone in close-up
17. hangs up phone
18. the huge wheel is now still
19. close-up of cogs or gears starting to move
20. another part of huge wheel moving
21. hand pulls back lever, tilt up to close-up of face
22. close-up of thermometre-type gauge rising
23. small piece moves
24. span starts to rise

In contrast to this rather embellished, indirect manner of narrating the halting of the train and the rising of the span, there are also narrative tropes as simple and short as this shot/countershot trope:

1. a signal man running along girders pauses and looks down
2. high angle point-of-view shot of river and town

Coexistent with the film's analytic project, then, and basically in contradiction to it, are conventional narrative structures. Furthermore, *Brug's* linear narrative diegesis is itself used uncritically and non-reflexively – illusionistically even – unlike a contemporary film such as *Man with a Movie Camera* in which narrative structures themselves come under analysis. Dulac witnessed not only a symphony of movements, but the story of the rise and fall of a bridge. The great narrative realist filmmakers of the twenties, studied by Ivens for their editing technique and admired by Filmliga, must be seen as the presiding inspiration of *Brug*, along with the avant-garde formalists whose presence is perhaps more explicit (Richter, for example, seems to be explicitly quoted in the fragment of 'absolute' film with which Ivens concludes *Brug*, an animated swelling cube, black on white). It is perhaps the mark of Ivens as yet an ama-

teur that neither the 'realist' text nor the 'modernist' text dominates the film in a unified, coherent manner.

74 | One other aspect of *Brug*, more purely ideological, also links the film to the avant-garde milieu of the twenties, namely a quasi-Futurist aestheticisation of the machine. *Brug* comes virtually at the end of a stream of films from the twenties that are more or less in love with the machines of the modern age. This stream includes films as diverse as Léger's *Ballet mécanique* (1924, France, 19), Lang's *Metropolis* (1927, Germany, 153), Ruttmann's *Berlin*, and such Soviet representatives of the genre as Vertov's *Odinnadtsatyy* (*The Eleventh Year*, 1928, 52), *Man with a Movie Camera*, and Eisenstein's essays on the Leningrad bridge and the cream-separator in *Oktyabr* (*October*, 1927, 95) and *Staroye i novoye* (*The General Line*, 1929, 121) respectively. Potamkin ([1929] 1977) responded to *Brug* foremost as one of the machine film genre, comparing it to predecessors as various as Gance's *La Roue* (*The Wheel*, 1922, France, 273), Henri Chomette's *À quoi rêvent les jeunes films?* (*What Do Young Films Dream About?*, 1924, France) and Eugène Deslaw's *La Marche des machines* (*The March of the Machines*, 1927, France, 9), as well as Léger's film and Clair's *La Tour* (*The Eiffel Tower*, 1928, France, 14). In defining the scope of the machine film, Potamkin definitively locates it, not in relation to the social role of machinery, but in terms of the formal interests of the modernist movement:

In filming a machine or machines, there are several things to aim for – the relation of the entire machine to its parts, the relation of the machine at rest to the machine in motion, the relations of the moving parts, the increase and decrease in speed, the texture or lustre, the sense of volume and sense of power. A machine film can be very dramatic! (Potamkin, [1929] 1977, 74-75)

Potamkin is particularly interested in the lyric possibilities of the machine film, and, like Dulac, praises Ivens for his command of rhythm and pace, recognising at the same time the overall narrative shape:

A machine-film is like a lyric; it must not be too long. Ivens carried his film beyond its logical point of duration, thereby weakening it. Still it is a good film. [...] Ivens followed the languid pace of the opening and closing of the bridge heeding, all the time, the nature of the structure. (Potamkin, [1929] 1977, 77)¹⁰

Another text from the period gives us a much more precise sense of the ideological roots of the machine film genre of which *Brug* can be seen as a kind of culmination. As we have seen, Krull, present at much of the shoot, published a

collection of her photographs (Krull, 1929) shortly after the appearance of *Brug*, a forceful collection of images of machinery and structures clearly inspired by the same perspective of the machine as outlined by Potamkin. The collection included photos of the same Rotterdam bridge as appeared in her husband's film, dramatic low-angle views of the girders, wires, and towers, and close-ups of cogs and gears similar to those of Ivens, still versions of the idioms of the machine films. There is also a range of related material, including magnificent silhouetted harbourscapes punctuated by cranes (an image which would eventually become an Ivens signature), and assorted views of gleaming metal furnace pipes, scaffolding, and machinery parts, taken in Amsterdam, Paris, Marseilles, Saint-Malo, and a French Citroen factory. The preface to this collection was by the same Florent Fels who was to praise Ivens warmly after the premiere of *Regen*; in his preface, Fels displays the ideological implications of the machine film with an alarmingly naive hyperbole. It deserves quotation at length:

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Steel is transforming our landscapes. Forests of pylons are replacing secular trees. Blast furnaces are being substituted for hills.

Of this new aspect of the world, here are some elements fixed in some beautiful photos, representative of a new romanticism.

Germaine Krull is the Desbordes-Valmore¹¹ of this lyricism and her photographs are sonnets with sharp and luminous rhymes. What an orchid this Farcot regulator is, and what disturbing insects these exhaust wheels are.

The superimpression gives a fantastic face to the most precise mechanisms and before a milling machine, covered with thick oil, of dead debris and trickling water, one thinks of Dostoevsky.

In the halo which surrounds them, the powerful generators, silent and peaceful in action, seem to radiate luminous vibrations, and what a trumpet call these chimneys throw towards the sky, these gods at the end of our road! Bridges penetrate space. Trains break in their fracas the line of the horizon. They leave the sun and, in the fatal advance of progress, slide on the ether, sweeping along marveling living beings toward starry stations. (Fels, 1929b, 509)

The anti-humanist potential of such an aesthetic would hardly need to be pointed out (even if Marinetti was not yet at that point on the brink of his legendary panegyric to Mussolini's Ethiopian adventure, offered in much the same terms a few years later). In his article in 'Phases of Cinema Unity: III', Potamkin even proposed the construction of a special machine to be used for 'absolute' machine films in which it would be possible to eliminate entirely the human factor, and suggested that, regarding the 'absolute' film:

nothing so interferes with the unity of an absolute film as the presence of a human figure not arranged into the entire absolute structure. It may be true, as one critic has observed, that the appearance of a human figure into a film of non-human contents relieves the spectator's tension. But that very relief is intrusion. [...] The absolute film of all films makes no compromise with the spectator's prejudice and habit of mind. Its unity is its only determinant. (Potamkin, [1930] 1977, 30)

In parentheses, Potamkin adds, 'In one of the most pleasing of the machine films, Deslaw's *March of the Machines*, at one point a man is visible behind the machinery. The austerity is broken for the moment and the mind needs to reconstruct the absoluteness'.

76 | There can be no question that such a sensibility is legible in *Brug*. It can clearly be read as a hymn to the strength, solidity, and mobility of the structure that is its subject, without any necessary reference to that subject's social context or function. Ivens's perspective is loaded with this attitude: the strikingly composed angular shots of the huge wheels that operate the mechanism, the graceful pans along the girders, the camera's low-angle prostration before the oncoming train demanding passage. Potamkin ([1929] 1977, 77) elaborates a few other specific strategies whereby Ivens underlines the solidity of the bridge: 'He was very careful to capture only so much of the edifice as would convey its solidity. He understood that to take in too much of the bridge at a time would make the steel look webby rather than solid'.

Ivens's recollections in *Camera* confirm Potamkin's impression. One finds references to the technical means necessary to convey the 'feeling of iron', 'the feeling of power behind [the wheel]', to the use of filters to 'help intensify the texture and substance of the material – the clean steel and the oily cable', and the mental image of 'the fast trains from Amsterdam to Paris, streaking across in a powerful drive of black metal and white steam', or to the bridge's 'enormous variety of action, turning wheels, trembling cables, rising masses' (Ivens, 1969, 26-27, 30-32). It is no surprise accordingly that Fels (1929a, 303) sensed that the 'personality of the bridge was so great that it got the better of the headstrong Ivens and submerged the entire film'.

The New Romanticism of the machine age, proclaimed by Fels in his preface to *Métal*, was hardly new at all, having been espoused by the Italian and Russian Futurists as much as fifteen years earlier, and in fact was in a state of decline in 1927, on the verge of its dissipation before the onset of the Depression, Fascism, and the Popular Fronts. And it is an indication of this perhaps that Ivens, for all his sympathy for the cult that Fels and Potamkin embraced so uncritically, is not swept away irredeemably by it. The 'realist' text continuously subverts the machine film discourse. As Grelier (1965, 26)

states, 'the object, its *plastique*, its function, remain human, within the scale of man'.

One aspect of this human scale is the emphasis on the bridge's functionality. The film is not simply a symphony of shapes and movements, but a careful exposition of the working of an intricate feat of engineering. This is accomplished partly through Ivens's adherence to the sequentiality of the opening and closing of the bridge, with the two perpendicular streams of traffic following each other. The systematic progression of each phase of the event is communicated with a clarity that is remarkable in view of the indirect and metonymic manner insisted upon by the director. The functionality of the bridge is also underlined on the shot-to-shot level: the causal connection between the wheel turning and the span rising, for example, is explicitly articulated by the sequence of individual shots and often even, as we have seen, within a single shot. The signal is seen falling before the stream of boats proceeds.

The spectator's sense of the bridge as a functioning whole is periodically reinforced by an extreme long shot of the entire apparatus, locating it on the skyline of the city and the river, and in the context of the immediately surrounding buildings and the traffic it serves; furthermore, the film is introduced by a drawing of the bridge's design on much the same scale as the long-shot image of it. Even during the analytic dismemberment of the structure in Ivens's expressive and wandering close-ups, the view of the Rotterdam skyline, or of the river or rail traffic, often comes into background view, reinforcing the sense of its functional and geographical context. The constant reference to the bridge's spatial relationship to the river traffic below is directly connected to the sense of the bridge's functionality. This effect was deliberate according to *Camera*: 'And far below, seen through the turning spokes will be seen tiny shapes of traffic. I must be sure that there are many trucks to keep the idea of Rotterdam as a port' (Ivens, 1969, 38).

In this respect, Béla Balázs's estimation of the film, although perceptive of its tendency to abstraction, seems unnecessarily harsh:

Even when Ivens shows a bridge and tells us that it is the great railway bridge at Rotterdam, the huge iron structure dissolves into an immaterial picture of a hundred angles. The mere fact that one can see this one Rotterdam bridge on such a multitude of pictures almost robs it of its reality. It seems not a utilitarian bit of engineering but a series of strange optical effects, visual variations on a theme, and one can scarcely believe that a goods train could possibly pass over it. Every setup has a different physiognomy, a different character, but none of them have anything whatever to do with the purpose of the bridge or its architectural qualities. (Balázs, [1952] 1970, 176)¹²

It may be true, as Balázs implies, that there is a mannered overlay of virtuoso effects, both editorial and compositional, stemming from Ivens's avant-garde orientation and his amateur status. It is true that there are occasionally eccentric camera angles (for example, a few diagonally off-kilter bird's-eye-views of the train), an occasional indulgence in some *trompe l'oeil* effect with movement and shadow, or an obtrusive use of a visual rhyme. It is true also that the exposition of the bridge's functionality may only be partly successful, as Ivens's recollections of audience response during his Soviet tour in the early thirties suggest (as Ivens, [1969, 56] remembers it, workers in his audiences still wanted to know what cities are connected by the bridge and why there are no people on the bridge). Yet Ivens's understanding of the way the bridge works, apart from its purely visual and structural properties, and his sensitivity to its social functioning, are both undeniably inscribed in *Brug*, even if these talents would only achieve their fullest realisation in the mature period beginning with *Zuiderzee*.

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Naturally, the human role in the bridge's functionality is essential, and there is more recognition of this in the film than Balázs admits. Although occasionally the machinery seems self-animated according to the requirements of the machine film genre, as prescribed by Potamkin, the operator is repeatedly brought into view – flicking a switch, pulling a lever, talking on the telephone, consulting the gauge. Except for a single close-up perspective of the man's face, the human reference is admittedly somewhat impersonal, despite the details in *Camera* about the friendly, co-operative relationship between worker and artist. If the humanist text is ultimately secondary, it is all the same the germ of *Zuiderzee*, that monument to human ingenuity, muscle, and perseverance. And Ivens's interaction with his human subject, as he photographed him operating the mechanism, is the germ also of his mature *mise-en-scène* methodology. Ultimately, one wonders whether Ivens's attitude toward the bridge might not have more in common with the Soviet variation of the machine cult – tractors and dams in the service of society – than with the anti-humanist ideology of its Western counterpart. The bridge is raised so that human traffic can pass; the cogs and wheels do not dance for their own benefit, but in response to the human hand on the lever and in subservience to the busy city below.

Brug's success must be measured historically not only in the foregoing conversation it sparked among the most sophisticated critics on both sides of the Atlantic, but also in its commercial and popular success, both domestically and abroad. Stufkens recounts the upswell of applause by a 400-strong audience that greeted the May 1928 premiere in Amsterdam, and a Dutch critic's recognition of 'a fundamental energy, a painstaking gravity, a wealth of fantasy and an unmitigated terseness that was difficult to equal' in the film

(Jordaan, 1931, 10-11). But immediate sales to Moscow, Berlin, and Paris (Stufkens, 2008, 51) and a subsequent international tour may well have been no less significant for Ivens. The career of the filmmaker was on its way.

BRANDING

Branding, Ivens's second major film, appeared in the wake of the enthusiasm which greeted *Brug*. A joint project undertaken in collaboration with Mannus Franken, it was shot in June 1928 in the North Sea fishing village of Katwijk, and was completed later that year. This 33-minute film, somewhat of an anomaly in Ivens's career, is one of Ivens's rare experiments with fiction. It is marked by an unevenness stemming not only from this venture into an unfamiliar area, and from problems arising from the collaboration with Franken, but also, it is clear, from the uncertainties of an artist who was still an apprentice. If Potamkin ([1930] 1977, 36) was right in praising its 'dignity and seriousness of effort', it is also true as Wegner (1965, 28) remarks, that many passages have 'a certain primitiveness'. The film is given short shrift in Ivens studies, including in this book, but it was rehabilitated, so to speak, by being excerpted by Ivens and his partner Marceline Loridan in *Une histoire de vent (A Tale of Wind)*, 1988, France, 78) 60 years later. Still it was unaccountably not included in the 2008 box set, though one 'extra' included a charming video episode of Ivens returning to Katwijk in 1980 with his former collaborator Henri Storck and Loridan's former collaborator Jean Rouch for a lively session of reminiscences.

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Based on a novel by Ivens's friend, Jef Last, who also plays the film's protagonist, and strongly influenced by Franken, *Branding* is a much less personal film than *Brug*, and clearly shows the strain of its multiple authorship. The story is simple and downbeat: an unemployed sailor, in love with a young woman from his fishing village, is led to pawn his watch, his ring, and even his boots to a vividly parasitical local pawnbroker, 'the neighbour, who gets rich on the misfortune of others' according to the intertitles, in order to buy her a gift, and to have enough to eat himself. Ultimately, the sailor chooses exile at sea over the stagnant village milieu because, 'First I must break with the *past* – completely'. This downbeat ending, the only one in Ivens's entire career, is clearly the contribution of his more melancholy collaborators.

Franken had been a technical student in Delft and eventually set up a base in Paris where he was known as a journalist and as a director of outdoor pageants and two short films, *Les Jardins du Luxembourg* (1927, Netherlands, 14) and *Redding (Rescue)*, 1929, Netherlands), the latter shot like *Branding* in Dutch fishing ports. Articles by him on Léger and Clair appeared in *Filmliga*.

Franken would go on to make a pivotal contribution to the fledgling Indonesian cinema after his two films with Ivens, employing the same semi-documentary approach pioneered by him and Ivens in *Branding*. Ivens may have been attracted to the story because of its social theme, but he was not involved either in the formulation of Last's story or with Franken's development of the scenario.

An article by Ivens (1929) describing his experiences with the film appeared the following year in *Filmiga*, probably in connection with the film's Amsterdam premiere in February 1929. This helps clarify Ivens's stake in the project. It is implied that although Franken was an experienced filmmaker with two films already to his credit, he was primarily involved with the staging while Ivens's responsibilities included the technical aspects of production, shooting, and montage.

80 | The article begins with a preamble about the film's intentions based on a recapitulation of a few basic formulas of modernist aesthetics of the period. Ivens writes that the acted film is an attempt to transpose human material into film rhythm, to portray the human figure, not as an actor but as a pictorial surface at the service of montage. In other words, the human figures in the story were supposedly playing the same structural role as the Rotterdam bridge had in *Brug*. Ivens's article goes on to mention a few digressions from Last's original story required by the budget but concludes that the changes were ultimately insignificant and that the main line of the story was retained. He then suggests that one intention was to convey the atmosphere, to let the actors (non-professional, he emphasises) interact with the inanimate objects of the environment, to show the influence of the unemployment crisis on actual material objects and the quality of life, and, in terms of the story's heroine, to convey her femininity, by purely visual means.

The rest of the article is devoted mainly to a discussion of various technical aspects of the film that seem to have enlisted most of his creative energy. He mentions the limited magazine capacity of the Kinamo and the consequent need to invest more creativity in the editing than in the actual shooting. The technical devices for the development of the image, he explains, were less limited than those for the actual recording of it; that is, in-camera dissolves and various optical and filtering effects were not possible. He remarks as well that the interior scenes shot later that fall offered the challenge of using the interaction of artificial light and daylight in actual surroundings outside of a studio. Again, future techniques of documentary *mise-en-scène* were being explored.

The problem of filming people, non-professional actors as well as the local townspeople, is also discussed. He describes his naturalist rationale in filming the actors without makeup, a strategy consistent with the relatively

subdued style of acting. The problem of people losing their self-consciousness before the camera comes next: apparently he viewed his success in solving this as mixed – the male actors' performances are adequate, and in the case of Co Sieger, the dancer who played the heroine, her awkwardness and shyness are used to good advantage. The villagers, who served as extras, either willingly or unwittingly, were more of a challenge. Many of Katwijk's conservative inhabitants regarded the Amsterdam bohemians living in a rented house by the sea as 'pure devils' and refused to have anything to do with them – Ivens gratefully lists the names of the families who did co-operate. Ivens's later preoccupation with the technique of filming non-professional actors thus received its first concerted expression.¹³

8. *Branding* (1929): trying out the technique of directing non-professional actors. DVD frame capture. © Mannus Franken Stichting/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



In conclusion, Ivens mentions that special music was composed by Max Vredenburg for the film's exhibition, a first for a Dutch film of any description, and finally gives special thanks to his 14-year-old editing assistant, Johnny Fernhout.¹⁴

Like all of the early works, *Branding* reveals a host of the influences that shaped the outlook of that decade of the European film avant-garde. Franken was more of a Francophile than Ivens – he lived in Paris during the period – and the influence of the French avant-garde, the self-styled Impressionists grouped around Dulac and Louis Delluc, is perhaps most evident.¹⁵ The interests of Jean Epstein, in particular, seem most clearly paralleled (if not actually echoed) in *Branding*: the use of objects to convey psychological states, a well-tuned sense of landscape, an attraction to everyday characters and to folkloric themes. Epstein's commitment to the principle of non-professional acting identifies him as a possible model for Ivens, as well as, for some film historians, a precursor of neorealism and direct cinema (Marsolais, 1974, 45-46). Certainly *La Belle Nivernaise* (*The Beauty from Nivernais*, 1924, France, 69),

Epstein's 1923 tale of bargemen travelling the Seine between Paris and Rouen, using both authentic settings and non-professional actors, seems to anticipate *Branding*. Epstein's *Finis Terrae* (1929, France, 80), almost exactly contemporaneous to *Branding*, also has an almost uncanny resemblance to the Ivens-Franken film, particularly in its use of a remote Breton maritime setting for its simple, semi-documentary story. *Branding* also displays a visible overlay of the Soviet influence that was virtually unavoidable at the time. This influence is particularly felt in the cutting of the film, presumably Ivens's sphere of authority. Especially ostentatious, for example, is a mannered and incongruent trope of flash cutting used to convey a sudden movement by the hero during a courtship sequence in the dunes along the shore (he whirls around to confront the heroine who is following him flirtatiously). A reliance on kinetically articulated transitions and such devices as superimpositions can also be seen as partaking of this general influence, as can even the intensely metonymic mode of narrative. The use of landscape as a reflection of the drama as well seems just as evocative of *Mother* in its understated lyricism, as of the hyperbolic and artificial spirit of many German films of the period (it is difficult not to see Ivens's turbulent passages treating the surf as echoes of almost identical sequences in Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1921, Germany, 81).¹⁶ In short, the film is characterised by a virtual patchwork of echoes and influences that reflects both the genuine cosmopolitanism of the cultural milieu in which it was made and the susceptibility of Ivens, the apprentice artist, to absorb the diverse influences abounding in this milieu.

It seems at first odd that the almost abstract study of a bridge imbued with distinct Futurist overtones, should have been followed in Ivens's filmography by a simple melodramatic tale set in a rustic community scarcely initiated into the 20th century. In fact, it is often overlooked that the entire European avant-garde of the period, especially in the Low Countries, had the same kind of schizophrenic interest in the folkloric reservoir of the parent cultures alongside the preoccupation with the material of the Machine Age. Lang's *Metropolis*, Vertov's *The Eleventh Year*, Storck's *Images d'Ostende* (1929, Belgium, 15), and Dulac's abstract films such as *Disque 957* (1928, France, 6) were balanced by films by the same directors representing an entirely antithetical folk orientation: respectively, *Die Nibelungen*, *Shestayachastmira (One Sixth of the Earth)*, Vertov, 1926, USSR, 65), *Une pêche au hareng (A Herring)*, Storck, 1930, Belgium, 15), and *La Fête espagnol (Spanish Fiesta)*, Dulac, 1919, France). The pages of *Filmliga* and of *Variété*, a Belgian art journal which was particularly enthusiastic about Ivens's early films, reflect this divergence in a dramatic way. The photography appearing in *Variété*, during the late twenties (including Krull's), balances Futurist-inspired studies of machine parts with rural landscapes, portraits of peasant artisans at work, and scenes of idle fishing

boats and rugged wharfs. Ivens's Amsterdam circle, as we have seen, included a number of artists who had resisted the trends of modernism in favour of the folkloric and social subjects and media of traditional Dutch realism. *Branding*, then, follows this pattern. Potamkin ([1930] 1977) was one of those who recognised the importance of indigenous folk subjects for Dutch and Belgian artists, particularly filmmakers, and was perceptive enough to note that *Branding*'s treatment of such a subject was its most commendable feature. Remarking on the affinity between *Branding* and Epstein's *Finis Terrae*, he registered considerable surprise that the Amsterdam audience had found *Finis Terrae* 'wretched', for he found that in its treatment of indigenous Breton folk material it succeeded where *Branding* had failed, that is, in 'working with the indigenous life of Holland'. Potamkin wondered in the same article whether the 'French absolute film [is] the source for the Dutch and Belgian artist', and speculated on the possibility of a 'permanent Dutch cinema attitude' grounded in folk roots, 'an autochthonous and original Dutch cinema' based on the 'apprehended experience of the Dutch people'. He continued,

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Finis Terrae should have meant something to the Dutch practitioners as a study in the utilization of natural tempers and in the exploitation of native types. [...] I think it would be well for the Dutch cinematists to remain concerned with the physical evidences of *folk*. They have at hand a rich source in their graphic art. They should go, not necessarily to their greatest artists (though Rembrandt can teach every cinematist much about tones) but to those Flemish or German artists, who have remained most folkish: an Abel Grimmer, for instance. Or for grander employments of folk activities to the paintings of the Brueghels and to Bosch – these are full of the kinetic. The galleries in Antwerp, Brussels and Amsterdam are replete with sources. [...] The Dutch and Belgian cinematists will do well if they study their folk-painters, look into their folk-writers, watch their folk-movements and remain folk for a while. (Potamkin, [1930] 1977, 36-37)

It is possible that Potamkin, had he examined *Branding* somewhat more closely, might have recognised his own prescriptions in effect: there is scarcely a painter from the tradition of Dutch folk realism that is not somehow evoked by the film. A shot of the heroine scaling fish in a sunny court has the simple household subject, precise outline, and glowing warmth of a Vermeer or de Hooch; cinematic renditions of classical still lifes abound; and the landscapes of town, harbour, and shore that provide the backdrop for the story have that expressive dynamism and richness of suggestive detail, as well as authenticity of local colour, that the Dutch landscape tradition has made familiar. As for

the Brueghel recommendation it is unfortunate that Potamkin would not live to see dozens of Brueghel-inspired scenes in future Ivens works.

Yet, the Amsterdammers' rejection of *Finis Terrae* is not as surprising as it seemed to Potamkin: Ivens recalls in his memoirs that at the time the sophisticated Filmliga audience was too 'snobbish' even for *Branding* with its simple melodramatic plot and its local setting (Ivens, 1969, 34). The latter was perhaps a little too local for an audience that was considerably more interested in the current output of artists in Moscow, Berlin, and Paris than of homegrown artists, especially now that the novelty of a purely Dutch filmmaker that had inflected the reception of *Brug* was past.

84 | Whatever the case, *Branding's* most durable asset is its peculiarly Dutch folk consciousness, articulated through the mode of documentary realism and filtered through Ivens's and Franken's cosmopolitan sensibilities. It is best in its straightforward observation of the details of setting, costume, and gesture. Potamkin's perception is more astute than he knew: this departure from the standards of the French 'absolute' cinema not only gives the film its lasting freshness but is a promise of Ivens's mature work. His evocation of the Katwijk community and its surrounding environment of ocean, dunes, and tulip fields, and the integration of this environment with the village's economic and social life, anticipate Ivens's highly tuned sense of the interaction of place and society during his mature work.

As with *Brug*, the reality of the environment in *Branding* is conveyed with a combination of clear close-up detail and a sense of the long-shot totality of a landscape. The filmmakers intercut, on the one hand, a high-angle long-shot pan of the village roofs, an intricately textured idle harbourscape, or a symmetrical view of the townspeople walking in file in their black Sunday suits to church with, on the other hand, a whole array of close-up details: a cat in a window, a view of the hero's bag with a fishtail sticking out, the reflection of a boat's hull in the motionless surface of the water, a close-up tilt down the rigging of a fishing boat, a Van Gogh-inspired pair of boots. Ivens and Franken are particularly skilled at building up the heroine's persona by fitting her into the daily life of the community with vivid details of her daily activities. Each time she is seen engaged in a different household chore – scrubbing the street with a long-handled brush, scaling fish, washing windows, drawing water – an anticipation, surely, of Ivens's mature interest in working people and work. Though Franken was more responsible for the direction of the actors than Ivens, the details of everyday working-world objects are evoked with a precision and sensitivity that are clearly Ivens's. And Grelier (1965, 69) is right that the extraordinary lyricism and expressiveness of the landscape passages – those in the dunes, the tulip fields, the surf – anticipate Ivens's consistently exercised talent in this direction in later years, and testify to his remarkable

affinity with Dovzhenko, whose work he may already have been studying.¹⁷ The recurring leitmotif of children in *Branding* likewise seems a precursor of what was to become a mature stylistic signature. If here this began as a tactic for circumventing the hardness of the adult villagers, the presentation of children at work or play, or simply posing for the camera, became an almost formulaic element of Ivens's universe, the image of a child becoming a validation of the struggles that he would document as well as an injection of spontaneity into a film. In contrast, the filmmakers' approach to the romantic couple is characterised by a certain delicacy, possibly awkwardness. A kind of reticence about sexuality is a hallmark of Ivens's work, and of the socialist realist tradition that he would assimilate and refine within the next decade. This seems more blatant in *Branding*, a film focusing entirely on a sexual relationship, than it does throughout the rest of a career in which such subject matter is always peripheral to other concerns. In contrast, Storck's similar Belgian work, *Une idylle à la plage* (*Romance on the Beach*, 1931, 35), seems very erotic indeed.

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The most valuable contemporary critic of *Branding* is Ivens's fellow member of *Filmliga*, Menno Ter Braak (1929a). His long, sensitive review of the film in *Filmliga* points to a number of basic problems, and is particularly suggestive as to what Franken's and Ivens's respective contributions to the project might have been. In fact, Ter Braak immediately recognised the creative tension within the collaboration and centred his critique on it, which is worth paraphrasing at length.

Ter Braak's biggest complaint was in relation to the psychological dimension of the narrative, and it was Franken he held responsible for a 'complete failure of psychological intuition'. In his opinion, the dramatic restraint, the economy of the means of expression intended by the film backfire: instead of an 'aphoristic' narrative style, there is a kind of 'visual stuttering' on several occasions, and a general unintelligibility in the visual language, a lack of continuity between the various scenes arising from the invisibility of the transitions. The story seems to have inspired Ivens even less than it did Franken: it was a pretext for Ivens's visual virtuosity, which Ter Braak detects in 'visual intermezzi', 'masterly fragments' that 'remain hanging loose' from the psychological development attempted by Franken. The movement of the film, Ter Braak concludes, fluctuated between two directions, at one point psychological motif and then again *cinéma pur*.

The material with the actors was often used differently from natural material, without this difference being justified by the particular worth of the actor. There was again no director for this film; there was a director for the rhythmical sea and carnival studies, (Ivens) and a director who understood the film in general (Franken), but the right man in the right

place was missing, the man who should have found the psychological links. (Ter Braak, 1929a, 68)

For Ter Braak, the film was ultimately an Ivens film, with his imprint as reflected in the ocean intermezzi more or less dominating the sensibility of the film.

86 | Ter Braak's perceptions still seem well-founded almost 90 years later. The distinctly Ivensian sequences of the film, the lyrical interludes, are quite distinct from the more strictly narrative parts. In a few cases, however, the artists seem to have been working together more closely than Ter Braak gives them credit for, namely in two beautiful sequences in which the lovers meet on the dunes. In these two sequences, the first blissful and sunny, and the second, precarious and cloudy, landscape and nature seem to be in close accord with the simple psychological states of the two characters. In the first, a long handheld track follows the pair into the dunes and from that point, extra-long shots, some in silhouette, place the lovers in relation to the rolling terrain and the expanseless Dutch sky while contrapuntal close-ups reveal the intimacy of their relationship – the heroine's shy smile, their two hands joined, her bare feet playing in the sand as they kiss, a pattern of sand sifting down a tiny hill-ock, their hands meeting in the sand, gulls floating against the clouds as they leave. The effect is marred only by a miscalculated insert shot of the sneering pawnbroker. The second, less happy meeting on the dunes is introduced by a low-angle pan of the dune grasses sifted by a strong wind, and the lovers are wrapped in shawl and coat against the cold and sunless sky.

Other sequences of a similar lyrical virtuosity are indeed intermezzi, as Ter Braak states, with only an arbitrary connection to the narrative. The major recurring visual motif of the film, for example, a view of waves breaking on the shore, evokes the savagery as well as the rhythmical grace of the sea, but its metaphorical thrust is stated rather than felt, as both Ter Braak and Potamkin point out. Consequently, the hero's final decision to seek exile on the sea seems unmotivated either aesthetically or psychologically. Still, in itself, this motif is expressive, and Ivens's camera demonstrates a Flahertian sensitivity to a range of graphic and emotive qualities in the surface of the ocean. Ivens's memoirs confirm that this motif held much of the interest for him in the film:

It took more than one film to teach me to work with actors, but the important accomplishments for me in this film were some successes in photographic ingenuity. In order to film the movement of the sea and the surf in a dramatic subjective way, I constructed a rubber sack with a glass front to contain my head and arms and camera. This enabled me to shoot while breakers rolled over my camera and myself, producing shots of

sea movement with a violent quality that nobody had seen before on the screen. (Ivens, 1969, 34)

It is true that the shots of foam dashing against the lens itself are dazzling, in a way the logical culmination of Ivens's previously unrealised experiments with a subjective camera. But all the same, in its isolation from the rest of the film, such virtuoso embellishment simply constitutes additional exercises for the apprentice.

One aspect of *Branding* that seems the most startling departure from *Brug* is its use of the popular melodrama in apparent defiance of the sharply anti-popular prejudice among the Filmliga public. The directors suppressed many of the histrionics that would have been present in a commercial version of the same story. But a very strong residue of this tradition remains nonetheless, in the exaggerated stereotype used for the expression of the character of the villain, for example, shot typically in low angle, a malignant expression distorting his face. According to Grelier (1965, 69), the realism of the film, its authentic effects of atmosphere and setting suppress this intrusion of melodramatic formulas, but it is more likely that the realist text and the popular, melodramatic residue coexist in unresolved conflict. In fact, there is a more disturbing rupture between this eclectic narrative text itself, and the modernist overlay to be read in the so-called intermezzi, an overlay that represents the real continuity between Ivens's first two films, *Brug* and *Branding*. In other words, the narrative elements, whether realist or melodramatic, are at odds with the almost abstract texture of other elements. If *Brug* involved the construction of 'absolute' cinema on the basic sequential conventions of the narrative film (the opening and the closing of the bridge), the reverse process is evident in *Branding*, and is less coherently realised: the construction of a narrative film on the conventions of the absolute film. All three of the early films are similar in their welding together of disparate forms of filmic discourse, and this is apparently why Ivens was able to move from one project to the next with no apparent sense of discontinuity. However, in *Branding*, the fusion of the constituent materials is the most problematical of the three. It is not surprising, then, that *Branding* has usually been discussed in terms of the seriousness of its intentions and of the success of certain of its elements, rather than as a fully achieved work, and had less success in finding an audience than the other two films – which may explain its absence from the 2008 box set.

REGEN

88 | *Regen* is at first glance the most artistically unified and fully realised of the three early major works; at least it seems to a large extent free of the tensions between modes of discourse that marked the two earlier films. As such, this fifteen-minute 'film poem' has been traditionally accepted as a classic of the late silent documentary, is still widely distributed and shown, a 21st-century staple of YouTube, and has even been characterised by polemically motivated critics of Ivens as an achievement on a level that he would never surpass (Grenier, 1958). The circumstances surrounding the production of the film, however, suggest that it must be regarded as the last product of the apprentice phase of Ivens's work, rather than as the first important milestone of his career. Begun late in 1927, carried out intermittently along with the production of *Brug* and already exhibited piecemeal as early as January 1928, delayed at first by a dry spell, and finally wrapped up soon after the completion of *Branding*, *Regen* was, like that film, a collaborative project undertaken with Mannus Franken and was charged by the persistent rain that had hampered the shooting of *Branding* (Ivens, 1969, 34). The project was conceived, shot, edited, and repeatedly sneak-previewed over a period of two years (Stufkens, 2008, 65-67), and was finalised more or less concurrently with Ivens's work on his film for the Dutch construction workers' union that signals an entirely new phase in his career, *Wij Bouwen* (*We Are Building*, 1930, Netherlands, 110-141). Two entirely different sets of production circumstances thus overlapped at this crucial point: the last of a series of personally motivated, privately produced artisanal works aimed at the cosmopolitan avant-garde film community is finished simultaneously with a commissioned film aimed at an audience of workers and union officials, a film with a specific prosaic message and publicity function to be delivered for a price to consumers who had no interest in film as an art form per se. *Regen* was first shown in December 1929 at Filmliga's Uitkijk cinema, and the premiere of that other strikingly different film followed shortly thereafter. Within a month of their successful releases in their respective circuits, Ivens was to leave for his first trip to the USSR, both films under his arm, and an entirely new phase in his career was underway, a phase building directly upon the initiative established with *Wij Bouwen*.

Technically, *Regen* was as much of a collaboration as *Branding* – a 1929 note to *Filmliga* by Ivens protests against the publication's habit of referring to *Regen* as an Ivens film rather than a joint project. But it is no doubt significant that the *Filmliga* constituency did see it as an Ivens film, as did Ter Braak (1929a, 65). Although the finished film is still dominated by that melancholy that is said to be characteristic of Franken's sensibility, Ivens's artistic personality and his technical and artistic evolution are all clearly legible within the

film. For one thing, the film was entirely shot by Ivens with the help of his growing circle of assistants and students, who by this time included, in addition to Fernhout, Helen van Dongen, the young secretary-translator for the Ivens firm, CAPI, who was becoming increasingly involved in the *Filmliga* group. Ivens (1969, 40) states that *Regen* was 'made almost entirely as a cameraman's film'. Thus, although Ivens gives Franken credit for considerable involvement with the scenario or 'outline', and for having come to Amsterdam from his Paris home 'for a short time to assist in the editing' (Ivens, 1969, 40), the *Filmliga* critic opined that Franken's contribution had been 'a gentleness and a soft, melancholic romanticism that unexpectedly lifts the somewhat grim pragmatism of Ivens's concept to a different level: that of individual emotion' (Jordaan, 1931, 16, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 70). Still it is difficult to imagine how the usually absent Franken's role could have been the determining one.

Other details in this account of the production reveal the presence of a specific shooting method and stylistic element considerably more important in *Regen* than in the two earlier films. A spirit of spontaneity in the finished text resulted from a new on-the-spot, spur-of-the-moment approach to the subject. Ivens remembers how the group of collaborators would watch for rain and would rush out into the streets at the first sign to capture it on film:

With the swiftly shifting rhythm and light of the rain, sometimes changing within a few seconds, my filming had to be defter and more spontaneous. For example, on the big central square of Amsterdam, I saw three little girls under a cape and the skipping movements of their legs had the rhythm of raindrops. There had been a time when I thought that such good things could be shot tomorrow as well as today; but you soon learn that this is never true. I filmed those girls without a second's hesitation. They would probably never again walk at that hour on the square, or when they did it wouldn't be raining, and if it was raining they wouldn't have a cape, or skip in just that way, or it would be too dark – or something. So you film it immediately. With these dozens of interrelated factors you get the feeling of shooting – now or never. (Ivens, 1969, 36)

Wegner (1965, 26) echoes this, depicting the shift from *Brug* to *Regen* as an expansion from the Here and Now to the Now or Never. As Ivens (1969, 36) put it, the challenge of the new subject 'forced me to relax the rigid and over-analytical method of filming that I had used in *Brug*'. Indeed the role of the ephemeral, random gesture or nuance is pivotal in *Regen*, as it is in varying degrees for the other key documentaries of the late silent period by Vigo, Cavalcanti, Vertov, and Ruttmann.

9. *Regen* (1929): three little girls under a cape, 'now or never', 'relax[ing] the rigid and over-analytical method of filming that I had used in *Brug*'. DVD frame capture. © Mannus Franken Stichting/CAPi Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Technical aspects of the new-spontaneous shooting style are also dwelt upon in *Camera*:

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I found that none of the new colour-corrective film emulsions on the market were suitable for my rain problems. The old extra-rapid Agfa film with no colour correction at all, and used without a filter, gave the best results. All lenses were used with a fully opened diaphragm because most of the work was done with a minimum of light. (Ivens, 1969, 37)

Most of the shooting was done with Ivens's by now well-worn Kinamo, with the assistance of another hand camera, the DeVry. The light, flexible Kinamo, used to good advantage on the girders of the bridge and on the dunes of Katwijk, is here exploited fully for the first time, adding to Ivens's analytic precision of framing and composition the freshness and inspiration of spur-of-the-moment impulse. If the spontaneous movements of the two earlier films were based on long hours of careful observation, here a more immediate kind of perception is in play, based on instinct, a quick eye and a nimble camera. The painstakingly premeditated shot of a dripping rail in close-up, for example, is balanced by a jerky movement, handheld, following someone boarding a tram.

Camera movement is thus an essential stylistic byproduct of the spontaneous method. Both *Brug* and *Branding* had employed tracking shots: the former as introductory and concluding train-borne apprehensions of the bridge-subject, and the latter as virtuoso handheld inflections of certain narrative moments. In *Regen*, handheld tracks and pans responding to ongoing events are expanded and refined, and integrated into the narrative and expressive texture of the film. Now that Ivens's subject has changed from an inanimate structure or a preplanned scenario to a dynamically unfolding human universe, his images have become much more fluid and flexible. Almost every

shot is built on a movement of some kind: either the camera itself pans across a streetscape, lurches through a crowd, or follows feet along a pavement; or else, when the camera itself is stationary, it focuses on a movement within that universe, from the flap of cloth to the scurrying of pedestrians and the glide of trams. In *Regen*, then, Ivens's self-processed affinity with Cavalcanti, and with Flaherty as well, is confirmed: the rhythm and movement of the subject and of the camera's encounter with the subject are emphasised, rather than an independent rhythm based solely on the artifice of montage, as with Ruttman and other Soviet-inspired editors. Through the proto-direct 'spontaneous' method, Ivens anchored his vision more firmly in the pace of the outside world itself. Although the determining mediation of the artist between spectator and the world is obviously still present, *Regen* nevertheless does reflect on Ivens's part a certain heightened realist sensibility that was by no means shared throughout the avant-garde community.

At the same time, the analytic elements are still important in *Regen*, in the fastidiously composed close-ups of objects reflecting the passage of the storm, for example; however, they too show a discernible evolution towards a more realist sensibility. There are none of the flamboyantly diagonal shooting angles, for example, that seemed obtrusive and even mannered in *Brug*, nor any of the non-figurative, textural articulations of Storck's images of the sea in *Images d'Ostende*.¹⁸ Here the overhead surveys of street scenes impress the spectator more with their efficient summarisation of the movements within the landscape than with their sheer physical bravado. The framing of the analytic perspectives has also evolved a greater delicacy. Ivens tends to articulate the rainstorm through understatement, suggestion, and metonymy; he is reluctant to show any object when a part of it will do, or a muffled reflection, a partly obscured view of it, or a shadow. Passers-by are often shown by their images in puddles or by their feet alone at the top of the frame. A frame is often divided by an awning, an umbrella, or a window-frame that removes a subject from direct perception.

In addition to the spontaneous and analytic elements, there are also a few shots involving documentary *mise-en-scène*, a not unimportant element of the two previous films, as we have seen, and a trademark of Ivens's later films: for example, a passer-by approaches the high-angle lens, stops precisely in frame, looks up at the sky, hand extended, then turns up his collar and hurries away – a shot altogether too felicitous in its composition and overloaded literary signification to be anything but the performance of an obliging collaborator following directions (Fernhout in fact).

Regen then offers for the first time a hybrid camera style anticipating that of Ivens's maturity: a combination of first, the analytic approach most characteristic of *Brug* and applied with great care to the environments of certain

future subjects that would attract his attention; second, a proto-direct spontaneous mode, expressed most coherently in *Regen*, which would be essential to the documentarist who, after 1929, would confirm the human universe as his subject; and finally, another major ingredient of his mature style, *mise-en-scène*, learned on location with the amateur actors at Katwijk, but given a documentary validity and signification in its one or two uses in *Regen*. It only remains for the abrupt change in subject matter precipitated by the *Wij Bouwen* project to stimulate further reconstitutions of the hybrid documentary form.

In *Regen*, as in the two previous films, these different elements come together in a fundamentally narrative structure. Ivens himself summarises the simple narrative progression that gives the film this narrative shape:

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The film opens with clear sunshine on houses, canals and people in the streets. A slight wind rises and first drops of rain splash into the canals. The shower comes down harder and the people hasten about their business under the protection of capes and umbrellas. The shower ends. The last drops fall and the city's life returns to normal. The only continuity in *Rain* is the beginning, progress, and end of this shower. There are neither titles nor dialogue. (Ivens, 1969, 35)

If the subject is more diffuse than that of either previous film, it nevertheless does have a self-contained temporal and spatial coherence that the film constructs using the conventional narrative codes of the silent cinema (in boasting of the absence of titles, Ivens is influenced by that elusive ideal of twenties filmmaking, the purely visual, title-less narrative, the inspiration of Murnau and Vigo, among others). Two of the earliest city films, those of Ruttmann and Cavalcanti, had both used a vaguely chronological dawn-to-dusk framework as a structural base, but did so much more loosely than Ivens used the progression of the storm in *Regen*, embarking at every turn on associative and dramatic digressions. In both of the earlier films it is the sequence that is the primary location of the narrative impulse; in contrast, Ivens situates the narrative impulse at every level, within the shot, within the sequence, and, perhaps most importantly within the overall shape of the film. In compressing the temporal and spatial dimensions of the event, in using this as a pretext for his cityscape/symphony, and in restraining any impulse to intrude upon or diverge from the apparent integrity of the event, Ivens gives his film a narrative purity that is unique among the city films, a crystalline simplicity of form.

Ivens's basic narrative orientation is evident also on the level of the shot. In many cases a shot is built upon a tiny incident or self-contained anecdote – a boat, passing under a bridge, a woman waiting for a tram, a flock of sparrows

alighting and then taking off. This sensitivity to the single suggestive narrative detail is no doubt one of the factors which have led to the classification of *Regen* as a 'painterly' film par excellence, and of Ivens as a descendent of Brueghel, Vermeer, and Van Gogh (Stufkens, 2002).

Sequences are also often given a narrative shape, and Ivens's discovery of the power of the editor to construct a documentary event is revealed. Frequently, several shots are organised into a narrative sequence, following a single recognisable figure, for example, or the stages of a single event. In a number of cases the use of a subjective camera is connected to an implied subject by editorial manipulation and a small narrative unit is formed, based on the familiar shot/subjective shot syntactical formula of the fictional cinema. For example, a track follows a man with an umbrella through a crowd; there is then a cut to another track through a similar crowd, handheld, and from the angle that would suggest the point of view of the walker. In a reversal of this pattern, a subjective track from a bicycle, handlebars fully in view, is followed by a long pan of a moving bicycle as it is reflected in the wet pavement – the same bicycle as in the previous shot, the spectator is invited to assume. Elsewhere, the relationship within such syntactical units is more ambiguous than this. For example, the group of girls under a rain cape first passes the camera. Ivens then cuts to a close-up of a gushing eave, then to a reflection in a canal surface spotted by rain, and then back to the girls, whereupon this cluster of four shots assumes the shape of a miniature narrative syntagm whose principle of cohesion is left quite open.

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According to *Camera*, one variation of this basic narrative sequence being perfected by Ivens at this point in his career was developed accidentally. Although he sees this particular example in terms of humour, it is also a confirmation of the power of the editor in documentary film to construct a diegetic universe of causal and sequential coherence out of unrelated elements quite as effectively and arbitrarily as the editor of fiction:

Another interesting thing I learned about the value of shots and movements was their relation to humour. In editing I guided the eyes of the audience to the right of the screen by a close shot of water gushing out of a drainpipe, following this immediately by a shot of a dripping wet dog running along. My intention was merely to pick up the movement and rhythm in the pipe shot with the shot of the dog and my simple movement continuity always got a laugh. If I had been a more skilful editor at that time I would have made a more conscious use of such an effect, but I was still learning. I was still too preoccupied with movement and rhythm to be sufficiently aware of the special film capacities for communicating the humorous movements around us. (Ivens, 1969, 38)

Upon close examination of the film, it seems probable that the humorous reaction to this cut comes not so much from the continuity of the two shots, that is from the artificially induced impression that the dog has been soaked by the drainpipe, but merely from the frisky gait of the dog and its indignant glance at the camera. The shots work only very roughly as a continuity. However, the possibility of obtaining a narrative effect through the juxtaposition of two disparate images was certainly not lost on the young editor, nor the importance of carefully analysing audience response. But perhaps the most important lesson to be gleaned from this experience was that a shot could never signify only movement or rhythm in the abstract; a shot also inevitably signifies the facts and predetermined codes of the pro-filmic world and these speak to an audience directly or indirectly, regardless of the director's intention or consciousness.

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One of the most protracted of the narrative tropes of *Regen* follows a shot in which the cameraman boards a tram. The narrative logic of the sequence is not impeccable – it is interrupted by an exterior shot of another passenger boarding – but otherwise the series of tracking shots from inside the tram, following logically from the boarding shot, pointing both to the front and the rear, and including from time to time the driver's shoulder or the steering wheel, constitutes a graceful and coherent narrative sequence, depicting a tram ride through the use of a subjective camera, anticipating a favourite device throughout Ivens's career and apotheosised in the lyrical essays of the 1960s. It is also of course a view of the storm from a smoothly mobile vantage point, a variation on the film's attitude of viewing the rain at one remove.

One other less common approach to syntactic construction in *Regen* is the development of a sequence according to thematic logic rather than strict sequential logic. There is a whole sequence, for example, arranged around windowpanes, of the rain seen through windows, reflected in windowpanes, and dripping from or across windows. Another is focused on a parked car, and the events of the storm and the traffic are reflected in its fender, its hood figurehead, and its headlights.

Ivens's use of narrative syntax in the documentary medium is thus consolidated and refined with *Regen*. The simple discovery in *Brug* that the narrative formula of shot/subjective shot is equally operative within the nonfictional mode as within fiction becomes expanded into a basic principle of his filmic construction. In searching for the laws of motion and rhythm, as any conscientious child of the twenties avant-garde was motivated to do, Ivens had in effect rediscovered the basic syntax of narrativity. Laws of motion and rhythm were not discoverable for Ivens in the abstract, but in terms of their interaction with a real audience who had completely assimilated the codes of the narrative fictional cinema and utilised them indiscriminately in their reading of

the nonfictional cinema as well. Ivens, like the majority of contemporary documentarists, from Flaherty to Vertov, was employing these codes to build up a diegetic universe from the raw material of actuality, as coherent and self-contained (and in many ways as illusionistic) as the fictional universe. Ivens (1969, 37) offhandedly mentions in *Camera* that the beginning of the storm in *Regen* is a composite of ten actual such beginnings photographed on different occasions. It is this approach to reality, the editorial assemblage of the raw material of actuality according to the narrative codes of the classical fictional cinema, that would be integral to his work for the six decades.

There are no references to Flaherty in the *Filmliga* publication or Ivens's other writings of the period, and none of course to Grierson, whose *Drifters* (1929, UK, 49) was roughly contemporary to *Regen*.¹⁹ It would seem that Ivens's consolidation of his approach was made in isolation from similar strides in the documentary of the English-speaking world. This stems partly from the fact that the concept of documentary or nonfiction film was not yet an operative one for Ivens – indeed Grierson had scarcely developed it. He was still dominated by the modernist terms of reference. The great documentarist was still apparently under the impression at the time of *Regen* that he was making an 'absolute' film.

Although some comments have already been made about the role of montage in *Regen* in connection to its 'spontaneous' elements and to its narrative construction, there remain some general observations to be made about the general function of montage in the film beyond these two specific applications. In general, montage adds to the overall strengthening of Ivens's realist sensibility in *Regen*: for the most part cuts do not function as self-reflexive formal articulations in themselves as they often do in the previous films, but rather submit to the diegetic task at hand or to the construction of the atmospheric effects for which the film is famous. If in *Branding* it was often a single explicit shot or trope that had the job of preparing the mood of a dramatic situation, here the progressions are more gradual and low-key. A number of visual motifs are woven subtly into the narration, contributing to its gradual unfolding; the motif of birds, for example, described by Ivens in *Camera*, appears from time to time to register the progress of the storm, or as Ivens said,

To strengthen the continuity of *Rain* I used the repetition of a second visual motif – birds flying in the sunlight and then as the rain starts, a flock moving against the gray sky (continuing a rhythm indicated in the previous shot by leaves rustling in the wind). During the storm I showed one or two birds flying restlessly about. After the rain has stopped there is a shot of some birds sitting quietly on the wet railing of a bridge. (Ivens, 1969, 39)

There are other similar motifs: the use of eaves as an index of the progress of the storm, and a constant reference to surfaces – of canals, streets, puddles, vehicles, windows, etc. – for the same purpose. The citation suggests that some of the threads of continuity do not rely on denotative images alone but also on what Eisenstein might have called overtone values. The motion of objects within the frame seems to be used in this way: in addition to the rustle of leaves mentioned, an early series of images signaling the approach of the storm includes the flutter of clothes, the flapping of an awning, and the swoop of the birds for cover. Light values, as Ivens also suggests, are orchestrated in the same way, at times with such subtlety that the effect is almost subliminal. The editorial principle of contrast – in scale, in direction of movement, in shot angle, etc. – is still important in *Regen*, but to a much different end than the same principle in *Brug*. Cuts employing contrast are carefully integrated into the narrative continuum, contributing, for example, to the feeling of the acceleration of the activity with the onset of the storm: the opening of an umbrella exactly matches in pace and scale the closing of a window; a stationary perspective of a slowly dripping eave spout is followed with a fast movement of a car out of frame; a low-angle view of a passing car is matched with a high-angle long shot of two passing trams. Or else, such cuts construct an echo or a rhyme that adds to the cumulative unity of the whole. Similarly, the use of long-shot close-up articulations is much less emphatic than in the previous films; a higher proportion of medium-range shooting contributes to a more fluid visual fabric. In short, if *Brug* showed the seriousness and the experimental orientation of the apprentice, the montage of *Regen* shows the growing ease of a master, the growing commitment to the use of montage to construct a unified diegetic universe. It seems even that Ivens is working toward the ideal of the invisibility of the cut that would preoccupy his contemporaries in the classical fictional cinema over the first generation of sound technology.

10. *Regen* (1929): A 6-second walking shot encapsulating subjectivity, fluidity, narrative, lyricism – but masking contradiction? Frame enlargement, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen. © Mannus Franken Stichting/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Potamkin's ([1930] 1977, 35) response to *Regen* proves once more to be a reliable one: he praises the film for its purity, for succeeding in communicating an emotional statement without being sentimental or self-conscious, and without being 'troubled by effecting a mood on the spectator' or 'perpetrat[ing]' its mood, unlike Kirsanoff. It is true that *Regen* is the most subjective and personal of the three early films and, in fact, the most successful in communicating a certain emotional point of view, arguably, of Ivens's entire *oeuvre*. Few critics fail to discuss *Regen* in terms of its atmosphere or its lyricism, or as a 'cine-poem'. No doubt the spontaneous shooting style has much to do with the film's emotional statement, and of course Ivens's heightened editorial fluidity. Potamkin correctly suggests that another important factor is Ivens's familiarity with, and evidently great passion for, his indigenous subject matter. If *Branding* could, somewhat uncharitably, be termed a folkloric fantasy of urban intellectuals, *Regen* radiates the sincere, unpretentious response of an individual to a well-known, authentic environment, articulated with restraint and simplicity. It is difficult not to concur when Ivens (1969, 36) himself emphasises the lyrical aspects of the film in retrospect, inevitably alluding as he does in *Camera*, to Verlaine's lines:

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*Il pleut dans mon coeur,
Comme il pleut sur la ville.*
(It rains in my heart,
As it rains on the city.)

It is perhaps surprising in retrospect that not all subsequent critics would agree with Potamkin and that an apparently innocuous cine-poem like *Regen* should have become the butt of fierce criticism within a few years of its premiere, not the least by Ivens himself. It is important to situate this criticism carefully in relation to the context in which *Regen* was made and to the changes Ivens underwent in the next years, since *Regen*'s skilfully rendered formal and thematic unity almost completely masks the contradictions in Ivens's situation in that context; there are few of the tensions and disjunctures that are so visible in *Brug* and *Branding*.

Although the emotional clarity and simple lyrical-narrative form distinguish *Regen* in a certain way from the sophisticated modernist sensibility of its constituency, there are other aspects of the film already touched upon that firmly link it to that sensibility, which no doubt account for its success within the avant-garde circuit. *Regen* differs from *Brug* in its emphasis on surfaces rather than structures, but does resemble that film insofar as it can be read as an abstract film, that is, as a perspective of objects purely in terms of their formal properties as sources of light, rather than as a reflection on or rep-

resentation of a given actuality. Balázs, in his analysis of *Regen*, emphasised this tendency of the film and connected it thereby to the avant-gardist movement from which it had emerged:

The rain we see in the Ivens film is not one particular rain which fell somewhere, sometime. These visual impressions are not bound into unity by any conception of time and space. With subtle sensitivity he has captured, not what rain really is, but what it looks like when a soft spring rain drips off leaves, the surface of a pond gets gooseflesh from the rain, a solitary raindrop hesitatingly gropes its way down a windowpane, or the wet pavement reflects the life of the city. We get a hundred visual impressions, but never the things themselves. Nor do these interest us in such films. All we want to see are the individual, intimate, surprising visual effects. Not the things, but their pictures constitute our experience and we do not think of any objects outside the impression. There are in fact no concrete objects behind such pictures, which are images, not reproductions.

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This style of the 'absolute' is obviously the result of an extreme subjectivism which is undoubtedly a form of ideological escapism characteristic of decadent artistic cultures. (Balázs, [1952] 1970, 176)

Aside from the unnecessarily Zhdanovist tone of Balázs's conclusion,²⁰ his description does speak to many elements of *Regen*'s conception. Ivens did in fact subscribe to a prevailing aesthetic of twenties modernism detected by Balázs, the sufficiency of the object itself. As Ivens told Florent Fels in an interview,

I am not seeking the symbol, the object alone interests me: the rain is highly photogenic, for it is movement and light. [...] In *Regen*, it's the object which is getting in our way for it imposes its imperious presence upon us. If I shoot, for example, an auto in the rain, I have to defend myself against the normal standard object which takes away the attention which I want to fix upon the event, that is to say, the rain. The sun, the wind, the first drops, the water in torrents, the return of the sun, form all of the elements of the drama, with all literature removed. (Fels, 1929a, 304)

The same interview also contains a rather contradictory reference to Ivens's interest in the effect of the rain on human actions, their life, and their walk. In view of Ivens's stated primary interest in the event, and its realisation in the text of the film, it would have been more accurate to phrase it as the effect of

human actions *on the rain*; the role of the rain *in the human universe* is clearly peripheral to the main thrust of the film. Are people just one more variety of surface upon which the effect of the rain can be recorded? There is much less sense of the individual or collective personality and its interaction with its environment than there was in the Cavalcanti film admired by Ivens or even in *Branding*. The anonymous inhabitants of this anonymous city clearly have the minor role in the film: the setting is recognisably Amsterdam of course, but few of that city's peculiar social or economic energies are inscribed in the film. People are presented for the most part as disembodied parts of bodies or as indistinguishable long-shot shapes who respond to the storm as instinctively and indecisively as the flocks of birds. A hand pulls in a window or extends an umbrella, pairs of legs are reflected in a puddle, a tram's steering wheel is guided by another unseen hand, a bicycle is operated by an unseen assistant. In pursuing this interest in 'the object alone', and employing his indirect and metonymic attitude, Ivens systematically filters the human presence out of the universe of the film (except for his own subjective point of view). Even when Ivens's camera does record the human factor, it is timid and uninterested. The long-shot appraisals of serious Dutch pedestrians boarding trams, holding umbrellas, and hurrying home, always stop short of confrontation or extended close-range perusal, not to mention the self-revelation and even interchange of *Man with a Movie Camera*. The lesson learned by Ivens in working with and observing ordinary people as subjects of his art in *Branding* had yet to be applied to modern urban society.

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Much of the subsequent criticism of the film dwelt upon this latent anti-humanism, its indifference to the lives of its human subjects in its preoccupation with the surfaces of a universe of objects. Pudovkin, Ivens's lifelong friend, was both gentle and severe a few years later when he compared *Zuiderzee* favourably to *Regen*:

It is quite interesting that, in his film on the *Zuiderzee*, Ivens comes finally and for the first time, to the human. His first film, *Brug*, had no human characters. In his film, *Regen*, there were still no real characters, only shadows with human shapes: wet raincoats, umbrellas, shoes, clothing set into motion by hidden motors which interest no one. *Regen* is a cerebral work and suffers from all the defects of whatever is too cerebral, too much outside of reality. Also, it is not an organized work, and certain passages remain comprehensible only to the artists. It is lacking emotion, and its form is so confusing that it has lost all dynamism. It is otherwise in the film on the *Zuiderzee*: Ivens has here come into contact with metal and machines – as in *Brug* – and with water and humans – as in *Regen* – but the result appears completely different. The organized dynamism of

the work suddenly becomes, in Ivens's vision, life itself. [...] Men are no longer automatons putting garments in motion – as in *Regen*. (Pudovkin, [1931] 1965, 135)

Though Pudovkin unfairly denigrates *Regen*'s organisation and feeling, Ivens himself would echo his critique in a public re-evaluation of the film. There are reports of his having told a Paris audience that *Regen* lacked foundation because man and his soul are absent (Hulsker, 1933). In 1933, he came under extremely harsh attack in the pages of *Filmliga* for a similar lecture (perhaps the same one?) in Paris. The correspondent, Hans Sluizer, scolds him for 'fiercely' criticising his earlier work, yet showing it nevertheless. Sluizer relates that Ivens told his audience that he found his early work,

too empty, too literary, lacking the accentuation of the social element.

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[...] He told them that he would make *Regen* differently were he to do it again, emphasizing how *people* react to things, which are given now as documentary. In *Regen*, we see many aspects of phenomena, we see rain in a street and rain in a canal – but we don't see the harm done by the rain to some people, and the advantages of it to other people. (Sluizer, 1933, 130-131)

Sluizer adds that Ivens was spouting 'Russian propaganda' and 'Communist slogans'. Ivens's own lecture notes from a slightly later period (made in English for an unspecified lecture, probably early in his American tour) suggest in their fragmentary way the same message:

Rain. It rains. Just it rains.

eye-cut Buñuel

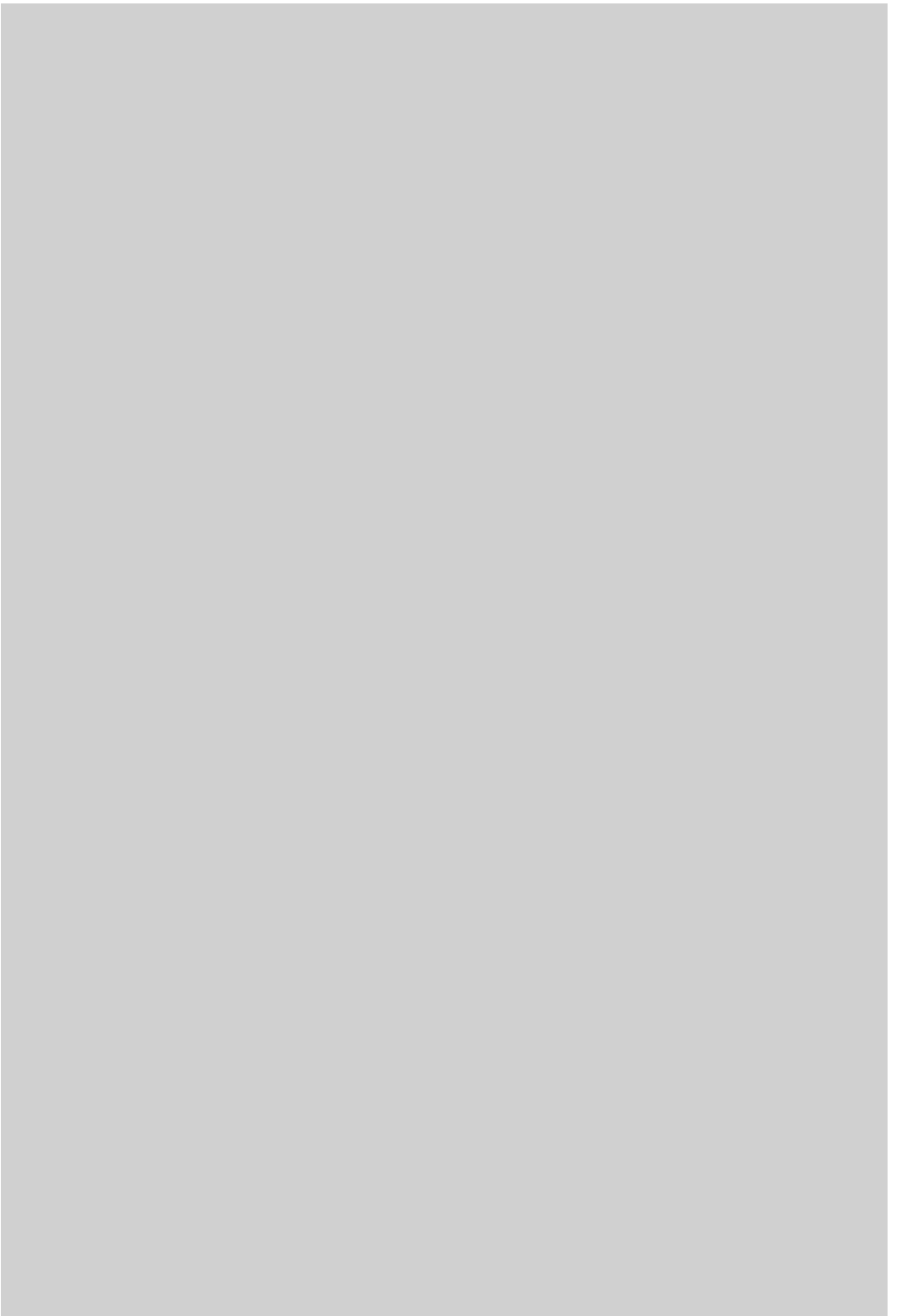
without aim, purpose

strong point of view, of departure.

All this gives no inherent creative power, dead end. (Ivens n.d., lecture notes, JIA)²¹

By the time Ivens was to record his memoirs with Leyda in the forties, his estimation of his own earlier work had mellowed somewhat, possibly because of the warm American response to the films. He was still referring, however, to *Regen*'s 'lack of content' and its failure to emphasise human beings' reactions to the rain ('everything was subordinated to the aesthetic approach'), but at the same time he justifies the early films because they were laying the foundations of technical and creative competence before his work on more important subjects (Ivens, 1969, 40).

While the hindsight criticism of Pudovkin, Balázs, and Ivens himself has an undeniable validity, they are perhaps too ready to remove *Regen* from its historical context and to deny a certain progressive, tentatively humanist text struggling to the surface. The questions posed by Ivens's Soviet audiences (as he remembers them from his first tour) are admittedly justified. They asked 'Why are you afraid of faces? If you could look at a face with the same frankness with which you look at a raindrop you would be wonderful', and remarked that Ivens seemed to have 'fallen in love with reflections and textures, showed too little of human reactions and concentrated too much on objects' (Ivens, 1969, 56-57). But it must not be forgotten that an audience in Soviet Georgia wept on seeing the film. The fundamental and enduring power of the film's emotional appeal and lyrical perception should be seen as the first expression of that same honest, often sentimental lyricism with which Ivens would paint the dignity of human labour and the struggle against fascism. It must also be seen as a decisive stride past the cold formal analysis of *Brug*. Furthermore, *Regen's* humanist sensibility must be read in the accessibility of its narrative form, in its devotion to the personal exploration of a familiar everyday human environment, in its abstention from the alienating constructions of the modernist mode, in its power to bring tears to an audience fully on the other side of Europe. It was probably the directness and simplicity of Ivens's lyricism that had inspired Pudovkin, when he saw *Regen* in the editing stages, to invite the filmmaker home with him. It was the same direct emotional appeal that Ivens himself had admired in the work of Dovzhenko in his dispatches to *Filmliga* and which he would consistently refine himself for the rest of his career as he moved on to greater subjects. This factor led *Regen* to become one of the most widely shown and loved of Ivens's films, in both its silent version and in its two scored sound versions of 1932 and 1940.²² Immortalised in the official Dutch national film canon (Stufkens, 2008, 82), in dozens of YouTube variations, and in thousands of Film Studies courses and textbooks, *Regen* became a canonical institution, archived in at least eleven different celluloid versions and often the only Ivens film available in the dry spots and dry periods of film history, one that would follow Ivens for better and for worse for 60 years.



11. *Philips-Radio* (1931): poster by Ivens's girlfriend Anneke van der Feer won prizes for its stylish modernism but elided the Ivens 'human element'. Original in colour. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen.

The Radicalisation of the Poet 1929-1936

'We cannot show this film, *c'est trop de réalité*'.
– French censor, 1933.

WIJ BOUWEN

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The production of *Wij Bouwen* (*We are Building*, 1930, Netherlands, 110-141) beginning in mid-1929 marks Ivens's immersion in a set of production circumstances entirely different from those of the Amsterdam avant-garde milieu that had fostered his first three films. It was the start of a completely new phase in his career. Commissioned by the educational director of the *Nederlandsche Bouwvak Arbeiders Bond*, the Dutch construction workers' union, the film was to serve the double purpose of celebrating the union's tenth anniversary and to aid it in its recruitment drive. This was an early venture of Dutch unions in imitation of earlier efforts by Dutch political and religious groups to use non-theatrical film in their public work, beginning about three years previously.

The original conception of the project was one set out by Ivens after receiving the initial commission and thereupon agreed upon by the union management:

The central theme was the professional pride of the building workers. This really was the old guild idea: the pride and importance of a man who works with his hands, who builds factories, homes, schools, and dams. The pride of labour in itself, in its results and its function in society, and the feeling of dignity, solidarity, and force that comes through that pride.

The sketch ended with the construction workers carrying on their long Dutch tradition of architecture and construction into the new era and the fight through their union for the rights of all labour. (Ivens, 1969, 43)



12. *Borinage* (1934):
Ivens and Henri Storck
(in glasses) on location
directing their non-
professional actors,
including workers in
gendarme costumes.
Production still, courtesy
coll. EFJI, Nijmegen ©
CAPI Films, Paris, and
Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

Ivens's eager acceptance of this first commission meant his transition from amateur to professional status as a filmmaker: his films and those of his Filmliga associates had never had this kind of financial footing. The traditional Filmliga was too small and specialised to permit a non-artisanal professional status, and the colonised commercial cinema in the Netherlands, such as it was, was not open to 'art' filmmakers. The union commission was an important opportunity offering not only a budget, but also an audience. Ivens and his brother Willem, a physician, prevailed upon their father to let them set up a separate production department within the family firm CAPI. The informal collective working arrangements of the previous films thus became formalised into the crews of subsequent productions, and Studio Joris Ivens was formed in 1930. Ivens's co-workers for this first professional film included Willem Bon, Jan Hin, Joop Huisken, Mark Kolthoff, and of course Van Dongen and Fernhout. *Wij Bouwen*, then, marks the end of Ivens's private artisanal

work and the beginning of his professional use of film, not only as a medium of personal expression (for it continued to be that), but also as a means of communication of specific messages to specific publics – in short, as the memoirs put it, ‘the integration of an artist in society’ (Ivens, 1969, 44).¹

Ivens tackled the apparently prosaic subject of construction workers with an enthusiasm that must have baffled his friends in Filmliga. It would always be thus: a large proportion of Ivens’s *oeuvre* consists of such commissions on subjects that might seem minor in relation to conventional film history. Georges Sadoul (1963, 20) discussed this aspect of Ivens’s work, seeing him as an artist of little, unimportant assignments of the kind that Flaherty, say, would be of too great a stature to attempt. The integration of the artist in society has meant for Ivens many occasional works done as favours to people and causes, as well as the series of ‘masterpieces’ that film history is usually about; it has meant the artist at the disposal of many varied social forces, the artist as a worker always having to earn a difficult living as well, the artist answering the demands of film prose and pragmatism as well as the demands of ‘art’.

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This commission, however, once completed, was not to become just another ‘minor work’. Its various offshoots and revisions would preoccupy Ivens over the next five years; it would evolve into the two great films of the Dutch period, *Zuiderzeewerken* (*Zuiderzee*, 1930-33, 40-52) and *Nieuwe Gronden* (*New Earth*, 1933, 30). *Wij Bouwen* and its various descendants gave a continuity to Ivens’s career during those years despite the two industrial commissions, *Philips-Radio* (1931, Netherlands, 36) and *Creosoot* (*Creosote*, 1932, Netherlands, 81), the Soviet project, *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, 50), and the Belgian film he undertook before leaving Holland permanently in 1934, *Misère au Borinage* (*Borinage*, 1934, 34). After the completion of each of these projects, Ivens would always return to Amsterdam to make another addition to the ongoing epic that *Wij Bouwen* had become.

Ivens was still involved with the final stages in the production of *Regen* (*Rain*, 1929, Netherlands, 16) when he accepted the commission. His first task was a conscientious tour of building sites throughout the country scouting the various possibilities of the subject. Eventually the film would cover the construction of housing and offices in Amsterdam, factories and caissons in Rotterdam, chemical plants in the south near Maastricht, dikes in the Zuiderzee, a new railway line in Limburg province, and the sinking of piles in Amsterdam. Also included were a survey of new architectural trends, and glimpses of various union activities such as a 1929 Rotterdam congress, outings, and demonstrations.

The seven-reel version of the film that premiered in Amsterdam at the end of 1929 apparently did not include all of this material. Some of the extra footage Ivens incorporated into a series of one and two-reel shorts produced for

CAPI, including *Heien (Pile-driving)*, *Nieuwe Architectuur (New Architecture)*, *Caissonbouw (Caisson Building in Rotterdam)*, *Zuid-Limburg (Railway-building in South Limburg)*, *Congres der Vakverenigingen (Trade Unions congress)*, *Timmerfabriek (Carpenters)*, *Jeugddag (Youth Day)*, and *Zuiderzee*. The last-mentioned film documented the draining techniques in use in the project and was the specific departure point for the feature-length *Zuiderzee* finished several years later.

It is not clear whether the version of *Wij Bouwen* deposited by Ivens with the Museum of Modern Art in New York during the early years of World War II is in any way a definitive version of the film. In fact, it is unlikely that such a thing exists. Ivens (1969, 44) mentions that he was editing the last reel during the projection of the first reel at the premiere at the start of January 1930, and it seems probable that the film continued to be modified regularly during its active use.² We know for example that the second public screening a few weeks after the premiere was a different version since the director had taken the 150-minute original with him to the USSR (Stufkens, 2008, 131). The notebook shape of the feature-length MOMA print also suggests that the film was never planned or used regularly in the form in which it has been preserved. Its style is uneven: some parts are infused with Ivens's lyrical flair or with his analytic perceptiveness, others are efficiently prosaic, still others have a charmingly amateurish sprawl to them. Its overall structure is loose, episodic, and digressive, though there are tightly cohesive passages. This shape no doubt reflects the public for whom it was intended, a lay group enthralled by the fact of seeing itself and its universe on the screen for the first time rather than pre-occupied with an aesthetic experience in the *Filmliga* sense.

The MOMA version of *Wij Bouwen* is organised around short thematic units focusing on either certain aspects of building – scaffolding, bricklaying, roofing, etc. – or on various union events – an excursion, for example. The only suggestion of architectonic design is in the fact that one of the final sequences takes place high up in a near-completed skyscraper and includes views of other near-completed buildings set against an urban skyline. The entire film thus seems to move toward the completion of a job.

In any case, it is the smaller units of the film that offer the most insight into Ivens's evolving use of the film medium, his commitment to his new subject matter, and his relationship with his new public. What is immediately clear in the film is that, despite the radical change in Ivens's subject matter, the stylistic and syntactic repertory he accumulated in his first three films is continuing to serve him in good stead and is becoming increasingly refined. All three modes of visual style developed in those films are basic to this one: the modernist-inspired analysis seen most clearly in *De Brug (The Bridge, 1928, Netherlands, 16)*; the spontaneous, lyrical style characteristic of *Regen*; and the

semi-documentary *mise-en-scène* most clearly visible in *Branding* (*Breakers*, 1929, Netherlands, 42). Ivens's continuing analytic orientation is still legible in the frequently bold, diagonal compositions with which he often depicts the structures or the machinery on the construction sites. There are also breathtaking bird's-eye-views of the sites and surrounding areas which are reminiscent of the views from the top of the Rotterdam bridge in their play of scale and angle. There are many other echoes as well: a composition celebrates the play of sunlight on planks falling from scaffolding, a striking travelling shot uses the elevator scaling the side of an uncompleted building, a forceful triangular composition of a roof situates a worker at the apex. But formal analysis no longer gives the work its momentum – here it is more a question of a stylistic veneer or of the insertion of certain digressive passages, both of which are exploited to pay tribute to the workers' skill and the immensity of their creations. A close-up discovery of an intricate pattern of bricks in a newly constructed wall is more a testimony to the skill of its builder than a formal articulation in itself.

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Heien, one of the short films to emerge from the original commission is worthy of particular mention as an example of Ivens's continuing preoccupation with modernist themes. Ivens (1969, 45) describes the film quite accurately as an 'impressionistic' one, centred on the archetypally Dutch activity of anchoring huge wooden piles in the wet surface soil of Amsterdam. Grelier (1965, 71) describes the film as 'a homage to workers more obscure than those in the great epic deeds of our century, the construction of blast furnaces and dams', but it looks most like a formal exercise inspired by the intense dynamic energy of this job. The film is full of staccato passages of Soviet-influenced fast cutting conveying the repetitive rhythm of the work. There are also some fascinating experiments along the lines of Ivens's old interest in the subjective camera – at one point, the camera is even mounted on the pneumatic hammer. Some of the oblique and low-angle perspectives of the plunging hammers are stunning. Though the short does have recognisable affinities with *Wij Bouwen* in its retention of the overall narrative shape of the process – following the transport of the logs through the streets to the final carrying off of the leftover pieces, and in its considerable attention to the workers themselves who are doing the work – this tiny gem of a film is more reminiscent of *Brug* in its concentration on the compositional and kinetic potential of its subject, a reminder that Ivens had certainly not abandoned the preoccupations of his avant-garde period (*Heien* was first shown only eighteen months after the premiere of *Brug*).

13. *Wij Bouwen* (*Heien* [Pile-driving]) (1929): kinetics and composition show lingering avant-garde preoccupations. Frame enlargement, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen. Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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The spontaneous lyricism of *Regen* is no less visible in *Wij Bouwen* than Ivens's analytic sensibility, but it too is ultimately subordinated to the primary purpose of the project. The cinematographers were evidently called upon to improvise frequently in the course of the shooting, not only in the largely unstructured excursion and parade sequences, where groups of exuberant young workers in their Sunday best are forever moving about and posing for the camera, but also on the job sites. Here, the camera follows a worker as he moves about with his tools, recording economically and precisely every gesture of the job. Or it zeroes in on workers engaged in lunching, washing up, or collecting their pay envelopes at the end of the day. Here the human subject is not skilfully avoided as in *Regen*, but is confronted head-on in all its unpredictability and complexity. The authenticity of the rich behavioural canvas recorded by the artist is one of the most appealing aspects of the film.

Ivens's tendency towards a kind of documentary *mise-en-scène* has also been adapted towards the needs of the new subject matter. Frequently a certain worker is followed at such close quarters by the camera that it is clear that there is a collaboration taking place between artist and subject. In some cases an individual worker is patently catering to the camera as it moves in for a close-up examination of the job, or has paused while the camera changes its shooting angle or lens. The short-take narrative syntax employed by Ivens in the description of his subjects' work virtually demanded at this point in the development of documentary technology the kind of director-subject interaction more normally associated with studio fiction filmmaking, and Ivens was to deepen his reliance on this mode throughout the next two decades.

As work progressed on *Zuiderzee*, as the extensions of the original union project emerged, Ivens's style became increasingly refined and integrated, achieving at the richest moments of the work a kind of hybrid of these three stylistic tendencies. In the meantime, I have mentioned the fundamentally narrative syntax that binds these elements together and this needs to be

examined at closer range. The narrative syntactical conventions visible in the avant-garde films are all repeated in *Wij Bouwen*, in fact have been expanded, systematised, and refined. On the syntagmatic level, for example, Ivens now relies systematically on the shot/subjective shot trope appearing sporadically in the early films, and on shot/countershot constructions also borrowed from fictional narrative wherein, for example, close-up detail of a subject's work is interpolated with views of his face or his whole figure. Both of these constructions imply a direct narrative continuity for the spectator. On the level of the larger units as well, the sense of narrative sequence is rigidly adhered to: a short sequence on bricklaying near the beginning of the MOMA version, for example, begins with a view of workmen carrying bricks up a ladder against the side of the building before it proceeds to analyse the specific details of the job itself, the application of mortar, the chiseling of the odd-sized bricks to fit and so on, and then concludes with a tilt down the facade of the house to present the viewer with the dimensions of the finished job.

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The chronological clarity of Ivens's narrative exposition has implications – not only in terms of his evolving mastery of a particular filmic discourse, but also in terms of his new subject and his goal of celebrating the skill and industry of the union members. The material totality of a job is never lost sight of in the attention to its details. The laying of a single brick is always seen to be an essential contribution to the overall design of a building. Every worker contributes his effort to the totality, and the montage constantly keeps the importance of this contribution in view – the vital connection between the individual and the collective. Ivens's polished use of standard narrative devices such as that of the establishing shot, or of the standard narrative rhythm of establishing shot/medium shot/insert close-up, can thus be seen as the integral expression of the basic conceptual framework of the film.

A commissioned film thus provided the terrain for Ivens's first concentrated exploration of labour, perhaps the most important single subject of his *oeuvre*, and for the first tentative staking out of the ideological stance with respect to that subject that, as it evolves, will inform the contours of his entire career. As we have already seen, the overall narrative shape given to the film by Ivens implies already an attitude to the human endeavour to shape the world by physical effort – it is a tribute to its rationality, order, and design, to its will, in short, to its heroism. On the level of the individual shot as well, there is an implicit ideological stance. I am speaking not only of the patent romanticisation in such shots as those that habitually depict a group of workers from a low angle, heroically silhouetted against the sky. More important, in the passages of more prosaic exposition, Ivens's patient close-up and medium-shot attention to a single bricklayer, carpenter or metalworker, carefully including every detail of the work, his instruments, and his expression, implies an unstinting

solidarity with the subject. In such passages, by avoiding the mannerisms of the cinema of personal expression, the artist subordinates his own subjectivity to that of the worker. The worker expresses himself by his labour and the artist provides him with the technology whereby he can show that labour to others. An important step is being taken towards a fundamental radicalisation of the relationship between artist and subject. The politics of this relationship notwithstanding, at least one Dutch critic of the day saw Ivens's remarkable iconography as an outcome of "inclination, of instinct" rather than of ideology or Soviet influence (Jordaan, 1931, 7, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 146).

Other initiatives attempted comparable radicalisations during the Depression, in both Europe and North America, and those of Ivens must be situated with respect to parallel efforts elsewhere. By 1930 both the Empire Marketing Board headed by John Grierson and the American Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL), to name only the most prominent such initiatives, were paralleling Ivens's gradual engagement in the problematic of the representation of workers on the screen. Ivens, however, an employee of the construction workers union, had perhaps a head start in that his was the only initiative actually undertaken by workers themselves.

At this point in Ivens's career however, the contradictions inherent in making worker-centred films within bourgeois society are still legibly inscribed on the film in a more or less unmediated form. Although Wegner (1965) has isolated a breathtaking image of collective endeavour in discussing *Wij Bouwen* – a group of workers jointly lift a huge concrete conduit pipe and carry it on their shoulders, their arms interlocked, the camera following, to its place in the construction – such images are not typical of *Wij Bouwen* in its early forms. The collective iconography of *Zuiderzee* was not yet being inscribed by the cinematographers as systematically as it would be in the next year or two. *Wij Bouwen* pays more attention to the skill of individual workers than of the collective. As Wegner (1965, 34) is careful to point out, the film stops short of articulating a single destiny for workers, not to mention positing the terms of collective struggle.³

The question of the nature and scope of the contradictions imposed upon Ivens by the film's union sponsorship is also relevant, since it is a question that will recur with nagging regularity throughout the rest of Ivens's career. During the fifties, Ivens was to add a detail to his earlier recollections of the *Wij Bouwen* commission. Using a socialist paper as a forum, he remembered that one of the original ideas for *Wij Bouwen* had been to show the contrast between the entrepreneur capitalist who smokes cigars in armchairs, 'building' for a profit, and the worker who pays with his sweat for the building of homes and cities (Lacazette, 1951). The union management apparently rejected this idea as being too combative. However there are traces of it in the finished film, in

sequences devoted to the administrative hierarchy of the building industry, with cigar-smokers having a certain prominence to be sure, and with a certain incongruity and ambiguity attached to such sequences. At one point, for example, a man in a business suit is seen looking at the photo of an uncompleted building before we are introduced to the actual building site itself where roughly dressed workers are doing much more than looking. The point is suggestive but far from explicit.

A comment in *Camera* about Ivens's original conception of *Wij Bouwen* confirms the possibility that *Wij Bouwen* contradicts or at least skirts Ivens's political beliefs of the time. The gap between what was believed and what was permitted to be said was a problem that had already presented itself: 'My thoughts about content and what I wanted my films to say had actually been ahead of the films I had made. But now I was going to catch up with my best aims' (Ivens, 1969, 44).

Ivens scholarship has occasionally evinced confusion as to whether Ivens was a member of the Communist Party of Holland (CPH) at this time or at any other,⁴ and it was only towards the end of his life that he allowed a full picture of his political affiliations and activities of this period to begin to emerge. It seems unlikely that Pudovkin's invitation of April 1929 would have been possible without some clearly understood political alignment. Ivens was certainly involved that year in activities of the Workers International Relief (WIR), an international workers' aid organisation centred in Germany and funded by the Communist International (Hogenkamp 1980). He also acted as camera operator in February 1929 for the film *Arm Drenthe: De nood in de Dreutsche venen* (*Poor Drenthe: Poverty in the Peatlands of Drenthe*, Netherlands, 15) showing a visit of the Communist deputy Louis de Visser to that impoverished area and produced by Leo van Lakerveld, a WIR delegate and the founder of Association for People's Culture (Vereeniging voor Volks Cultuur, VVVC). Ivens also participated in workers newsreel activities for VVVC that are remarkably similar to those pursued soon after by WFPL in the US, another group affiliated with WIR:

Up to this time, my experience in *idea* editing had been rather sparse. My earliest experience was some time in 1929 when I was given charge of the film programs for a series of workers' cultural and educational Sunday mornings. On Friday nights we would borrow a number of commercial newsreels. On Saturday we would study the material in the newsreels in relation to the international and national situation of the week, re-edit them with any other footage we happened to have available to us giving them a clear political significance, print new subtitles (the films were still silent) showing relationships between events which newsreel companies

never thought of, and which would certainly have shocked them if they had ever seen our uses of their 'innocent' material. For example, we could relate the injustice of an American lynching with the injustice of the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, making a general statement about injustice which we would then localize with a current event in our own country. Previously miscellaneous material was knit together into a new unity, sometimes with the addition of a spoken word on the public address system or some cartoons, photographs or Photostats of an editorial from the Dutch conservative press. After our Sunday morning show was finished we would take the film apart again, restore its original form and return it to the newsreel companies who were none the wiser! (Ivens, 1969, 96-97)⁵

Another account of the same activities by Ivens provides two further significant details to this slightly laundered *Camera* description:

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For the Party we used to show newsreels on Sunday mornings to the workers. That was on the Haarlemmerdijk in Amsterdam. We hired cinema-newsreels and cut them into pieces. We put in between shots from the Russian revolution and from the construction of socialism there. After the performance the newsreels were hurriedly restored to their old state. (Van Zomeren, 1972, 6)

Hogenkamp, a historian of European workers' film movements of the thirties, provides considerably more information, and some convincing speculation, worth quoting at length, about the nature of the newsreel activities and other connections of Ivens with the CPH:

In January 1928 the Vereeniging voor Volks Cultuur (VVVC) was founded with the aim 'to facilitate the organization of film, cabaret and other performances, and in such a way that undesirable interference from authorities who are not kindly disposed towards us can be limited to a minimum' (*De Tribune* 1928, 5).⁶ The foundation of the VVVC has to be seen as an attempt by the Communist Party of Holland to increase the effectiveness of its film shows. [...]

De Tribune, the daily newspaper of the CPH, published regular news about Ivens's trip [to the USSR in 1930] and after his return Ivens lectured about the experience he gained in the new Russia, on a VVVC morning. About this time (April 1930) Ivens must have become a member of the Party. The report of his lecture in *De Tribune* speaks about 'the words of comrade Joris Ivens' which 'made a very deep impression and let loose a real storm of applause' (*De Tribune* 1930a, 1).

THE NEWSREELS

The first VVVC-newsreel was shown September 28, 1930 in the Cinema Royal, Amsterdam. *De Tribune* wrote: 'The VVVC-news reel – which turned out to be nothing else than a common bourgeois newsreel, but for this occasion a bit re-edited and provided with new titles – really hit the nail on the head. It made it clear to those present how such topical news on the screen, shown every week in all theatres, had to be viewed. It was wittily accompanied by Bern Drukker with improvised organ-playing' (*Tribune* 1930b, 4). In contrast to subsequent numbered newsreels nothing further is to be found on this newsreel. One can assume that it had been edited the way Ivens described above and then restored to its original form, and returned to the distributor the next day.

The next VVVC-morning – this time in the biggest cinema of the city, Tuschinsky – saw the premiere of the so-called Tribune-film *Breken en Bouwen* (*To Break and Build*) (*Tribune* 1930c, 1). The title of this film refers to alterations being made at the premises of *De Tribune*, alterations which were carried out by Party members in their spare time. During the various actions to save this daily newspaper (in that period *De Tribune* was attacked from many sides) in December 1930 and January 1931, the film was intensively used.

The 'first' VVVC-newsreel (the unnumbered one from September not counted) was premiered on November 16 in Amsterdam. *De Tribune* called the newsreel 'a fine choice of images from the southern part of the Soviet Union, from Baku, Kharkov, Kiev, elucidated by some spoken texts and parts of an older film in which we see Lenin and Stalin in action, and later a beautiful series of images showing how the Russian comrades celebrate their October' (*De Tribune* 1930d, 4). The newsreel was, according to *De Tribune*, 'shot personally by one of the friends of the VVVC in the Soviet Union'. The identity of this friend of the VVVC is not disclosed (the names of members of the VVVC film collective were as a matter of course never mentioned). A cautious supposition points, however, at least in the direction of Joris Ivens, for Ivens had just made his trip through the USSR and moreover he had visited some of the cities that were shown in the newsreel (Ivens 1969, 51). [...]

Why the VVVC-film collective did not continue the series after 1931 is hard to discern. Perhaps the departure abroad of Joris Ivens was a reason. (Hogenkamp, 1977, 6-9)

Stufkens updates this account with the detail that the above activity was also sponsored by another organisation, Internationale Rode Hulp (International Red Aid, MOPR) and that Ivens himself composed a title card for one 1930 newsreel show, 'The International Red Aid is the organized defence against fascist terror and [for] class justice', which the Dutch censors banned for being 'inflammatory', 'exceptionally crude and even untrue', and 'a matter of worldview', rather than for being syntactically challenged (Stufkens, 2008, 5, my translation).

The VVVC film activism is highly significant in terms of not only political practice but also artistic practice (insofar as these two categories can be differentiated, which of course this book ultimately argues is impossible). Although none of this material survives, it is clear that the weekend newsreel re-edits were prophetic of later work in the genre of compilation, beginning in earnest the next decade with the masterpieces *Nieuwe Gronden* and *Borinage* and evolving through Ivens's entire career. If we employ William Wees's (1993, 2007) breakdown of compilation subgenres, namely 'compilation', 'collage', and 'appropriation' as belonging historically to realist, modernist, and post-modernist aesthetic tendencies respectively, then these early newsreel experiments with their critical edge and their subversive operations of 'wit' and 'alteration' patently belong to the second, modernist category of collage, and that Ivens was in the forefront of such experimentation alongside film pioneers like Esfir Shub and, in the visual arts, John Heartfield. Nonetheless in this study, I would prefer to use the blanket term of 'compilation' to frame Ivens's work re-using others' footage since his practice over the decades spans all three tendencies.

As for the intriguing questions as to why Ivens's avant-garde films would not have reflected more directly onscreen the indisputable political sympathies he was clearly manifesting offscreen, there is perhaps no answer except for the historical fact that many elements of the pre-Depression European avant-garde, for example, the French surrealists, claimed a similar political allegiance but saw no contradiction in refraining from expressing such allegiance in their art, except in the most oblique fashion.

Wij Bouwen then was an important landmark in Ivens's career, not because it was the film in which he first expressed his political sensibility, but because it was the film in which he first encountered the aesthetic and ideological problems inherent in doing so, the web of contradictions surrounding the act of political filmmaking in capitalist society. The contradictions are legible in the ideological 'stopping short' noted by Wegner, in the awkward traces of the original plans for explicit class analysis that the idealistic young artist had been forced to shelve, and in the disparity between the moments of great insight and the moments of 'commission' filmmaking. Ivens was to learn that

the kind of political filmmaking he was aiming at was not simply the result of catching up to one's 'best aims', but of hammering out the practical translation of those aims in a long process of struggle. Ivens had not yet had a film abandoned by a sponsor halfway, or butchered by the censor, or left idly in the can without a distributor. But his encounter with the limitations of the union sponsorship was a mild foretaste of the struggle ahead.

One other aspect of the contradictions imprinted in *Wij Bouwen* is that Ivens still kept a foot in the Filmliga camp when engaged in the union commission and his communist cultural activities. In fact, *Heien* and *Nieuwe Architectuur* were both given privileged exposure at Filmliga screenings. The latter film, a survey of recent trends in indigenous architecture, was more a tribute to Ivens's architect friends who were members of Filmliga than a gesture towards the union membership audience. Grelier (1965, 72) describes the film

as a kind of manifesto in favour of functional dwellings. Ivens endeavours to propagate some new ideas in the architectural field: restrained lines, total purification of structure, and dynamism of reinforced concrete. He wants to react against illuminated design, and the decorative excesses of rococo.

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That Ivens gave this shape to footage left over after the (provisional) final cut of *Wij Bouwen* confirms that there was a continuing gap between his own personal interests and his obligations to the presumed public of his work.

The generous and perceptive review of *Wij Bouwen* in the *Filmliga* journal confirms that Ivens was still very successful at this point in addressing the Filmliga constituency, and adds much to our sense of the context in which the film was received. The major point of Charles de Graaff's (1930) article is a comparison of *Wij Bouwen* to *Staroye i novoye* (*The General Line*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1929, USSR, 121) in which Eisenstein is cast in Ivens's shadow. De Graaff's predilection for the indigenous Dutch subject matter with its 'unadulterated', 'honest work' over the 'margarine-tainted, imported taste' of the Soviet film is perhaps somewhat chauvinistic, but his arguments are revealing. De Graaff feels that *Wij Bouwen* fares better as a propaganda film than *The General Line* because it lacks the latter's manipulation of psychological effects. Ivens, rather, keeps himself simply to the task at hand and tries to make the best of it, attaining a real 'clarity' from start to finish (despite a weak and too long middle part), unlike the doubtful impression left by Eisenstein. De Graaff is clearly aware of the whole new critical problematic introduced by Ivens's new subject matter, this new species of film, and warns against letting an appreciation for the artistry of the film divert one from the new significance of the documentary as a publicity film. He makes a very clear distinction between the

new Ivens and the old Ivens: Eisenstein is a great individualistic director and Ivens a primitive social artist who had gone against his own nature in making a 'cultural film' such as *Branding*. Ivens's talents do not lie in the direction of personal expression in the tradition of aesthetic 'individualism' but in the simple, direct, and honest submission to a 'social' goal, to the use of an indigenous subject matter and style (as opposed to the imported tastes of the Filmliga public, one assumes). Similarly, Jordaan (1930, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 147) emphasised the Dutch national character of this work, its fondness for 'usefulness' – or what Nichols (1994) would decades later call 'discourses of sobriety' – and its distaste for 'artistic ambush' (1930, cited by Stufkens, 2008, 18). In what is perhaps another reminder of the tension between Ivens's two publics at this point in his career, De Graaff finally mentions that in his opinion, *Heien* and *Zuiderzee* are the best sections of the collection and will be seen shortly, adding a note of exasperation with the boring union oratory that had apparently preceded the screening.

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Whether or not the Filmliga public as a whole was as perceptive as de Graaff in recognising and approving the spark of a 'primitive social artist' who had suddenly found himself, it must have seemed obvious to all that a radical change of some kind had occurred. As to whether Ivens's union audience approved of the film there can be no doubt. As far as the film's short-term goal was concerned, it is said to have reached a public of 22,000 workers in eight weeks and was extremely successful in its effect on the union's recruitment campaign (Ivens, 1969, 44). Ivens would later put more value on the success he had had in reaching the workers and showing them new things about their lives. For the rest of his career, Ivens would proudly repeat anecdotes about the initial reception of the film by the union public. One anecdote tells, for example, of the worker's wife who, according to Ivens's 1951 recollection, told him, tears in her eyes:

It's very moving what you have done. I thank you for it. You have shown me something that I've never been aware of during six years of marriage, that is to say, the dangers, the joys, the beauty of the work of my husband, all that he had never been able to make me understand. This discovery will be a precious help to me in our life together. (Lacazette, 1951, 26)

The success of this first union film enterprise was such that it spurred a series of subsequent films commissioned by unions, including *Stalen Knuisten* (*Fists of Steel*, Jo de Haas, 1930, 30) and *Triomf* (*Triumph*, Jan Jansen, 1931, 80). According to Hogenkamp (1980), this was the start of the genre of the commissioned documentary that was going to be typical for the Dutch cinema in the 1930s, of which the best-known practitioners were to be, in addition to

Ivens, Max de Haas, Otto Neyenhoff, and Jan Hin (the last named was a veteran of Studio Joris Ivens).

De Graaff's remark about *Zuiderzee* being especially popular suggests that it was the public reception to this part of *Wij Bouwen* that may have inspired the group of filmmakers to continue their investment in this project. Whatever may have been the case in Holland, there can be no doubt that the public reception of the film and its predecessors by its Soviet audiences during the long-awaited Soviet tour undertaken immediately following the premiere of *Wij Bouwen* had an enormous formative influence on Ivens's career: the memoirs set down over thirteen years later recall in great detail the various responses accorded the films by the Soviet public. We have seen that Soviet spectators had certain criticisms of the avant-garde films that Ivens himself would often repeat to Western audiences. But the Soviets were unanimous and ecstatic in their approval of the union-sponsored film, particularly of the *Zuiderzee* section. There were of course many questions about the living conditions of the Dutch brothers seen on the screen, and curiosity as well about Dutch construction technology, all of which the 'primitive social artist' found enormously gratifying. There were however other questions that got directly to the root of the very aesthetic problem that Ivens was in the process of solving. Ivens's description of his middle class roots apparently set off the exchange that resulted in 'one of the most significant evenings in my young film career'. *Camera's* description of this event deserves quoting at length:

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'You say you are from the middle class, yet the film we have seen was surely made with the eyes of a worker. I know, because it is exactly the way I see the work. So either you are a liar and bought the film in Holland from somebody else or you are a worker who's pretending to be from the middle class – and that is certainly not necessary here in a workers' and peasant state', he [a worker in the audience] added smiling.

I couldn't have asked for a higher compliment: *The film is exactly the way I see the work*. I had no documents with me and I made no attempt to prove that I was really a member of the middle class. Somewhat desperate, I tried to pin the questioner down on his sharp observation. I asked him, 'Where in my film do you see the work shown exactly as you see it?'

'Several places,' he said, 'especially in that heavy stone-work, on the dike. I have done that kind of work'.

'I see what you mean. I can explain how I filmed that sequence. I could not find the right angle of my camera on this stone work. So I started watching the work to see how it begins, how it ends, what its rhythm is; but still I could not find my camera angle. Then I tried to move the heavy basalt stones myself because I thought it would be valuable to get

the actual feel of the work before filming it. I soon became exhausted because I wasn't used to the work, but I found out what I wanted to know. You have to feel first where to get a grip on the stone – not in the middle but at certain corners. I found out there is a trick of balancing with the stone – how to use your own weight to get the stone from one place to another. I found that the greatest strain in the work was on the shoulder muscles and on the chin. Therefore those were the things to emphasize when photographing this action because they belong organically to the work. From then on the camera – its angle and its composition – were all dictated by that muscle and that chin. Those became the two focal points for the action. Reality dictated the photography, not any aesthetic effort to achieve a nice balance of lines and lighting. But this realistic angle also happened to be the most beautiful angle. I could not satisfactorily and truly photograph the stone labourer until I found out the physical strain of his work'. [...]

That man had discovered a secret of my working method which I myself had not fully realized. No film critic had ever touched the cause of the realistic quality in my films which they had observed and written about. It took the common sense of a Russian worker to do this. (Ivens, 1969, 59-61)

Ivens thus encountered a whole set of aesthetic criteria that he had never previously systematically articulated, the criteria of audience accessibility and response, of honesty and authenticity of conception, of the priority of communication over pictorial beauty, of the validity of lay criticism. What in effect occurred with the Soviet audiences was a consolidation of all the changes that Ivens had already made instinctively in his exploration of a new subject matter, a new constituency, and a new social goal. Reinforced in his new way of filmmaking, Ivens returned to expand *Zuiderzee* into a full-length film as it now exists. Of course, the continuation of the project over the next few years would be shaped by Ivens's gradual mastery of the crafts of editing and directing, not to mention growing ideological sophistication and aesthetic maturity, which he would acquire in the three projects taken on in the interim – *Philips-Radio*, *Creosoot*, and *Komsomol*.

ZUIDERZEE

Zuiderzee, although an outgrowth of *Wij Bouwen*, must now be considered as an autonomous work that had its premiere in May 1930, a month or so after Ivens's return from his first trip to the USSR. This silent short feature should be

considered not only as a *Wij Bouwen* spinoff, but as an early instalment in the enormous artistic and political growth that would see *Philips-Radio*, *Komso-mol*, *Nieuwe Gronden*, and *Borinage* all succeed each other in fast and dramatic progression. There is ambiguity about what the definitive version of *Zuiderzee* might be, if such a thing exists, since the filmmakers kept adding to this silent masterpiece after each successive landmark in the huge national public works project of reclaiming the Netherlands' great inland sea – notably the closing of the preliminary dike the Wieringermeerdike in 1929 and the closing of the final 34-kilometre seadike in May 1932 – culminating in the final version of the film three years later as a dramatically reshaped sound film *Nieuwe Gronden* that must also be considered as its own autonomous work. The Soviets certainly considered *Zuiderzee* as a stand-alone work since they had ordered 200 prints of it right after Ivens's first visit (Ivens, 1969, 67).

Nevertheless it seems to have been the 1932 final dike closing, while Ivens was in Magnitogorsk, that was the pretext for the filmmakers' decision to assemble all of their material into a definitive short feature (45 minutes) that ended up in the Museum of Modern Art and other collections. Van Dongen would periodically prepare official 'record' films of the dike construction and of the reclamation of the new lands as part of the ongoing CAPI enterprise and in consultation with the Maatschappij tot Uitvoering van de Zuiderzeewerken (MUZ, Society for the Implementation of the Zuiderzee Works). The fact that a 'professional' camera operator from abroad, the French Éli Lotar, participated in the ongoing cinematography confirms that by this time the Ivens films were moving considerably beyond the artisanal level of his early work.

Although the term 'epic' was used somewhat indiscriminately in early film criticism, Balázs's ([1952] 1970, 166) classification of *Zuiderzee* (along with *Turksib* [Victor Turin, 1929, 75], the Soviet epic of railroad-building) as an 'epic of labour' is in no way hasty or imprecise. This film fulfils all of the descriptive and evaluative components of the category 'epic' and it is useful to approach the film from this point of view. For this purpose, my model of the epic is primarily socio-historical (epic as historiography and as socio-historical theory), but I would also stress elements that might be instrumental in a mythological/archetypal approach (epic as heroics and as combat mythology). McConnell (1979) connects four literary-cinematic genres – epic, romance, melodrama, and satire – to socio-political relationships as defined by Rousseau's 'social contract'. The epic in its 'primary' variation is about fundamental political relationships, about foundings, either by warrior gods or by law-givers. The 'secondary' epic, to which *Zuiderzee* corresponds most, is described as combining these two earlier founding figures in a human hero. The hero continues the task of the founders, building civilisation and the political state. The hero's tools and technology for this purpose are given special emphasis in this

variation, according to McConnell. *Man of Aran* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1934, UK, 76) and *Oktyabr* (*October*, Sergei Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov, 1928, USSR, 95) are films he proposes as examples of this form, but *Zuiderzee* and *Turksib* are both important additions to this list since they bring to the epic form an innovation made possible by 20th-century film technology: the possibility of ‘present-tense’ or ‘ongoing’ epic historiography.⁷

The label ‘epic’ applies to *Zuiderzee* first in terms of the historical monumentality of the event the film describes: the ten-year construction project certainly compares to the colossal feats of nation-building, of ‘founding’, narrated in such other great silent film epics as *October*, *Napoléon* (Abel Gance, 1927, France, 330), *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915, USA, 165), and *The Iron Horse* (John Ford, 1924, USA, 150).

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The giant project becomes for Ivens a microcosm of a society caught up in the process of actively asserting control over its destiny, a society’s mastery of its natural environment to the satisfaction of its needs. Furthermore, the film offers a vision of the functioning of such a society as encyclopedic in its way as the works of Eisenstein and Griffith, from the opening images of children playing in the sunlight as their fathers pause for lunch, an image that proclaims the continuity of human society before a single clod of earth is moved, to the final images of new land appearing from beneath the foam. Such universal implications of the film are on the one hand a reason why the film is often said to have lasted exceptionally well⁸ and on the other hand a reason why Ivens would soon feel that he had to step so definitely beyond it with the succeeding films, in the direction of a new specificity and immediacy.

The problematic of technology in the foreground of Ivens’s avant-garde period and of the whole modernist movement of the twenties is finally here resolved. McConnell (1979, 62) states, ‘in the vision of the secondary epic, then, tools play almost as important a role as do heroes. For heroes in this

14. *Zuiderzee* (1931-33): the epic hero’s strength and skill in the stone-moving sequence that fascinated Soviet worker audiences. DVD frame capture. Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



world are defined by their command of tools, of the technology which makes founding possible’.

While *Zuiderzee* continues many of the conventions of the machine films of the earlier years – there are forests of swinging cranes that are balletic in their precision and a continuous celebration of the graphic and kinetic force of the dredgers and pumps – the technology is subordinated socially to the human project of social construction. There is no rhapsodisation of the machine in isolation from its use value. The crane, Ivens’s favourite image in the film, is always connected editorially to its operator and then to its function in the unfolding of the project. If a sequence contemplates for an extended moment a particularly lyrical juxtaposition of crane movements, it immediately turns to the deposit of a load, the taking up of another, and then to a summation of the current situation of the dike in relation to the sea. A profoundly materialist vision of society is thus articulated by this epic. Technology is related to its function with such clarity that the spectator is reminded of Vertov, who could hardly show a loaf of bread without tracing its route from farmer to consumer, or a strip of film without following it from cameraperson to audience. As with Vertov, the ultimate term of reference is always the societal subject. The opening sequence is of crucial significance in this regard. The image of the workers sitting with their hefty bowls of soup as their children play declares the ultimate principle of history, the fundamental Marxist axiom that humankind reproduces itself through labour. A similar sequence later in the film is an additional reminder of this principle: footage of workers leaving the site at the end of the day and washing up again includes their children playing and waiting for them. Rich in the spontaneous detail of the quotidian, the footage is interpolated with flash-forward dissolves of the completed project, a device that is basic to the epic repertory.⁹ Ivens juxtaposes in this way both the new generation and the ideal new environment that is being shaped for them by the present generation. Like all great epics, *Zuiderzee* has the shape and the dynamism of the movement of history and implies a conception of history as coherent, purposeful, heroic, even utopian.

Zuiderzee partakes of the traditional romantic mode of epic narrative, exalting as it does the super-human powers of its heroic protagonist. Ivens’s particular inflection of this mode, like Eisenstein’s, derives from contemporary Marxist ideology, and would resurface in subsequent decades of his career as socialist realism left a more ‘personalized’ imprint on his vision: for now his heroics are embodied in collective rather than in individualist terms. Balázs ([1952] 1970, 68) sees *Zuiderzee* as a tribute to the rationality of this collective hero: ‘An invisible force is made visible in this film; the directing intelligence of man, just as an invisible wind is made visible by the bending of treetops.’

Ivens’s strict adherence to the logic of causality and sequence in the struc-

ture of the film is at the base of this impression. Each phase of the gigantic project is clearly connected to the next, never viewed in isolation: the willow matrices are towed out into place in the water *so that* a ballast of rock can be dropped into them forcing them to sink *so that* they can serve as foundations for the earth and clay that are to be moved. The animated diagram-map that traces for the spectator the gradual metamorphosis of the Zuiderzee into the Yselmeer simply echoes the already clear precision of the filmic exposition.

But these heroics of human design are perhaps secondary in Ivens's vision to the rather more cinematic heroics of human labour, of strength and struggle. *Zuiderzee* and *Turksib* are also, according to Balázs ([1952] 1970, 68), 'film memorials to human effort, proclaiming the glory of human labour, toil which at the cost of skill and sweat is labouring to make this earth a garden'. These heroics of the worker, discovered tentatively in *Wij Bouwen*, extended but ultimately suppressed in the industrial films because of their publicity orientation, rediscovered and transported to a socialist realist mythic plane in *Komsomol*, are here consolidated in the artist's own indigenous environment. Perhaps for this reason, these heroics are expressed in *Zuiderzee* with an integrity and passion that *Komsomol*, the work of an expatriate, would not succeed entirely in putting across. Here they are given the fullest and richest embodiment of Ivens's career. The romantic affirmation of the proletariat as hero, as the dramatic subject of the film, of its labour as the prime dramatic impetus of the film, arises from the deeper principle held by the artist: the faith in the proletariat as the subject of history, and in labour as the means by which history is transformed.

Ivens's heroics are rooted in specific cinematic approaches to the subject. As we have already seen, the most typical attitude of the camera is literally a respectful one, a medium or medium-long low-angle perspective of one worker or a small group: one memorable shot is of two men shovelling clay in a complete synchronisation of effort, one tossing his shovelfuls of clay onto the shovel of his co-worker who in turn passes it on while the first worker reloads. As in *Komsomol*, the symbolic propensities of such a choreographic configuration are exploited to the fullest: the spectator is led by the length of the shot to be caught up in the physical rhythm of the movement and thence in its symbolic aura. The opening images of the film are an even more forceful poeticisation of collective labour. A file of men is seen in long shot carrying one of the long willow coils through the shallow water, creating a graceful moving arc composition on the screen, the leaders in the foreground, the whole configuration caught in partial silhouette against the water and the sky. The most famous such sequence is one justly celebrated by Wegner (1965, 34) for its heroic connotations of collective strength. This sequence, with its two perfectly synchronised columns of men, arms inter-

locked, carrying a huge concrete conduit pipe, is a short one but radiates the entire complex of idealism.

15. *Zuiderzee* (1931-33): the choreography of collective work with its 'entire complex of idealism' would become the Ivens visual signature throughout more than five decades. Frame enlargement, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen. Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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Although Ivens is maybe borrowing from the Soviet repertory in his romanticisation of his subject, particularly in the use of silhouette effects and choreographic configurations, there is no sense in which his attitude is a borrowed veneer, imposed arbitrarily on the Dutch subject. His heroics are deeply rooted in his close-range observations of, and intimate involvement in, the local situation. Ivens is careful to balance in a way far more systematic and purposeful than in *Wij Bouwen* a sense of the individual with the sense of the collective. He fully employs his license as omniscient epic narrator to move directly from his colossal bird's-eye perspectives of the entire construction site and the aforementioned long-shot constellations to close and medium-close analyses of the work of individual men. The emphasis in such close perspectives – for example, a sudden close-up examination of the hands and tools of a single worker (who acknowledges the camera with a dignified, matter-of-fact glance) during a long-shot sequence dealing with the construction of frames for a concrete embankment – is on the strength and skill of the individual worker's contribution to the total effort.

The stone-moving sequence that so interested the Soviet audience fits into this general pattern: the close-range analysis of the single worker's effort in this job includes close-up attention not only to the subject's straining neck and bulging arms as he grapples with the boulder, but also his feet firmly braced in their clogs, and the surface of the boulder as he chips it and eases it into place. At the end of this sequence, both worker and spectator admiringly survey the completed stone-paved embankment. This link between the individual task and the global situation is a major absence in *Industrial Britain* (1932, UK, 21),

the almost exactly contemporary, similarly motivated project directed by Flaherty for Grierson. Consequently, a whole range of Luddite, anti-union, and pro-Empire sentiments may be inferred from the British film's exaltation of the self-sufficient craftsmanship of the solitary worker. The individual-global link is essential both to the epic form and to Ivens's ideological underpinnings of that form.

Zuiderzee, filmed prior to and concurrently with *Komsomol*, naturally makes no use of the principle of extended dramatic personalisation that Ivens would appropriate from socialist realism at that time – in fact the individual workers that do emerge so concretely in *Zuiderzee* are occasionally literally 'composite' workers, ideal subjects constructed in the montage. All the same, the collective subject of the film is not an anonymous mass but a collective of specific individuals frequently glimpsed with great expressiveness and detail. One has only to think of the portly worker on his lunch break who emerges through a trapdoor onto the deck of a barge and strolls about surveying the surrounding work site with self-satisfaction, all the while balancing his huge bowl and spooning down his soup with aplomb.

A further principle of epic dramaturgy, that of combat or struggles, also provides the film with a basic structural principal. If the struggle against nature is a central theme of Ivens's work ready to be gleaned by an auteurist sifting of the filmography,¹⁰ this struggle, colossal in proportions, finds the quintessential expression in *Zuiderzee*. It provides the work with its basic structure of accelerating tension and a climax of epic magnitude. To be specific, it is the final closing of the dike that provides the film with this mounting intensity as the project moves through its various phases: the construction of the barrages, the sinking of the piles, the preparation of the cribbings, the work of the excavators, the erection of concrete and metal frameworks for the dikes, the work of the barges unloading earth and stone on the dike foundations, and the final battle to close in the last gap in the finished dike with barges and excavators together. If in traditional epics the antagonists were rival camps on the human level, here society as a unanimous whole becomes pitted in its epic struggle against the elements, specifically the North Sea.

The final struggle, in which the ocean finally submits to society and the earth, was composed, as Ivens (1969, 94) remembered in *Camera*, of a number of smaller closings of secondary dikes as well as that of the final closings of 1929 and 1932. Welded together by periodic overviews, occasionally aerial, in which the armies of workers and cranes dump endless tons of clay and earth onto the dike and the waves continually lash back to undo their work, the climax is without question a brilliant study in action editing. Ivens's note of pride in his description of the 150-metre (c.5.5 min.) dike-closing sequence 'as the most complex and successfully dramatic editing I have ever done', is

entirely justifiable. Ivens attributes the success of the sequence to the fact that the material was shot according to three separate opposing points of view, the camera operators adopting respectively the perspectives of the sea, the land, and human society, thus providing three complete 'hubs' for the editing. Certainly in the slightly compressed and sharpened *Nieuwe Gronden* version of the climax (1934) the sense of combat among three poles is quite pronounced. This scene is further enhanced by the application of an Eisensteinian juxtaposition of shots containing contrasting directions of movement. Each movement of earth or water or machine contradicts the movement of the previous shot. Explosive splashes of sea-water are cut so as to seem to be leaping up in reaction to the huge glistening cargo of mud that has dropped across the surface of the screen. Or, an imperturbable pipe-smoking crane operator swings a lever to the right upper corner of the frame as if in response to a surge of white water moving in almost the opposite direction. There are also numerous shots in the manner of *Brug* in which contrasting movements are captured on the single frame at once, thus heightening the dynamism of the climax; for example, a current of water rushing in one direction is imprinted with the shadow of the crane moving in the opposite direction. At one point there is in fact a whole trope of four such shots each filling the frame with cranes moving in opposite directions background and foreground, the effect being cumulatively hypnotic. Predictably, the rhythm is accelerated by many short inserts, lasting less than a second, of explosions of foam or of the teeth of a crane-scoop sinking ferociously into a pile of mud. (This technique would be used later to denote explosions in *The Spanish Earth* [1937, USA, 53].) This strategy is relieved from time to time by virtuoso tracking shots that make full use of the availability of the cranes at hand: one such shot lasts a staggering ten seconds as the camera soars along with its close-up load of mud in an expansive right pan that keeps in the background a high-angle view of the left-rushing current below until the load is released. The resultant rhythm of the climactic battle is thus not one of unmitigated acceleration but of a mounting of tension through fits and starts, through pauses and regroupings. According to Wegner (1965, 56) the working out of this final climactic rhythm made such demands on Ivens's powers of concentration that he would have to set it aside for days at a time before returning to it. The final point at which a released load of mud refuses to sink beneath the water, settling instead on the emerging dike, an image signifying the victory of society over its adversary, is a moment of tremendous exhilaration even for spectators whose visual literacy has been worn away by the 80 years of sound cinema that have intervened between the editing of *Zuiderzee* and the present.

Zuiderzee must now be analysed as Ivens's final, most mature expression of filmic discourse that can be described as both indirect and narrative.

Nichols (1976, 34) identifies two basic modes of address of the documentary film, direct and indirect, ‘according to whether or not the viewer is explicitly acknowledged as the subject to which the film is addressed’.¹¹ The former mode, which does explicitly and directly acknowledge the viewer, was used almost exclusively by the classical sound documentary during the approximately 30 years of its heyday (1930-1960): the dominant diegesis of the classical sound documentary was almost always situated wholly or in part on a level of the soundtrack, and could be pure narrative, as in, say, *The Battle of San Pietro* (John Huston, 1945, USA, 32), pure exposition (which is in any case a sub-category of narrative as far as filmic discourse is concerned) as in *The Song of Ceylon* (Basil Wright, 1935, UK, 38), or, most often, a combination of both, as in *Las Hurdes (Land Without Bread)*, Luis Buñuel, 1932, Spain, 30) or *Nieuwe Gronden*, with or without additional rhetorical stances such as exhortation, interrogation, exclamation, etc. By the time Ivens had completed *Zuiderzee*, the apogee of his silent, indirect, narrative style, this style had already been tentatively challenged by the abrupt disjuncture in filmic practice occasioned by *Komsomol* and was about to be permanently reshaped in *Borinage* and *Nieuwe Gronden*, the sound version of *Zuiderzee*, as we shall see. The formal shift from the indirect narrative mode of Ivens’s silent documentaries to the direct mode, in which he would combine expository, denunciative, and hortatory elements with the customary narration, coincides with a radical shift in the socio-political dimensions of his filmic practice as well. This shift involved a realignment of the artist-subject-viewer configuration posited by his work so that his films would intervene directly in socio-political problematics. *Zuiderzee* was the last of his films to abstain from this kind of socio-political intervention.¹²

There are minor departures from indirect address in *Zuiderzee*, it is true, glimpses of the posture of direct address soon to be taken up: an occasional silent intertitle addresses the spectator directly in its illustration of certain phases of the dike construction. However, these intertitles function as intermittent summaries of the visual narrative rather than as the determining diegetic element, as the intertitles of *Borinage* and the soundtracks of *Komsomol* and *Nieuwe Gronden* would do. Otherwise, the spectator is not explicitly acknowledged as the subject of the film’s address in *Zuiderzee*, the last film in which this is true. As far as Nichols’s additional distinction between narrative and expository diegesis is concerned, the tendencies we have already noted in Ivens’s documentary discourse towards a narrative structure are continued here, enriched by expository impulses, such as an occasional close-up insert-shot that adds a sense of ‘this is how it was done’ to the more continuous ‘this happened’.

The visual style of this overall narrative indirect mode integrates with a

maturity and coherence all of the tendencies hitherto distinguishable in Ivens's work. The analytic tendency expressed in the digressive and flamboyant aestheticism of *Brug*, is here traceable, for example, in the boulder-moving sequence, in certain long-shot compositions, or in certain vestiges of 'Soviet' cutting. The *mise-en-scène* tendency is visible in the extreme precision of the blocking of the figures in a sequence such as the conduit-pipe sequence. The spontaneous 'life-caught-unawares' tendencies are especially noticeable in the candid scenes of workers relaxing between shifts. All three tendencies are integrated smoothly into the seamless, narrative form of what should be seen as one of the last great silent documentaries and one of Ivens's best works.

I have already stated that Ivens was not present at the actual final closing of the dike. He was in fact spending less and less time in the Netherlands during this whole period. The sound montage of *Philips-Radio* took place in Paris, the shooting of *Creosoot* took him all over Europe, and of course the second Soviet visit of almost a year considerably loosened his ties with his original milieu. As he went further and further afield for longer and longer stretches of time, Ivens relied more and more for the actual shooting of the *Zuiderzee* project and for the post-production work on the other films on the team of filmmakers that he had more or less trained. Van Dongen, who was apparently still involved in the camerawork at this point, Fernhout, Joop Huisken, a CAPI salesman, Jan Hin, a theological student, Willem Bon, a medical student, as well as Éli Lotar, a politically inclined French cameraman who apparently took leave of absence from the *Zuiderzee* project in the spring of 1933 to shoot Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*.¹³ The collective spirit with which *Branding* and *Regen* had been realised here became the fundamental principle of the production of the film. There is no doubt that Ivens's vision and inspiration gave *Zuiderzee* and the other films their coherence, but this soon-to-be familiar pattern of delegating large amounts of creative responsibility to co-workers is formalised here for the first time. Ivens would contribute to the camerawork in *Philips-Radio* and *Borinage*, but *Creosoot*, *Komsomol*, and all subsequent works were shot by cinematographers. Van Dongen for her part would gradually take on more responsibilities as editor over the next decade. Although her role in Ivens's films would never be as all-embracing as it would be with Flaherty, it was nevertheless crucial. Even before the American period, Van Dongen's reputation as editor and as innovator of procedures for sound montage in documentary was well established and her career began to take on more and more of its own autonomy. Correspondingly Ivens's own role as director took on more and more aspects of the producer's role. One probable outgrowth of Ivens's increasing preoccupation with the demands of producing would be the greater conceptual coherence of his films. Subsequent work would attract little of the criticism for cinematographic gimmickry and aestheticism that had occa-

sionally met the films for which Ivens had been cinematographer. Another aspect of this new role for Ivens was that it was a reflection of the increasing role of the films as interventions in specific social situations.

Zuiderzee was widely distributed only in its 1930 version. The gradual winding down of the activity and harmony within the avant-garde constituency is likely responsible for the lack of evidence of any subsequent high-profile distribution. An additional factor, of course, is that by 1933 the silent documentary was an obsolete form, and directors who continued to work in this mode were usually persuaded to add sound, as Flaherty was with *Man of Aran* the following year. In any case, Ivens himself contributed to the immediate obsolescence of *Zuiderzee* by making his own shortened sound version, *Nieuwe Gronden*, shot and edited in the summer of 1933.

PHILIPS-RADIO

Capital was not far behind Labour in recognising Ivens's talent and a potential use for it. Ivens had only just returned from the USSR in the spring of 1930 when he received an invitation from the publicity department of one of the largest and most prosperous of Dutch firms, the Philips Radio company at Eindhoven, to make a film in its factory. Both Ivens and the family firm already had a relationship with Philips (Stufkens, 2008, 92-93) and the young filmmaker was immediately attracted by the generous contract and budget offered, since his artistic career had yet to be consolidated as a profitable undertaking, this commission would finally establish the production section of CAPI as a solid and prestigious outfit in its own right.

The terms of the commission were quite general: "They left the choice of sub-text entirely in my hands. Their directives at this early stage were: "Look around the factory as an artist would. Whatever attracts you in the plant – go ahead and make a film about it!" (Ivens, 1969, 61). Like Flaherty's and Grierson's industrial sponsors, the company was less interested in an explicit publicity film than an 'arty' film that would bring them prestige and publicity indirectly. Philips was an early proponent of the idea of corporate sponsoring of 'art' filmmakers: Jean Renoir had already been a beneficiary in 1928.

For Ivens the Philips project had more than financial advantages. The budget and the factory setting meant that for the first time he would be able to make a film with the luxurious technical facilities taken for granted by studio filmmakers. At Philips, Ivens was to have the full cooperation of the company's engineers and full use of the factory's technical facilities, as well as the means to hire a crew of six members (made up mostly of his Amsterdam co-workers including Van Dongen, Ferno, Huisken, and Kolthoff, but also the

French cinematographer Jean Dréville, a French avant-gardist who had been an assistant of Marcel L'Herbier as well as Krull's lover). The crew and the engineers transformed the factory into one huge studio, adapting the cranes and conveyor belts for the travelling shots. Ivens even had a special scaffold constructed for the filming of some of the glass-blowing material. He also had access to a formidable array of Philips lighting equipment: the film was to be shot almost entirely with artificial interior lighting and Ivens experimented with a rectangular frame fitted with very hot Philips incandescent lights attached to his camera, achieving some interesting novel effects thereby. In addition, the cast of thousands paid by Philips were to obey him exactly and not to complain as he hovered about their workplace with his battery of assistants and lights. The camera chosen for the film was the new Debrie, notable at the time for its non-reflex viewfinder, a camera much larger and more stationary than the handheld Kinamo, which was to be available as a backup only. The team's pleasure in experimenting with this real-world studio is palpable in period accounts.

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Perhaps the major attraction for Ivens was that *Philips-Radio* would be his first sound film – and the first Dutch sound film to boot (Stufkens, 2008, 94). The prospect of pioneering in sound technology for the documentary greatly excited both Ivens and Van Dongen, who moved into this area as her own field of specialisation. Very little had been done in the field of sound documentary up to this point. During Ivens's stay in the Ukraine, he would certainly have heard tell of Vertov's ongoing work on *Entuziazm: Simfoniya Donbassa* (*Enthusiasm: The Donbass Symphony*, 1931, USSR, 67) and have absorbed the great excitement within the Soviet film industry about sound in general. It is also probable that he would have seen or heard a great deal of Ruttmann's *Melodier der Welt* (*Melody of the World*, 1929, Germany, 40) as well, then barely finished, which was to be shown in Paris as part of a double feature with *Philips-Radio* in October 1931. In preparation for the sound montage, Van Dongen undertook an intensive six-month apprenticeship in Paris at the Tobis Klangfilm studios studying the Western Electric system, and she and Ivens were mentored by René Clair who was then working on his second sound feature *Le Million* (1931, France, 81). Van Dongen spent a further period at UFA in Berlin studying the RCA system. There she was joined by Lou Lichtveld, the Filmliga music specialist who was to come up with the score for the film and who brushed up on the technical aspects of this assignment with Oskar Fischinger, the avant-garde animator. The film was to be shot silent like almost all sound documentaries of the thirties – with the astonishing Soviet exceptions of *Enthusiasm* and Esfir Shub's *K.S.E. – Komsomol Shef Elektrifikatsii* (*The Komsomol – Sponsor of Electrification*, 1932, 56) – and the soundtrack would be added later in Paris. The shooting took about five months during the fall and midwinter of 1930-

1931, but not surprisingly the editing and sound editing took even longer, with the premiere occurring in the fall of 1931.

The shape of the finished film is among other things a vivid testimony to Ivens's ability to vary his style and sensibility not only according to his budget but also according to his constituency and his sponsors. *Philips-Radio* could not be further from the straightforward style of *Wij Bouwen*; it recalls instead the elaborate, self-consciously artistic style of *Brug* and *Regen* and of Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grossstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, 1927, Germany, 65). It was replete with all of the Soviet-inspired excesses in montage virtuosity which for contemporary audiences indicated art and sophistication and which the Philips management undoubtedly equated with the company's prestige. The pace is often frenetic, the continuity is often obscure, and the indulgent use of such late silent mannerisms as superimpositions, accelerated motion, and other lab tricks, makes the film seem like the swan song of the twenties as much as a harbinger of the sound era.

The repertory of the machine films and *ballets mécaniques* of the late silent era is much more visible than in *Brug* – there are stunning tableaux of spinning bobbins, close-ups of dancing cogs and gears, choreographies of fields of cylinders, tubes, and microphones, and compositions saturated with gadgetry. A number of sequences seem to be following Potamkin's ([1930] 1977, 30) prescriptions for the elimination of the human presence from the machine film; there are whole sections dealing with highly automated parts of the plant in which the presence of the workers is suppressed and in which repeated shots of conveyor belts moving products and parts past and towards the camera, filling the screen with orderly mechanised movement, create the dominant impression. The concluding passage, a half-minute 'ballet' of spinning 'Philite' speaker discs against a black background gives a final touch of lyrical fantasy on the verge of abstraction, no doubt inspired by Fischinger but also anticipating later work by Norman McLaren – but that did not stop Philips from excising this touch of whimsy from later corporate versions of the film (Stufkens, 2008, 104).

Other passages recall the tendency of Ruttmann in *Berlin*, and Ivens in *Regen* to a lesser extent, to characterise the city's inhabitants by portraying only isolated body parts, usually hands in Ruttmann's case. *Philips-Radio* has a passage, for example, devoted to hands screwing together parts on a moving assembly line, and another devoted to hands slapping labels on the cartons of finished products. Often, the cutting is excessively abrupt and the effect is entirely rhythmic because there is insufficient time for given shots to convey their visual information. The film has dated badly in those passages where imitative stylistic veneers and intrusions are most self-conscious. Ivens (1969, 63) would later recognise the temptation that the Philips commission had

posed 'of becoming so glib and skilful in my work that I could do this sort of film as easily as a juggler keeps five balls in the air'.

16. *Philips-Radio* (1931): Ivens's 'job was to concentrate on the people in the plant rather than the gadgets'. DVD frame capture. © Philips, Amsterdam/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loidan-Ivens.



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In its stronger moments, *Philips-Radio* departs from the glib tendencies, however, and does live up to one contemporary commentator's remark that the film is about 'the relation between men and machines' (Winter, 1931, 267-269), or Ivens's (1969, 63) assessment that his 'job was to concentrate on the people in the plant rather than the gadgets'. Such moments build upon Ivens's discovery in *Wij Bouwen* of a subject matter and a style more suited to his personality and world outlook. One recurring image is the face of a worker framed by the objects of his or her work in a foreground arrangement, for example, a low-angle view of a draftsman framed by his tools arranged beneath him on a transparent draughting table. Some of the assembly-line sequences achieve a similar effect insofar as workers are kept in view long enough and a coherent enough picture of their work is conveyed, so that the repetitiveness of the job and the nervous tension of the worker are effectively communicated.

Part of the reason for the unevenness of the film's perception of the human factor in the plant may very well be the intimidating effect of the shooting technology on the spontaneity of the workers, particularly the heat and glare from the lighting. Ivens does recall employing tricks so that employees wouldn't be nervous when filmed, for example, pretending to shoot with the larger camera in one direction while another surreptitiously takes the desired shots. No doubt the tendency to rely on disembodied hands and feet in certain passages of the film is also a reflection of this effect.

This problem, however, did not apparently affect the celebrated glass-blowing images. According to Wegner (1965, 37), this material constitutes Ivens's first masterpiece. By any standard the three scenes built from it are a remarkable tour de force, the longest single theme of the film, invariable singled out

by critics for praise. It occupies a prominent place near the start of the film, interpolated twice by passages on other subjects, and is strikingly different in visual and editorial quality from the rest of the film. Ivens's discovery of these medieval craftsmen buried in the heart of a Bauhaus factory, distending their cheeks around their ovens, clearly left an indelible impression on him: their faces would become familiar elements of several Ivens compilation films over the next decades. Ivens was struck so forcefully, not only because here were men who habitually die at the age of 45 and earn little more than assembly-line workers, but because here was a perfect visualisation of the theme discovered almost by accident in the previous commission and reinforced by his Soviet audience, the theme of labour. Philips had brought Ivens face to face with a particularly 20th-century form of capitalist exploitation, the dehumanised rationalisation of the assembly line. But, although the monotony and tension of work on the line is dealt with adequately in the film, Ivens did not linger unduly on it. Instead, he sought out those images of labour that not only expressed a more classical vision of the capitalist relationship, the toil of muscles rather than nerves, but also those that echoed his classical Marxist faith in human potential and the dignity of the human struggle for subsistence. The glass-blowers offer images of suffering and exploitation, but they also offer images of strength, skill, struggle, and even heroism.

If Ivens's vision of these men differed radically from the romanticisation of his contemporary Flaherty when confronted with the identical subject in *Industrial Britain*, or the childlike wonder of his junior compatriot Bert Haanstra in *Glas (Glass, 1958, 11)*, it is because Ivens never lets the raw beauty of their images obscure the very bitter social context in which they are inscribed. He recalls the editorial means by which he brought home his own particular perception of those men:

In polishing *Philips-Radio*, I learned a great deal about structure, particularly the dramatic structure of a sequence. For example, in one sequence I wanted to show the hard physical labour that still had to be done even in such a modernized factory as Philips. I found such hard labour in the glass-blowing department. Heavy lumps of molten glass are pulled apart like taffy. Two men handle each lump and one blows air through a pipe into the lump to get the right diameter and thickness for the long glass tubes that are being made. As the blower walks backward blowing the glass thinner and longer, his cheeks puff out – further than you could ever imagine cheeks could puff. The cheeks lose their human aspect and begin to look like those of a frog.

17. *Philips-Radio* (1931): Ivens repeated such views 'to silence the audience and make them aware of the inhuman aspect of the work'. DVD frame capture. © Philips, Amsterdam/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



I foresaw that many people would laugh at this effect so I deliberately repeated the glass-blower's puffed cheeks in an even bolder close-up to obtain a more grotesque effect, and then came even closer to the flesh of his cheeks and intercut this close-up with the slow careful backward steps that he took throughout the process. This deliberate repetition tends to silence the audience and make them aware of the inhuman aspect of the work. (Ivens, 1969, 64)

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The effect of Ivens returning twice to sequences based on this same material has much the same effect as this escalation of increasingly intense close-ups. This rhetorical, accumulative piling up of images was a device to which Ivens, unblinking chronicler of horrors of 20th-century war and peace, would return many times in other contexts.

The basic narrative constructions of the previous films are used in *Philips-Radio* to articulate the new subject matter but with a much more self-conscious sense of purpose and of rhythm than in *Wij Bouwen*. A typical sequence follows the familiar pattern of establishing long or medium shots introducing the long intent close-ups of hands, faces, tools, and products, regularly interrupted with medium- or long-shot summarisations of various stages in the processes. All of this unfolds with a deliberate, reflective rhythm, with a minimum of subjective intervention on the part of the filmmaker. The many perspectives of the glass-blowers are habitually low-angled; one contains an echo of the motif already mentioned, a medium view of the blower framed by the close-up foreground view of the bulb he is forming, a carefully efficient image that encapsulates the worker, means of production, and product all in a single intimate frame. Perhaps it is Ivens's growing sensitivity to the importance and mechanics of audience response that is behind the new purposefulness of his narrative construction. In retrospect he was minutely aware of the way the orchestration of the glass-blowing material affected different kinds of audiences:

In *Philips-Radio*, there is a man who is blowing into a ball of glass, and I can be in a theatre with my eyes closed and tell what kind of audience is watching the film. An intellectual public, for example, laughs at the first image; then at the second, it laughs even harder with great guffaws; but the third time, when the worker is disfigured in close-up, looks at the spectator, then this audience remains silent. This look is almost an accusation. However, with workers, from the very first images, they remain silent. They understand that physically, because they know what you can do to the human body. (Ivens, [1955] 1965, 74)

134 | It is interesting that here, in these sequences, there appear to be none of the problems mentioned in connection with the other parts of the film, the effect of the cumbersome camera and lighting paraphernalia on the spontaneity of the workers. The reason is obvious: the atmosphere of trust and cooperation between artist and subject pioneered on the scaffolding of Amsterdam construction sites, and the related mode of documentary *mise-en-scène*, prevented such problems from arising. With the glass-blowers, no tricks were necessary.

Aside from this striking progression of three glass-blowing sequences in the first half of the film, the overall structure of *Philips-Radio* is rather loose. A vague chronological framework groups early stages in the manufacture of various products in this first part and later stages such as testing, packing, and shipping in the final part. Grelier (1965, 73) detects a three-part structure to the film: the first establishing the factory as a whole, the second treating the details of the various manufacturing processes, and the third suggesting the power of the firm through surveying the shipping of the products, this last part interpolated with more glass-blowing imagery. But Ivens's intention is clearly less to offer a clear systematic view of the manufacturing processes, showing the links from one stage to the next as he would do in *Zuiderzee*, than to build up random impressions of the various environments of the factory. This 'associative, fragmentary, discontinuous approach' did not please everyone at the company of course, but the brass felt their prestige artistic commission had achieved its goals (Stufkens, 2008, 101).

Ivens's montage notes support this interpretation of the film. At a fairly advanced stage in the editing, Ivens listed all of the various sequences, already organised around thematic and geographical reference points, according to what he called 'important moods' and noted alongside each sequence the various feelings, impressions, and questions that the sequence was intended to evoke in the spectator. Alongside a sequence about the manufacture of receiver tubes, for example, the list includes:

Many small things
 Carefully
 hey! a little pigeonhole
 funny machines
 a lot of work by hand
 That must be the *controle* [tube-testing site]
 What a huge amount!
 I have a lamp like that at home.
 This one is expensive – don't let that one drop.
 Alongside a sequence in an electro dynamo department:
 Big halls,
 Also transport up above [aerial conveyor belt]
 Monotonous
 still it's clean and simple
 this goes fast
 Control
 there go those loudspeakers again [Vertovian motif using the PA system
 of the factory]
 Pretty face. (Ivens, production notes, JIA)

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It is clear from these examples that Ivens's intention, at this stage, is neither to dazzle with formal virtuosity nor to methodically transmit detailed information about the manufacturing processes, but to puzzle, delight, and fascinate the lay viewer with an accumulation of visual impressions, to alternate initial puzzlement with reassuring glimpses of familiar objects recognisable in these strange surroundings. The question of course is whether the modernist intricacy of some of the editing did not occasionally contradict this decidedly populist orientation or whether it successfully contributed to the desired effect of puzzlement.

The use of sound in the film appears to be designed to complement this aim of building a progression of random impressions and moods. The use of a written text is restricted to several silent intertitles, giving a technical detail here and there meant to introduce certain sequences, 'mechanical glass-blowing', for example. Aside from the intertitles and a single spoken word at one point ('Beautiful!'), there is no commentary, the tendency towards an omnipresent voice-over that would dominate documentaries at a later stage in the thirties (including some of Ivens's own) having happily been forestalled.¹⁴ The sound effects added in the Paris mixing studios by means of the labourious and much-publicised process of breaking down real sounds and adding synthetic ones (there was even a radio-trained vocal imitator standing by making the odd contribution) serve mainly to accentuate the visual impressions being transmit-

ted, the sound of flames and breath in the glass-blowing sequences, for example.¹⁵ The score, composed by Lichtveld for a small jazz orchestra (including trumpet, clarinet, piano, and drums, with harp strings occasionally audible) also seems planned to reinforce the moods created by the visual impressions and was integrated with the sound effects track. Despite its unquestionable technological innovativeness, what is most striking today about the soundtrack is its timidity, particularly in comparison with such work as *Enthusiasm*, in which sound plays an organic part of the aesthetic structure and filmic experience rather than just a supporting role. There are some nice touches, such as an aural joke in which background music turns out to be in-film music being played by a Philips phonograph,¹⁶ but Wegner's (1965, 38) claim that Ivens and Van Dongen were already surpassing Alberto Cavalcanti's English sound documentary experiments of three years later is absurd. *Philips-Radio* could be shown silent without a serious loss of filmic coherence, all the more so since speech (and text) were downplayed to encourage international audiences (Stufkens, 2008, 94). The film's major achievement in regard to the sound it had pioneered was a complex but discreet subtlety rather than any structural breakthrough. It was not until *Komsomol*, undertaken the following year, and *Nieuwe Gronden* that sound would play an integral role in Ivens's documentaries.

That one of Ivens's desired impressions in an assembly-line sequence was 'monotonous' suggests that he was attempting to make a few covert critical comments regarding his subject matter, under the nose of his sponsors. Among the desired 'moods' for the glass-blowing sequences were 'heavy work' and 'why don't they do that with a machine'? It is clear that the audience was intended to ask such questions as this latter one in response to the film. But whether such subversive intentions on the part of Ivens were fully realised, and how they may be considered in any analysis of the film, are complex questions.

Upon its premiere in September 1931 in Amsterdam and the following month in Paris, accompanied by a brilliant modernist poster by Ivens girlfriend Anneke van der Feer,¹⁷ *Philips-Radio* was greeted with unanimous critical praise for having risen above what were already felt to be the clichés of the industrial film; beyond that, however, the film was read according to the ideological predispositions of the spectator. Leftist critics invariably saw the film as a denunciation of rationalised capitalism. Léon Moussinac of *L'Humanité* was the most eloquent of these exegetes:

[The film shows] how intelligent spirits can sometimes get the better of their difficulties and, against all predictions, succeed in presenting us, within a publicity theme that has been imposed, whole films, in a broad sense, with a powerful social character.

Industrial Symphony [the title given to *Philips-Radio* upon its French

release, October 1931] is dramatic. It sets up in high, strong images and a wilful rhythm, the spectre of a moral and physical ruin that threatens those workers who are victims of capitalist rationalization and those whom the machine hasn't yet been able to liberate from certain jobs.

Here is a 'model' factory, that is to say, where everything is continuous: machine, equipment, organization, so that industrial profit is carried to its maximum, so that production reaches this curve of intensity beyond which there can only be catastrophe. Machines and muscles taut for a stretch of hours that wears out, ruins, and disorganizes the poor human mechanism, the assembly line that permits no more mistakes or clumsy gestures, that ties the worker to his job and, instead of liberating him from a superfluous part of labour, forces from him a production whose accelerated rhythm and unorganized allocation only serve to increase the profit of the bosses – until the crisis. [...]

Industrial Symphony is, to a certain extent, all the while being a successful film in cinematic terms, an act of accusation against the present economic system. It is for this reason that we're laughing at the idea of it serving as a publicity film. (Moussinac, 1931)

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If the critics of *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (Arnoux, 1931, 10), *Le Monde* (1931), and *La Revue du cinéma* (Dreyfus, 1931, 37) all gave more or less the same reading to the film, as well as Balázs ([1952] 1970, 99) (and of course Wegner [1965, 36] and Grelier, [1965, 73]), their perspectives were not at all shared by other critics who could easily have been seeing a different film entirely. The critics of *Filma*, *Vu*, *L'Intransigeant*, and *Le Haut-parleur* (all 1931) all joined *Journal des débats* (1931) in universally praising the poetic power of the film and its 'kaleidoscopic vision [that ultimately] drew the spectator into a whirlwind and created an impression of greatness and of ineffable power', with no reference whatsoever to possible subversive texts.

The fundamental ambiguity of his film thus exposed,¹⁸ Ivens gave a great deal of thought to the problem of working within the restrictions of the commissioned film. Philips's only restriction had been their refusal to allow Ivens to shoot outside the factory, that is in the workers' homes; the commissioning executive N.A. Halbertsma had been tolerant enough to allow him to leave in a short comic sequence about the upset of a loading trolley that the management felt put the firm in a bad light and did not seem phased that almost all of the firm's international branches returned the film as unusable (Stufkens, 2008, 103). Moreover Halbertsma's corporate feelings had been hurt when Ivens talked to the Dutch communist paper about Philips's animosity to left-wing filmmakers (*De Tribune* 12 November 1931, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 103; Schoots, [1995] 2000, 105).

An article by Ivens ([1931] 1965) appearing in the Paris *Revue des vivants* the same month as the French premiere of *Philips-Radio* and shortly after the completion of Ivens's second industrial film, *Creosoot*, is striking as a revelation of some of the still unresolved contradictions in his thinking about his work at that point. The article also reflects the rapid growth he was undergoing at the same time and can be seen as a manifesto of the aesthetico-political principles that motivate the best aspects of his work of the first two years of the decade. Not surprisingly, the article alludes constantly to the conceptual terms of reference of the avant-gardist disdain for the commercial cinema with its pandering to an ill-educated public, its mystification of the independence of the artist, its adherence to the notion of some built-in progressive character of the avant-garde cinema:

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The avant-garde cinema is a cinema that tends to provoke the interest and the reaction of the spectator. And I call the avant-garde cinema that cinema that takes the initiative of progress, and the guardian, the flag-bearer of cinematic sincerity. The independent cinema has in effect an auto-critique that drives it towards progress, the industrial cinema has only the critique of success, the critique of a badly educated public.

The industrial cinema brings only technical progress. The avant-garde cinema adds spiritual progress thereto. (Ivens, [1931] 1965, 143)

However a new element has also been introduced to this standard formulation, the Grierson-inspired use of the word 'documentary', Ivens's first systematic use of it in print that I am aware of.¹⁹ For Ivens at this point, documentary becomes the sole medium by which the avant-garde can struggle against the establishment film industry. This is because, he continues, documentary has some kind of privileged access to truth and truth is all one needs to force Hollywood to its knees:

The documentary is the expression of reality in its causal and inevitable aspect. [...]

In the present state of the cinema, the documentary is the best means of finding the true directions of the cinema. It is impossible for it to be obscured in the theatre, in literature, or music-hall, all that is not cinema. [...]

It is impossible for a documentary director to lie, not to be in the truth. The subject matter will not let itself be betrayed: a documentary necessitates the development of the human personality of the filmmaker since only the personality of the artist distinguishes him from any actuality whatsoever, from simple cinematography. [...]

Documentary must not be content to appeal to emotion, the literary exaltation of the beauty of the subject matter, but it should provoke latent activities and reactions. (Ivens, [1931] 1965, 142-144)

To some extent Ivens's championship of the documentary within the context of the avant-garde is a confirmation of what had already occurred. Although Ivens shows traces of the twenties avant-garde dogma of the 'pure cinema,' the European avant-garde had been greatly weakened since the beginning of the Depression and the cultural arena thus vacated had been occupied by a corresponding increase in political expression. In any case, if the foregoing discussion does have a defensive (as well as idealist) ring to it, it is because Ivens may have felt the need to account for the fact that his contributions to this independent truth-centred medium were in fact sponsored by two of the largest industrial organisations in Europe. The argument that follows is that the industrially sponsored documentary has much more freedom than the products of 'Big Film Industry', that is Hollywood:

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In effect, since the documentary lives principally from commissions, and since it is the best means of publicity for industry, its director only has to deal with one man: a businessman, foreign to the cinema. It is thus in the interest of this director to succeed in making a film whose truth and documentary character are at the same time the only criterion. In contrast, when he works for Big Industry, he finds himself shooting along with councils of administration, with artists, with censorship. He is limited, he is no longer independent, and, so to speak, in a certain kind of slavery. (Ivens, [1931] 1965, 143)

If Ivens does seem somewhat less ingenuous here than, say, Grierson was when tackling the same issue with his tough-minded pragmatism during the same period, perhaps what Ivens (1969, 66) describes in *Camera* as the 'inner conflict' of those years is responsible. After all, Ivens could not have been unaware of the implications of Philips's decision to limit the shooting to the factory premises, nor of the major campaign being conducted by the CPH specifically against Philips during the shoot. In fact, he must have surmised, as does Hogenkamp (personal communication, December 1980), that the Philips restriction was not unrelated to the campaign.

In any case, a third element entering into Ivens's article, the expression of certain left-populist terms of reference, anticipates the more developed political sensibility of *Borinage* and *Nieuwe Gronden* a few years later at which time the 'inner conflict' would have been left behind. This emphasis is almost

directly contradictory to the avant-gardist snipes at the ill-educated public early in the same article:

The documentary film is the positive means left to the avant-garde cineaste of working and of putting the most of himself, as representative of the expression of the masses, of popular expression into his work. [...]

The good director lives surrounded by his subject matter, by reality. He chooses on each occasion to interpret only a part of this reality, and the success of his film is at the same time dependent on the trust of the masses in his personality and provoked by this trust, the human personality of an individual who has chosen a part that seems important to him, and only a part of reality, leaving all the rest aside.

In other films, there doesn't exist a criterion as real and as important as this for evaluating the personality of the director or his integrity. (Ivens, [1931] 1965, 143-144)

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The irony is that talk of the 'trust of the masses in his work' and of the artist as 'representative of the masses' is still at the theoretical stage for an artist whose constituency remains largely an intellectual elite. Yet, though such principles were probably first absorbed in the Soviet milieu into which Ivens was about to immerse himself for the second time, there is little doubt that as theory they had been tested at least provisionally in the crucible of concrete experience, with the shooting of *Wij Bouwen* and *Philips-Radio*. The camerawork in the glass-blowing sequence alone, with its intentness, its clarity, and its intimacy, is adequate testimony to this, and Ivens's recollections of the editing of this material in response to specific audience feedback and specific didactic goals confirms this. Taking these limited but important theoretical and practical advances at this stage to their logical conclusion in terms of production, sponsorship, and distribution, etc., would be a step that would be consummated only after Ivens's return from his second Soviet trip.

At that point, Ivens would be able to analyse the Philips experience with more clarity and consistency, with the additional benefit of almost two years hindsight, recognising as he would later state in *Camera* (1969, 62) that the Philips film 'could not possibly be a work with forceful social implications'. He explained to a Paris audience in 1933 after his return from the USSR:

One is obliged in such a film to make an abstraction of social life both inside and outside of the factory, and you end up making a film that shows only the process of manufacture, without any relationship with the social life of the individual: when you are constrained to do without the

real dramatic action, you replace it by the shot angle and montage, for example, the effort of the glass blower. (Ivens, 1933c, 171)

And, as he added in *Camera* a dozen years later,

Almost as a reaction against the restrictions placed upon the film's social content by the Philips Company – understandable from their point of view – I concentrated on achieving the highest technical perfection, polishing the camera work and exploiting every nuance of texture in the glass and metal surfaces of the factory. (Ivens, 1969, 63)

During the Paris lecture quoted above, Ivens praised the current working methods and choice of subject matter in the USSR, and drew a number of lessons for the European avant-garde:

The director should not manufacture easy illusions to lull and amuse the masses. His duty is a nobler one. He should embrace the deepest problems that are posed to us every day and the examination of these problems alone will make real works of art and artists. [...] I could remake this film more or less well and there will be others who follow me, but there are new possibilities in the development of documentary film. That is the task of the avant-garde. (Ivens, 1933c, 171)

Despite such uncustomary vagueness, the audience knew exactly what was meant by this committed young filmmaker fresh from the Magnitogorsk blast furnaces – that the ambiguous artistry of *Philips-Radio* had been reassessed and found wanting. An enraged *Filmliga* critic used the next issue to attack Ivens for spouting communist propaganda at the lecture and to deride the fatuous ‘radical chic’ of his audience (Sluizer, 1933). Other Dutch critics pronouncing on *Philips-Radio* in 1931, no doubt less ideologically invested than Moussinac, were less enraged than Sluizer but symptomatically ambivalent – one muting his praise by complaining that Ivens had not paid attention to the people operating the machines he deftly portrays, another critiquing an objectivity that needs more emotion in a work that is ‘too impersonal, too flat and monotonous’ (*Het Volk* 29 September 1931, *Maasbode* n.d., both quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 104-105).

I say ‘symptomatically’ for two years of Ivens’s development had had profound effects on his relationship with the *Filmliga* community and his Dutch constituency at large, and the rupture was at hand. All the same, 80 years later, *Philips-Radio* has turned out to be one of Ivens’s most canonical works, ensconced in the 2008 DVD box set and exhibited in the permanent collec-

tions of both Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum and Paris's Centre Pompidou as a key document of European modernism and modernity.

CREOSOOT

Creosoot is a commission received and hastily completed during the last phase of the sound montage for *Philips-Radio*, it is a feature-length industrial documentary on the creosote industry sponsored by an international cartel in which an old school friend of Ivens had a position of authority. Like the Philips film, this assignment was undertaken not so much because of any personal interest in the subject (although Ivens apparently relished the location shooting required in Poland, Belgium, Paris, and Danzig), but out of a desire to keep the CAPI production unit intact and profitable, and thereby to assuage the persistent tensions over Ivens's neglect of the family business.

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The film chronologically followed various phases of creosote extraction in industrial settings in the Ruhr valley, in Paris, and in Belgium. An opening section on the lumber industry in the Polish interior culminated in a sequence treating the river transport of the lumber down the Vistula to Danzig and thence by sea to Amsterdam; a final movement demonstrated many of the uses of this wood preservative and led to a climactic rapid montage of Paris streets showing their creosote-treated paving blocks. The producers also added an animated appendix prepared by UFA's scientific department showing microscopically the various causes of wood decay and other topics.²⁰

Dréville came back to shoot this film, and Ferno was to assist since he was not yet ready for the entire responsibility for the camerawork (Ivens, 1969, 65). According to some reports, Ivens relegated most of the work to these two men because of his involvement with the completion of *Philips-Radio* (Michaut, 1953, 5). *Camera*, however, does contain some fascinating first-hand reminiscences of the shooting in Poland. The first *Creosoot* showing happened in Düsseldorf in October 1931, just a month after the Paris premiere of *Philips-Radio*, followed by the official January 1932 bow in The Hague.

By all accounts, *Creosoot* continues along the same lines established by *Philips-Radio*, although in the eyes of the *Filmliga* critic (H.S.[cholte] 1932) and one other unidentified Dutch critic ('De Creosootfilm' 1932), it was not nearly so successful. As with the earlier film, the film's most obvious characteristic was Soviet-style montage, 'well mastered and therefore very supple and discreet', according to the latter critic and the source of its 'power' according to the other, but still, with both writers, disappointing in comparison to *Philips-Radio*. Both critics as well remarked on not only the Soviet flavour of the film, but also specific parallels to *Turksib*. This was no doubt as much

because of the similar subject matter as of the specific approach to the cutting. The comparison in any case was not a favourable one: the *Filmliga* critic stated tersely that the film was not better than *Turksib*, while the other elaborated that the film was not a *Turksib*, but a reminder of *Turksib* and, what is more, a reminder at inappropriate moments. The *Filmliga* critic added that *Creosoot's* 'gimmicky procedures' provoked admiration in their own right but not as part of the whole film, and, as if in an echo, his compatriot spoke of 'a lot of little, pretty filmic things'. Such 'things' singled out by the two critics for praise included Dréville's recognisable talent in the treatment of the Polish forest landscape, the provocative camera angles and movements, and the 'extraordinary liveliness', accomplished framing, and play of line in the shots. Their consensus about the film's overall impression must have been disheartening for Ivens and contributed in no small way to his decisions about his future: 'our interest is awakened, but not our deep feelings [...] persuasive but never grips us', 'an overall creative spirit guiding the film has not materialized', 'the mis-union of the film's overall plan and its details', 'does not show the stamp of definite artistic quality or vision', 'too long for the general public, should be cut from feature length to one half or one third'.

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18. *Creosoot* (1931). The Polish forest phase of the creosote commission allowed views of 'heavy, skilful handwork' reminiscent of *Zuiderzee*. Production still, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © EFJI, Nijmegen.



In short, the basic problem with *Philips-Radio* had compounded itself: moments of clarity and control and a polished, derivative stylistic veneer could not redeem a film from its lack of personal commitment. It is not surprising that Ivens was not able to put much creative energy into the task of depicting creosote manufacturers as 'benefactors of humanity', as he would later describe the assignment in a rare moment of irony (Ivens, interview with author, February 1976).

The newspaper critic's reference to the lumbering sequence as being particularly impressive and the shooting-plan/shot-list in the Ivens archives

(‘Drehbuch Film Creosote’, JIA) suggest that this forest phase of creosote manufacture, with its emphasis on manual labour in a natural setting, may have brought out more of the *Zuiderzee* Ivens than the *Philips-Radio* Ivens. Certainly many of the shots listed treat manual labour, at medium and close range – one shot description actually specifies ‘heavy, skilful handwork’. Much of the river navigation material with its rafts and transports, and the harbour material with its cranes and ships must also have brought out the archetypal Dutchman that critics are always identifying in Ivens (for example Grenier, [1958, 205]). According to Wegner (1965, 40), who cannot have seen the film, Dréville’s style may have been apparent in the landscape and overview material, but Ivens’s own approach informed the images of workers. One can speculate that the opening lumbering sequences were the *Creosoot* equivalent of the glass-blowing material in *Philips-Radio*.

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The shot-lists for the rest of the film confirm the critics’ impressions that the predominant style was Soviet-modernist, self-conscious, and analytic. They reveal a great interest in movement both of the camera and within the frame – of falling trees, sliding logs, and swinging cranes – in diagonal shot composition, and in montage built on contrasting graphic composition – a number of simple storyboards evoke this principle. It again seems permissible to speculate that the later industrial material in the Belgian blast furnaces, the Ruhr chemical factories, or the Paris gas factory brought out even more of the conventions of the machine film than this part. Another principle entering into the shot lists is the consistent searching out of establishing shots, followed by a much closer, varied perspective of an event. The implication is that the now experienced documentarist is covering himself well on location: one typical entry specifies ‘detail and overview’ (*‘Detail und Uebersicht’*).

In conclusion, then, *Creosoot* was anything but a step forward for Ivens. Instead he was merely continuing to waver indecisively between the two tendencies, modernist and realist, as he had with *Philips*. Even the critics I have mentioned were astute enough to recognise this basic tension at work, one calling the film more an ‘absolute film’ than a documentary, and referring to it pejoratively as ‘artsy’ (*‘filmkunstnijverheid’*) before asking the fundamental question, ‘How do you rise above a documentary by means of a documentary?’ Or, to phrase the question from our point of view, ‘Why should a documentary try to rise above “being a documentary”?’

In any case, the *Creosoot* salary made it feasible for Ivens to accept the standing invitation to return to the USSR to make a film at that time. It was not the first time in film history, nor the last, that the success of a conscientiously fulfilled, but uninspired, assignment would permit a director to follow a project dear to his or her heart, nor that Capital would inadvertently finance another cinematic milestone on the road to Socialism.

KOMSOMOL

The 1931 article in which Ivens discusses, alternatively defensively and despairingly, his work for industrial sponsors has a conclusion that, curiously, Grelier (1965) omits from his reprinting of the text:

The documentary must not be content to be an appeal to the emotions, a literary exaltation before the beauty of the subject matter, but it should provoke latent activities and reactions.

By excess of individualism and artistic spirit, Europe is refractory to the social action of the documentary.

I therefore cannot achieve the development of my idea, of my cinematic ideal except in Russia, where the masses are used to these activities every day, so as to be able to understand the social truth of the documentary. (Ivens, 1931, 520)

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These final lines reveal a temporary resolution of Ivens's 'inner conflict' with respect to the industrial film, his sense of the 'artistic suicide' ahead of him if he continued in the vein of *Philips-Radio* and *Creosoot* (Ivens, 1969, 67). The longstanding invitation from the Mezhrabpom studio in Moscow to make a film in the USSR seems to have been grasped as a kind of escape hatch; *Komsomol*, the film that resulted, the story of the construction of a Magnitogorsk blast furnace and of the parallel evolution of a young Kyrgyz herdsman-turned-riveter, bursts with a rough utopian exuberance that is a marked contrast to the slick efficiency of the industrial films.²¹ Ivens's entire career would follow the same pattern: his periods of struggle and survival within the bourgeois film industries of Holland, the USA, and France would inevitably lead to yet another pilgrimage to wherever the current horizon of socialist promise was situated at the time – the USSR in 1932, Spain in 1937, Eastern Europe in 1945, China in 1958 and 1972, Cuba in 1961, Indochina beginning in 1965. One can also understand this pattern as cycles of personal and professional renunciation – even of shame and penance, whether public or private – and subsequent reparative refocusing. Inevitably films would appear in the new settings entirely different in structure and feeling from the others, alive with fresh new inspiration that would then be re-integrated into subsequent work – before it in turn would get transformed through the same pattern.

We have seen how Ivens's first Soviet trip had a formative impact on his sense of the relation between his art and his public. The second trip would have an even greater impact, far beyond the simple fact of providing an alternative to refractory Europe. The 1932 Soviet experience would introduce him to the aesthetic of socialist realism then being confirmed in theory, practice,

and official sanction. The exposure to socialist realism would permanently affect his aesthetic sensibility, stimulating important additions to those elements of Ivens's work already evolved: labour as a subject matter; analysis, spontaneous shooting, and semi-documentary *mise-en-scène* as complementary constituents of a hybrid form; narrative as structure. The new additions would be features distinctive to the Soviet tradition of socialist realism: in terms of dramatic form, a 'personalized', semi-allegorical romanticism; in terms of rhetorical posture, a didactic form of direct address based on a transformed relationship between artist and public.

146 | It was no accident that Mezhrabpom was Ivens's host studio and the producer of *Komsomol*. Mezhrabpom, a Soviet-German film organisation, was officially affiliated with the Workers International Relief (WIR), which was the studio's major shareholder upon its inception in 1924.²² It had supported the workers' newsreel activities in which Ivens had been involved in Holland and handled most of the foreign links of the Soviet film industry. In Germany, for example, its branch, Prometheus Films, had produced the great social realist features of the last years of Weimar, such as Piel Jutzi's *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (*Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness*, 1929, 121) and Brecht's and Slatan Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe, oder: Wem gehört die Welt?* (*Kuhle Wampe, Or Who Owns the World?*, 1932, 71); in the US, the WIR sponsored Ivens's future co-workers in the Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL). In the USSR itself, Mezhrabpom's activities included the sponsorship of numerous foreign filmmakers, both communists and sympathisers, among whom refugees from the new regime in Germany were the most prominent at the time of Ivens's project: Jutzi, Hans Richter, Erwin Piscator, Balázs, Gustav von Wangenheim, and other less well-known actors, technicians, and writers. Babette Gross ([1967] 1974, 168), wife of WIR head Willi Münzenberg, remembered that one purpose of this generous liaison program was the eventual setting up of 'film cells of proletarian art' in the capitalist West. If this is true, the Ivens sponsorship must certainly have been their most successful venture in this direction. Of course, the Soviets must also have hoped to absorb foreign expertise and experience at the same time.

Ivens arrived at Mezhrabpom as the Soviet film industry was going through a period of transition that would result in its second great period. At the time however it looked more like a crisis than a 'turning point' or a 'crest', euphemisms used by Ivens in one of his dispatches home to *Filmliga* (Ivens, 1933a, 65). According to Leyda's (1960, 437-438) reckoning, 1932 and 1933 saw the lowest output of significant new feature releases of any years between 1923 and 1948.

For one thing, Soviet filmmakers were not yet fully settled into the new Tager optical sound technology that Soviet scientists had had to develop inde-

pendently. The few first sound documentaries had been released as early as March 1930, but it was not until the first half of 1931 that three documentaries appeared in which the soundtrack was not simply added as an afterthought. Among these, of course, was Vertov's ground-breaking masterpiece *Enthusiasm* in April, so advanced in its conception of sound for film that critics attacked it savagely for its 'miaowings',²³ and so farsighted in its defiance of preconceptions about the technical capabilities of sound recording (he even took mobile recordings on location in the Donbass mines in which he was shooting) that very little progress was built on his achievement. The first dramatic sound films appeared in the late spring and summer of 1931 while Ivens and Van Dongen were doing their own pioneering work on the Philips soundtrack in Paris. These were Raizman's *Zemlya zhazhdet* (*The Earth Thirsts*, 1930, 60) and Ekk's *Putyovka v zhizn* (*Road to Life*, 1931, 105), a Mezhrabpom film praised by Ivens (1933a, 66) in his dispatch. Kozintsev's and Trauberg's *Odna* (*Alone*, 1931, 90) appeared that October, and Protazanov and Yutkevich would follow with their first sound film later that fall, just before Ivens's arrival. During Ivens's stay itself, Pudovkin would be working on *Dezertir* (*The Deserter*, 1933, 105), his first great sound film, also at Mezhrabpom.²⁴ The Soviet project, then, was to be an opportunity for Ivens to gain experience and inspiration as a sound filmmaker.

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Ivens's article speaks of the great urgency he felt in the film industry during his Soviet visit about the introduction of sound (1933a, 66). Praising *Enthusiasm* and *Road to Life* as outstanding examples of Soviet success with the new technology, Ivens speaks also of the progress in the radio industry being made in conjunction with the strides in film sound, suggesting that this particular area had in fact higher priority in terms of the USSR's immediate needs. Vertov presumably shared this belief: Ivens in *Komsomol* would incorporate *Enthusiasm's* conceit of the radio as the vital link connecting various parts of the USSR. Stuffkens (2008, 118-120) has also noted the thread between *Philips-Radio's* iconography of radio waves and that opening *Komsomol*, positing the continuity between the capitalist and communist tropes of radio communication as being the celebration of 'industrial and technological progress'.

Ivens may have profited also from Vertov's experience of shooting sound on location in industrial sites, and of counterpointing documentary image and sound in non-synchronous relationships. Although *Komsomol* lacks *Enthusiasm's* extravagant flair and versatility, Ivens's achievement is a worthy one, demonstrating, according to Leyda (1960, 286), 'the advantages of a track-picture relationship that was as free as anything used in the fictional film up to that time'. Certainly the soundtrack is much more obtrusive than that of *Philips-Radio*, expanding the experimentation of the earlier film with much more self-assurance and flamboyance, assaulting the spectator with a

symphony of clanging, of explosions, staccato riveting, and sirens. Very often the soundtrack is instrumental in the narrative as well, for example, in the early part of the film where the flute of the ‘obsolescent’ Asiatic society is contrasted to the industrial sounds of the new revolutionary society encroaching upon its pastoral serenity. The film’s dialogue scenes are intermittent and are generally less impressive than the rest of the film. No doubt the attempt at direct sound recording gives them the stiffness that sets them apart in a film that functions otherwise quite fluently as a non-synchronous sound film. Ivens (1969, 71) is quite terse about the technical problems with the still experimental equipment of the newly developed Soviet Tager system – ‘the bulky primitive sound equipment seemed twice as unwieldy as it would have anywhere else’ – but the problems must have been formidable indeed. The dialogue scenes most often involve the central character Afanaseyev, a shepherd turned Komsomol member and riveter, and usually foreground the special problems of amateur performers delivering over-scripted lines.

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19. *Komsomol* (1933). The challenges of nonprofessional performance: Afanaseyev, Kyrgyz shepherd-turned-Komsomol-member-and-riveter, at the Magnitogorsk workers’ assignment office window. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



For the score, Ivens recruited Hanns Eisler, the famous Berlin composer and Communist co-worker of Brecht. Eisler profited enormously from being set down in the bleak Magnitogorsk setting, finding folkloric melodies and instruments there, as well as concrete sound motifs, all of which greatly enrich the film’s music. The score played as important a structural role as the concrete noise soundtrack. Eisler himself described one such instance:

There is a scene in the film where a young Kyrgyz comes to Magnitogorsk to present himself at the workers’ assignment office and then leaves filled with astonishment, crossing the city towards his lodging. This scene gave the opportunity to mount a big orchestral number that makes the spectator feel the importance of the incident. For the important

feature of Magnitogorsk is not only the blast furnace but also this: men are changing the steppes and building a great project that, in its turn, is changing the builders. A new type of man is thus being born in the work process (Eisler, quoted in Grelier, 1965, 158-159).

The score climaxes in a heroic chorus, 'Ural!' set over a torch-lit procession of Komsomol shock brigades. The sequence culminates in a first view of a blinding river of molten steel from the new blast furnace accompanied by showers of sparks against the night sky. It is a merging of image and sound that sums up the mood of the entire first Five-Year Plan period.

20. *Komsomol's* climax is a heroic chorus, 'Ural!', set over a torch-lit procession of shock-brigades. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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The coming of sound was not the only reason for the feeling of both crisis and adventure in the air upon Ivens's arrival. The proclamation of the first Five-Year Plan in 1928 had profoundly altered Soviet filmmakers' conception of their task and provided them with radically different subject matter. The earlier themes of revolutionary history were replaced by subjects dealing with socialist construction. *Turksib*, *The General Line*, and *Zemlya (Earth)* (Dovzhenko, 1930, 79) are the best known examples of this new direction undertaken in the late twenties, but by 1932 such films were already considered transitional films superseded by a whole generation of newer films. Ivens (1933a, 65) commented on this in his dispatch. He wrote that these three transitional films had been followed by a change in the Soviet film echoed by similar changes in the other arts, in literature, theatre, and painting; the great directors had started treating the building of the socialist state, aiming at domestic needs rather than at international prestige or the Western market. During the first years of the Revolution, Ivens reflected, it could not have been expected of artists to find an appropriate distance from the historical drama then being enacted; however, now that the USSR was in the fifth year of its Five-Year Plan and had

already entered upon its second such plan, filmmakers were able to situate themselves clearly within this work of world-historic importance and to find their inspiration in it, working in their own way alongside the workers and peasants, co-operatively, against almost impossible difficulties in their path. Ivens depicted each scenario as an attempt to summarise this construction and to develop it, each director attempting to find its correct and actual shape. Ivens's wholehearted adoption of the official Five-Year Plan rhetoric reflects the genuine consensus that existed in the Soviet studios during the early thirties about the new subject and the complete bedazzlement of Ivens and the other foreign communists at the experience of this consensus:

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Life was effectively difficult, but we weren't desperate, far from that. The certainty of being engaged in a decisive battle dominated. It made us accept the most extravagant situations. Around us imperfections were everywhere: a certain wastefulness, loss of time, contradictory decisions, administrative harassments of a well-established bureaucracy, the inability of some people, the opportunism of others, all of this added up to hardship. What was unbelievable was that there was a wind that swept away the insufficiencies and this wind spared no one. It was a formidable common denominator that pushed all energies in the same direction. Each man, each woman, at whatever level, was animated by the same will to fight and to win the socialist wager. It was there the movement that carried everything along. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 95-96)

Schoots ([1995] 2000, 78) fiercely declares that Ivens and his expatriate crew were aware of the thousands of political prisoners working on the site under conditions of great hardship, and that during the two-month spring shoot around the project some must have shown up visible onscreen. Ivens, pre-occupied with the enthusiasm of the young Komsomol volunteers that surrounded him, living in freezing and vermin-infested barracks and subsisting on cabbage soup, remembered having a different take:

Dispossessed, deported with their families, [the kulaks] were assigned the hardest work, and everyone distrusted them. By day they dug, by night they sabotaged. [...] The kulaks marked the limit of the socialist order. [...] For the men in Moscow, they were there to 'learn' socialism, in reality they only thought of destroying it. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 102)²⁵

As with *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, 1976, France, 718) 40 years later, foreign sympathisers like Ivens both were shielded from and chose to relativise the bumps in the road to socialism.

The new subject matter had very specific formal ramifications. The impersonal epics of the early years of the Plan – *Turksib*, *Odinnadtsatyy* (*The Eleventh Year*, Vertov, 1928, 52), *The General Line* – were to be superseded by a more direct and more intimate kind of dramaturgy, less ambiguous, less cerebral, and less complex. Since *Komsomol* was among the films that embodied this transition, Ivens felt called upon to interpret it for his Dutch constituency in *Filmliga* (Ivens, 1933a, 65). The new Russian film art had done away with the former ‘poster-style’ film, he explained. In such films, the masses appeared only as masses and lacked both depth and effectiveness. The public was asking more and more for stronger personal contact, according to Ivens’s account, and the new Russian film was responding. Its concern was to speak directly to the difficulties of each person, one by one, to liberate individual personalities, to help them solve problems, to help them develop their own will, and thus in turn to have a strengthening and building effect on the masses as a whole. ‘No more from the top down, but from the bottom up’, he concluded. In short, the new form implied what Ivens would later call ‘personalisation’, the semi-documentary dramatisation of exemplary individual characters.

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Although socialist realism had unofficially been a feature of Russian culture in various forms since 1907, the year of Gorki’s novel *Mother*, and had been articulated as a theory as early as 1911 by Gorki, it was not until the time of Ivens’s second visit that it came to be promulgated as the official aesthetic form of Soviet culture. The evolving political climate was one factor behind this development. Ivens’s dispatch referred to the proclamation of April 1932 by which the various influential proletarian cultural organisations such as the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) had been disbanded. The disappearance of these headstrong groups, which had provoked such a creative and lively, if often strident, debate within Soviet culture throughout the twenties, Ivens saw paradoxically as a movement towards greater freedom in the cultural sphere.²⁶ Late in the same year was the first plenary session of the organisational committee of the Union of Soviet Writers, an event that made the new aesthetic official for literature and consequently for the other arts as well (though it was not until the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 that it was formally proclaimed). Although these developments paralleled in the political arena the entrenchment of Stalin as head of an increasingly rigid Party bureaucracy and the imminent weeding out of the original generation of Bolsheviks from the circles of power (the text of a congratulatory telegram from Stalin is inserted climactically at the end of the first reel of *Komsomol*), the period of paranoia, corruption, and stagnation in the cultural arena did not really set in irreparably until the closing years of the War.²⁷ Although the new doctrine did in effect terminate much of the rich modernist legacy of the twenties and make the middle and late thirties a period of some tribula-

tion even for such artists as Dovzhenko and Pudovkin as well as the modernists Vertov and Eisenstein, it did have certain positive implications as well that expatriates like Ivens were quick to perceive and celebrate. I am speaking of socialist realism's emphasis on the following goals for cultural work: popular accessibility, the immediacy and functionality of an artist's contact with his or her public, the immediate social and economic reality of Soviet society as subject matter, and the focus on the individual as opposed to the anonymous collective. Further features of socialist realism, increasingly the object of objective historical study (Robin, [1986] 1992), were its decidedly non-modernist embrace of a heroics and mythology built on emotional appeal (a strategy based on an understandable assessment of a peasant and proletarian society still struggling against mass illiteracy), and the principle of the accountability of the artists to their lay public with the concomitant dominance by lay people of cultural administration. That all of these principles were later debased and abused under the influence of Zhdanov and his henchmen must not colour our perception of the immensely fertile atmosphere that greeted Ivens in the USSR in 1932 and shaped permanently his subsequent artistic sensibility, in fact making of him the major ambassador, interpreter, and practitioner of the progressive elements of socialist realism in the Western cinema.²⁸

Such was the atmosphere prevailing in the Soviet studios upon the arrival of Ivens, that he automatically accepted the subject of socialist construction for his film and became involved in the stepped-up urgency felt in late 1931 and 1932 by many filmmakers who wanted to finish their work in time for the anticipated completion of the first Five-Year Plan in late 1932. In search of the specific aspect of socialist construction suitable for his film, Ivens first visited the construction site of the new Moscow subway, then locales of the chemical industry, coal-mining, and agriculture, all without finding his subject. In consultation with Pudovkin, Ivens finally hit upon the construction of new blast furnaces at Magnitogorsk in the Urals by brigades of Komsomol as a topic of suitable symbolic importance and visual potential, and enlisted Iosif Sklyut, Pudovkin's young directing student at the State Cinema School in Moscow, as writer. On 23 March the team left for the location having set a 22nd October deadline in keeping with the Five-Year Plan target date. Ivens's reminiscences of the committed and euphoric atmosphere that surrounded the construction and the shoot, despite the enormous hardships they encountered in living in barracks and working as a collective, are infectious. He was very proud of the way his film came to be considered by his crew and by the Magnitogorsk workers as an essential part of the construction project and that his crew eventually received the honourific designation of *udarniki* or 'shock workers'. He was also proud that like all good shock brigades the filmmakers were able to reach their goal well ahead of the deadline (Ivens, 1969, 74).

When Ivens first presented a treatment to Pudovkin for his advice shortly after his arrival at Mezhrabpom, having already narrowed his subject to the contribution of youth to socialist construction, it had an epic scope to it, reminiscent of Vertov or of the Dutch construction films. It was to be a film about ‘youth in every phase of the life of the Soviet Union [...] an epic form for this magnificent story of accomplishment’ (Ivens, 1969, 68). As Stufkens (2008, 109) correctly observes the treatment anticipated the epic grandiosity of later films about revolution from *Das Lied der Ströme* (*Song of the Rivers*, 1954, DDR, 90) to *Yukong*. Pudovkin’s advice was more than just good sense. It was a reflection of the dramaturgical simplicity and mythopoeic directness inherent in the newly established Soviet aesthetic:

You have at least ten films in the script. No one would be able to put all this material into one film. It would be too big for comprehension. You must choose one specific project out of it – one that will symbolize all that young people are doing here and that will simplify the dramatic and pictorial problems of your film. (Ivens, 1969, 68)

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We have seen that in *Philips-Radio* Ivens’s prolonged attention to the glass-blowers suggested that he was on the verge of a new more personal approach to the subject matter. The new orthodoxy of socialist realism confirmed this direction. Ivens, having finally chosen the construction of the giant Komsomolskaya blast furnace at Magnitogorsk as his subject, chose to concentrate this subject in the single true story of an individual worker, thus combining traditional documentary elements with a semi-dramatised personal plot to create a hybrid new form:

The Magnitogorsk film demanded a personal focus. We found this in the true story of the development of one of the young workers on the blast furnace – an eighteen-year-old Kyrgyz, named Afanaseyev. Here was a man who symbolized a people leaping across centuries in their social, economic and cultural development: from feudalism direct into the first stage of socialism, jumping the phase of capitalism; from the middle ages of the Kyrgyz tents to the blast furnaces of modern socialized industry. Afanaseyev, illiterate and an unskilled labourer, had come to Magnitogorsk to dig the foundation for the blast furnace. He was encouraged to attend a riveting class at a technical night school and subsequently worked as a riveter in the next stage of the construction. During his riveting job and before the blast furnace was ready for operation he continued night school, and learned to read and write. He became one of the operators of the blast furnace and took advance examinations in

foundry and steel production. He joined the Komsomol organization in Magnitogorsk.

This almost unbelievable advance from illiterate peasant boy to skilled worker was the ideal focus for us. But it offered many difficulties. In avoiding too much subtlety and too many personal angles we necessarily had to omit many phases of his rapid development and had to condense many of the obstacles and difficulties he encountered. It was the first film I had made where one person went through the entire action from beginning to end – so-called semi-documentary. (Ivens, 1969, 71-72)

It would not be the last. Afanaseyev's only antecedents were perhaps *Nanook* (*Nanook of the North*, Flaherty, 1922, USA, 79), a series of *Nanook* spinoffs, and Eisenstein's Marfa Lapkina in *The General Line*. But the riveter would be a first of a long line of similar characters who would provide dramatic focus for the themes of Ivens's career.

To emphasise that the semi-documentary dramatic structure of 'personalisation', which would continue to evolve throughout documentary history until the 21st century, did have specific roots in the Soviet context explored by Ivens in the early thirties, it is necessary to remember that Dovzhenko also was experimenting with this strategy at the same time, approaching it, like Eisenstein, from the direction of fiction rather than from nonfiction like Ivens and Flaherty. With regard to his *Ivan* (USSR, 83), released in November 1932 one month after *Komsomol*, the Ukrainian wrote:

I am reducing the plot of my film to the minimum. The peasant lad Ivan leaves the collective farm to join the ranks of the proletariat at a construction site. He is strong, cheerful, and dexterous. Lacking skills, Ivan is given the job of driving spikes on a railroad siding. He does well and is invited to go back to school. He refuses. He can get by. But that same day, Ivan discovers in a contest that strength is not enough. Even a simple manual job requires technical know-how. So he goes to school and cracks the books. Thus the question raised in the film is re-educating the rustic, eliminating his anarchistic peasant habits.

With *Ivan* I want to make my small contribution to the great task of depicting in our art a composite type of young man during our industrial revolution. I deliberately selected a simple plot without any heroes. In fact, Ivan is hardly a leading character. Instead, he is led; he has his mistakes pointed out to him; he is transferred to the machine shop and sent to school. He is led by the proletariat, which has achieved political consciousness and a high level of technical knowledge and so can absorb and re-educate the peasantry. [...]

The film is completely lacking in dramatic conflict. I am deliberately discarding the entire arsenal of effects used to insure the audience's attention and enthusiasm. I am making a clear and simple picture that will resemble its clear and simple heroes. Hence the simplicity of the formal composition, which does without fussy long shots, choppy montage, and foreshortening or kaleidoscopic effects. (Dovzhenko, quoted in Carynnyk, 1973, xxii-xxiii)

Ivens, for his part, praised *Ivan* at great length in his second dispatch to *Film-liga* and proudly mentioned in an interview about the same time Dovzhenko's reciprocal praise for *Komsomol* (Ivens, 1933b, 194; Hulsker, 1933, 148). In his article, Ivens recognised the transition in Dovzhenko's career from *Zvenigora* (1928, 109) and *Arsenal* (1929, 90), with their interest in the Civil War period, to *Earth* with its subject of peasant collectivisation as symbolic of a new tendency in Soviet films.²⁹ *Ivan* he locates as an extension of Dovzhenko's development in this direction, the subject being 'the shaping of new progressive and active people in the big socialist centres of industry' and the hero Ivan being representative of the great numbers of unskilled peasant labour attracted to such centres. Ivens notes also the absence of 'dramatic tensions' and the skill with which Dovzhenko shows the effect of Ivan's surroundings on him as part of the socialist production collective. In the same article, Ivens praises in almost identical terms yet another film in release that fall, Fridrikh Ermler's and Sergei Yutkevich's *Vstrechnyy* (*Counterplan* aka *Shame*, 1932, USSR, 115), a story of struggles to meet production quotas in a Leningrad factory. At the end of the article, Ivens sums up the achievement of the two films in terms of 'show[ing] the new Socialist view of life in a positive manner'.

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Predictably, those aspects of *Ivan* and *Counterplan* praised by Ivens are remarkably similar to elements of *Komsomol*. The Komsomol member Afanaseyev serves as a real yet symbolic and exemplary hero, defined precisely in social and behavioural terms yet clearly representative of a certain collective evolution. To use Dovzhenko's expression, he is a 'composite' hero. Obviously his membership in one of the Soviet nationalities is strategic, its signification carefully determined. Wegner (1965) sees the impressive scene near the beginning of *Komsomol* where Afanaseyev is playing his flute amid the waving steppe grasses, undisturbed by the nearby dynamiting of the blast furnace site, as having profound implications, not only in terms of the traditional 'old and new' theme of Soviet culture, but also in terms of the Asian people's relationship with the Soviets, their continued impassivity. He quotes Ivens:

I wanted to show that there are men who are not touched by these great changes, while others are building entirely new lives. The whole film

unfolds along this contrapuntal line. I believe that one has to show enthusiasm within the totality of its meaning, and that it is a decisive force. But one must also show that not everyone has been affected by it, because that makes the optimism of the greater part of humanity more heroic, and it is precisely with this building up of contrast that the artist has to work. (Wegner, 1965, 72)

156 | The most successful scenes in these terms are those at the beginning where the herdsman re-enacts his initial introduction to modern technology. The scenes where he plays his flute and where he wanders through the booming construction site marveling at all the hardware and traffic have considerable dramatic power. Once the rather rapid transition to skilled worker is made this aspect of the film becomes less imposing, perhaps because of the disappearance of the element of contrast. Ivens (1969, 72) recognised the relatively weaker impact of the latter part of the Afanaseyev story and attributed it to his own decision to avoid intricate psychological shading with his untrained actors. It seems also likely that Ivens, who had after all made only one dramatic film previously, still needed more experience in integrating a nonfictional dramatic story with the more familiar expository approach, especially with the still comparatively inflexible pre-direct technology.

Whatever the roughness of the element of 'personalisation' in the film, its unprecedented presence was a landmark both in Ivens's career and in documentary film history as a whole. Ivens was conscious of the historical moment of what he had done, as well as its controversial implications:

A human contact with the audience can't be reached anymore by way of the documentary film in its old and partly still present form. The latest documentaries – including *Komsomol* – I too have tried to do this – are a combination and inter-weaving of dramatic scenes and exposition. (Ivens, 1933a, 65)

In my Russian film, I have tried to give the human element its proper place by introducing acted, dramatic scenes. By doing this I have entered a field which many will regard as dangerous, the borderline between documentary and acted film. It leaves me indifferent if one calls it an artistically unsound method.

I am firmly convinced that now is the time to increase the value of the documentary film by using human episodes. More of the spectator's interest would be kept by employing scenes drawn from the real problems of mankind.

To me the film is that which grows up between the screen and the onlooker. [...]

You know that it is in Russia that I have had the chance to bring my ideas into practice. (Hulsker 1933, 148)

When Ivens speaks of criticism of *Komsomol*, he is not speaking hypothetically: upon the film's release in Moscow for the Five-Year Plan celebrations, there was apparently a very vocal opposition to the semi-documentary methods that Ivens had introduced into the film. This applied of course to the Afanaseyev story, but also to Ivens's strategy of reconstructing non-dramatic scenes wherever the original had not been filmed or could not for some reason. The most salient example of the latter was the triumphant night procession sequence at the climax of the film that Ivens unapologetically admitted to having restaged. The terms of a still current debate within the documentary field are already fully elaborated in Ivens's recollection of the controversy:

The critical discussion also questioned the correctness of including re-enactments of scenes in a straight documentary film. People from the camera-eye school of Vertov defended the orthodox stand that a documentary may only film events that are actually happening before the witnessing camera. The opposite stand was that it was perfectly valid to stage or re-enact events that have happened before in order to deepen the content of the film and even to assemble otherwise unrelated events or invent events certain to happen in the future.

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I could not agree with the Vertov approach to this big question of documentary truth. (Ivens 1969, 75)

Ivens goes on to explain that it was necessary to stage the 'storm night' because of the uncinematic arrangement of the trucks and the lighting during the actual volunteer night shifts:

If we had been content to shoot only what we happened to find, such an episode of great integrity and enthusiasm would have appeared far from intense and dramatic on the screen. So I felt free to stage a 'storm night' for filming purposes in order to emphasize its real meaning and to communicate the healthy enthusiasm and solidarity of these young people. This enabled us to take all the close-ups and medium shots of the faces we wanted, to direct the movement of the trucks and of the torches. So we were able to get just what we wanted instead of a couple of trucks haphazardly filmed on the road.

The distinction between letting the event dominate the filming and the attempt to film an event with maximum expressiveness is the difference between orthodox documentary (which today is represented by the

newsreel) and the newer, broader form of documentary film. (Ivens 1969, 76)

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If such an argument did shock and anger Vertov, who must certainly have seen his realm invaded by the ‘perfumed veil of kisses [...] and prestidigitation’³⁰ of the dramatic film (Vertov 1972, 94), he himself in his own film the following year, *Three Songs About Lenin*, resorted to variations of the same strategies used in *Komsomol*, certain semi-documentary tendencies toward *mise-en-scène* in his treatment of his literacy-hungry Uzbek women, and the direct-sound monologues of his decorated workers. Vertov’s defence of *Three Songs* would be based on many of the same general tenets of socialist realism evoked or practiced by Ivens: simplicity of form, directness of emotional appeal, the importance of human behaviour and emotions as subject matter, the use of popular and folkloric materials, and the reworking of modernist interests within a more accessible format (Vertov 1972, 164-184). Nonetheless the debate around *Komsomol* prevented the filming of a few of the scripted scenes (Stufkens, 2008, 111-112).

In the light of Ivens’s final warning in the interview cited above that it is possible to go too far in the area of dramatisation in the documentary, his emphasis on the importance of such vague and subjective criteria as ‘authenticity’ and the director’s ‘integrity’ in the evaluation of a given film’s ethical or aesthetic validity would be somewhat disconcerting were it not so disarming in its utter sincerity (Hulsker, 1933). His ultimate criterion in this debate about a film’s ethical-aesthetic integrity was the nature of the experiential relationship among artist, subject, and spectator – ‘the film is that which grows up between the screen and the onlooker’ (Hulsker, 1933, 148) – rather than any subjective and unverifiable judgment about phenomenological veracity in the art of filmmaking. Ivens could not have known that not all subsequent film propagandists employing his methods would justify his faith in their integrity.

The general narrative elements of *Komsomol* are as carefully determined in their structure and signification as the persona of Afanaseyev.³¹ Each scene and image is open to quite accessible semi-allegorical or even hieroglyphic readings. For example, in the labour allocation scene, Afanaseyev’s arrival is carefully matched by the arrival of a female Komsomol member volunteering from Moscow, and a skilled smelter worker straight from Dneprostroy, the prestige construction project of the twenties. Male/female, skilled/unskilled, party/non-party, Russian/non-Russian, Moscow/provinces – the three characters together could form a symmetrical pattern on a monumental frieze, so carefully are the details chosen. Presumably what Ivens means with regard to the poster-style dramatics having been left behind is that the poster types are

retained but are humanised and fleshed out in a way that remains credible without detracting from the carefully coded instructional function.

The overall shape of the film is equally determined by this signifying principle. Ivens's phrase 'in the positive manner' concisely conveys the socialist realist insistence on showing the workings of socialism in terms of its long-range ideal dynamic. What is in question is not the naturalism that might be erroneously inferred from the emphasis on the subject of everyday work, but in fact an intense romanticism; and Soviet proponents of the new aesthetic practice, like Anatoly Lunacharsky ([1933] 1971, 57), did not hesitate to use the word 'romanticism'. According to such proponents, individual works must contain a glimpse of utopia. They must contain the shape of the revolutionary transformation of society, a vision of the historical totality of the process of which the immediate subject is only a single momentary aspect. In other words, as Brecht's ([1953-1954] 1972, 227, my emphasis) text on socialist realism phrased it, 'Realist artists emphasize the moment of *becoming* and passing; in all their work, they think historically'.

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This implies not only *Komsomol*'s 'up' ending, with the torchlight procession of singing shock brigadiers and the sun rising upon the finished blast furnace. The contour of the entire social process must also be revealed, alongside the growth of the individual hero. The absence of dramatic conflict mentioned by Dovzhenko is a key aspect of this romantic rhythm. Although *Earth* and *Counterplan* had both used the device of saboteurs to permit some kind of traditional dramatic conflict, the too exaggerated use of sabotage as a formulaic device could compromise the 'positive manner' of the realism. What emerges accordingly, with *Ivan* and *Komsomol*, is a form resembling a kind of linear crescendo, in which the race to fill quotas or meet a deadline provides the dramatic momentum; conflict is present only in the passive form of the elements waiting to be molded into the shape of the future.³²

The straightforwardly didactic stance of socialist realism was a big step beyond the suggestive ambiguity of *Philips-Radio*. Ivens's partial assumption in *Komsomol* of an openly direct address is no doubt as profound a formal change brought about by his Soviet immersion as the new 'personalisation': a change in his relation as an artist to his public. With *Komsomol*, the evolution from the avant-garde lyricist to the professional publicist to the militant propagandist was considerably advanced, the evolution from first-person meditation or third-person narrative to the rhetorical posture of direct exhortation. Wegner (1965, 46) believes all previous developments in Ivens's career lead up to this decisive breakthrough into the militant documentary; for him, this is the fundamental pattern for the rest of Ivens's work, for that long series of occasions on which Ivens, professional militant filmmaker, would immerse himself temporarily in a given society, ally himself with a certain progressive

faction within the society, and address an agitational film to its constituency. Ivens was careful to emphasise that the intended public for *Komsomol* was not his traditional Western European avant-garde audience, but the Soviet public. As he expressed it in an interview, his goal was ‘to excite the enthusiasm of the young people who work for the second Five-Year Plan’ (Hulsker, 1933, 148).

The way in which the film crew was integrated with the Komsomolskaya project as a whole was a model for the new artist-public relationship that this film inaugurates in Ivens’s career. The bourgeois isolation of the artist from society was replaced by an active collaborative process – workers and artists saw each other as part of the whole collective effort. The daily meetings of the film crew to discuss the next day’s shooting would invariably involve an input from the community of workers on the site. The filmmakers were doing more than observing the project; they were entering into it: ‘It was the first time in my life that I felt integrated with my work, a part of my environment. Our film crew was not an isolated strange group temporarily attached to a big industrial project, but part of the project’ (Ivens, 1969, 72).

A further dimension of this new relationship, emphasised by Wegner (1965, 44-45), is Ivens’s concurrent development of his skill in working in large heterogeneous collectives, each member with a specific function. It must have demanded no little diplomatic prowess for this group of foreigners, plus the local workers, the cameraman Alexander Shelenkov, the writer Iosif Sklyut, not to mention a Komsomol coordinator named Andreyev, to arrive at such a coherent film in such a short time, a prowess indispensable for an artist whose method must embody collective ideals as well as promulgate them. Wegner’s (1965, 44-45) further insight was that the primitive frontier conditions under which the crew was working were good preparation for the future. The practice of regularly consulting rushes during a shoot would be a luxury not often possible during Ivens’s career.

One formal ramification of the new artist-public relationship is direct filmic address. In *Komsomol*, Ivens’s use of direct address – that is, presentational visual or verbal structures appealing to and acknowledging the position of the spectator in the filmic discourse – are confined, strictly speaking, to certain passages only: most notably a brief introductory compilation sequence showing strikes and demonstrations in the West, mostly Germany, culminating in a giant parade in Red Square. This passage, narrated by an emphatic voice-over, serves as a visualisation of the film’s dedication: ‘to the youth of the capitalist world’ (it is also the first extant sample of Ivens’s talent as an editor of archival material). Magnitogorsk is introduced in the following scenes with the help of animated maps, a pixilated sequence showing a model locomotive factory, and the climactic message from Stalin, all serving to situate the project in relation to the Five Year Plan as a whole and enlisting the spectator’s involve-

ment in this cause. The outcome is not only what Stuffkens (2008, 122) calls the film's 'hybridity' ('the film tries to be many things at once'), but also a direct unmediated appeal to the spectator, the first of Ivens's career. Most emphatic in the voice-over, direct address appears elsewhere in *Komsomol* intra-diegetically – that is, within the narrative framework – as in a scene where an orator exhorts a crowd of workers, or in another when a woman worker, who has just learned to read, reads aloud for the spectator the inscriptions on the sides of railway cars. The intrusion of the final chorus functions in a similar way, serving as an on-screen collective voice delivering a final musical summons to the audience. Ivens's choice of direct address is of course inextricable from the film's appropriation of radiophonic iconography and structures. The full implications of this radicalisation of filmic form and artist-public relationship will be discussed below in the analysis of those films made upon Ivens's return to Europe where this change is most systematically pursued: *Nieuwe Gronden* and *Borinage*.

The rest of *Komsomol*, set within this shell of direct address, relies primarily on the modes of representational or indirect address, combining an expository narration of the construction project with the intermittent dramatic core, the Afanaseyev story. The expository elements contain most of the features of Ivens's style and iconography of *Wij Bouwen*. A notable exception is that the usual flavour of unmediated spontaneity is less visible than usual. This is probably due to the inevitable restrictions of a foreign setting, the apparent omnipresence of the writer and the Komsomol representative (no doubt a two-edged sword), the greater reliance on narrative *mise-en-scène* inherent in the spirit of socialist realism, and the tight economy of raw materials: 'There was not much raw film available and therefore we had to conserve the limited amount we had. We had to plan for the utmost efficiency in shooting' (Ivens, 1969, 71).

Otherwise the full array of Ivens's dynamic perspectives are there; he ranges effortlessly between stunning vistas of the landscape being reshaped and intimate close-up details of a worker and his or her tools, all the while maintaining a full sense of the connection between the two perspectives. There is little room for the kind of unconnected abstract impressions used in *Philips-Radio*. The standard approach to a group of workers in one area of the site is to present a high-angle long-shot pan of the group and thence to proceed by means of extended low-angle medium-shots of individual workers, directing their efforts to the direction of the camera as often as not. This angle, tending to backdrop a figure with a dramatic sky or half-completed building, has the effect of investing the figure with an aura of strength and heroism. Afanaseyev is seen a number of times in this way as he progresses from unskilled earth-mover to trained literate riveter. Groups also tend to be romanticised

by the *mise-en-scène*, silhouetted on the horizon as in *Wij Bouwen* and *Zuiderzee*, or moving with uncanny unison in the performance of some collective job. Several times we see a human chain of women passing bricks one by one along a scaffolding or into the interior of the half-finished furnace, alternating close views of the individual members with an overview of the entire mechanism, preserving in the editing the rhythm of the steady movement of the bricks from hand to hand, concluding naturally with a view of the bricks arriving at their destination and being laid. This perfect image of the synchronisation of collective effort would be chosen by Ivens regularly throughout the rest of his career.

As in *Zuiderzee*, Ivens is fascinated with cranes, bulldozers, and other earth-moving equipment and the dramatic force that this machinery can have on the screen. This tendency is not the only vestige of the modernist Ivens. There are also from time to time passages reminiscent of the earlier penchant for picking out movements and shapes which will transform the screen into abstract dynamic patterns, huge masses moving across the frame. One shot for example accents patterns of shadow and light moving across the cab of a crane. In addition, there are also the odd multilayered crowd compositions that hark back to an earlier era with their *Potemkin* feeling. But in general the modernist traces are of secondary importance.

In *Zuiderzee*, the elements of water, earth, and sky provided the iconographic backdrop for Ivens's heroic vision of labour; here he adds the possibilities of the flames of the ovens, or clouds of smoke and steam, to frame the groups he chooses to watch, adding the fourth and final element to his cosmology. The riveters also seem to have a privileged meaning in the film's iconography. The job of a riveter straddling a scaffolding high against the sky is the essential heroic act of the film, not the least because of the special implications of riveting for a documentary experimenting with the possibilities of sound. It is Afanaseyev's evolution that Ivens portrays as being symbolic of the revolution surrounding him. A large number of small narrative units centre on riveting and the various phases involved in the job, each one treated sequentially. The off-the-job life of the workers is also of vital importance to the subject. Punctuating the film are informal scenes of workers lunching, and in this film of course the scenes in which workers are learning to read and write have a special resonance: the quality of life is high despite the effort, and people are changing as well as landscapes.

One very engaging sequence was shot in the Siberian mining centre of Kuzbass, 2300 kilometres away from Magnitogorsk, during a two week visit by the crew at the end of the shoot, the point being to link the heroic riveters of the construction site with the sweating underground coal miners in an enormous chain of production, each link being as vital as the next. When the river

of molten steel finally flows from the finished furnace at the climax of the film there is thus a real sense of the network of human and material resources that has produced it, and of the society that will benefit from it.

The Soviets were delighted with their guest's homage to their revolution. *Komsomol* was chosen as one of ten films to be shown during the celebrations marking the early completion of the first Five-Year Plan. Upon its premiere in January 1933 in Moscow, it reportedly received wide circulation throughout the USSR, and some limited exposure among Ivens's still overlapping cine-club and political constituencies in Western Europe – not without predictable attempts to censor (Stufkens, 2008, 123). Dutch critics were interested in, and predisposed to like, this new venture for their native son, but their verdicts were decidedly and symptomatically mixed (Stufkens, 2008, 124-125). *Komsomol's* honeymoon with Soviet exhibitors was shortlived: Schoots ([1995] 2000, 81) cites Soviet film historian Sergei Drobachenko to the effect that, unbeknownst to Ivens, the inclusion in the film of lyrics by constructivist playwright Sergei Tretyakov, a victim of the Moscow purges in 1937, led to the shelving of *Komsomol* at that time.

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NIEUWE GRONDEN

Ivens's penultimate project before the start of his long exile from the Netherlands in 1934 was a new sound version of the Dutch national epic, *Zuiderzee*, which had been definitively finished only the year before. The new universal acceptance of sound technology was obviously one important reason for the new version: *Regen* had been sonorised by Van Dongen in 1932 while Ivens was in the USSR, and *Borinage* would get its sound version – in Russian as we have seen – the following year in Moscow. It was not only technology however that made *Zuiderzee* seem outdated in its silent version.

The new version, to be called *Nieuwe Gronden* (*The New Earth*) was completed more or less concurrently with the final work on *Borinage*. It was thus only natural that the abrupt disjuncture in Ivens's filmic practice symbolised by *Borinage* should dictate that the older silent version of *Zuiderzee* should be reworked according to the new mode of discourse. *Zuiderzee* contained basic contradictions that were no longer tolerable. It was no longer possible for Ivens to affirm this vision of an epic universe devoid of class conflict in which the rational, goal-directed effort of workers was rewarded with victory. He could no longer affirm the strength and dignity of working people while repressing any question of the societal context that frustrated and exploited that strength. The epic combat is reformulated: the struggle against nature of *Zuiderzee* becomes the class struggle of *Nieuwe Gronden*. Films using an indi-

rect, narrative form to recount for passive audiences the victories of labour would have to be replaced by films that assaulted and accused these audiences, which addressed them directly, exploding the myths of worker-society unity with the violent clash of images with images and with words.

Once again the parallel between the work of Ivens up to and including *Zuiderzee* and that of Grierson in England, comes into play. The two were the major documentarists in Western Europe who, reacting against the exotic and apolitical tradition of Flaherty and inspired by the work of the Soviets, particularly Vertov and Turin, were attempting to incorporate the ideology and the images of the working class into a medium that had ignored and disenfranchised that class. Both the British and the Dutch traditions were based on the same fundamental contradictions, the incompatibility of a worker-centred ideology with the interests of the state and corporate film sponsors. Ivens had visited England in May 1930 during his work on *Philips-Radio* during which time he had visited the Kodak factories at Elfort on CAPI business and had brief contact with the fledgling British documentary movement. Grierson's work, however, is totally absent as an explicit term of reference in Ivens's work, despite the remarkable affinity of *Drifters* (John Grierson, 1929, 49) and *Granton Trawler* (Edgar Anstey, 1934, 11) with *Zuiderzee*. If any influence was exerted it was probably in the other direction (Ivens, 1969, 93). At the time of *Nieuwe Gronden*, the two movements diverged: Grierson would continue to contain the contradictions within his work for the rest of his career, insisting all the while on making a virtue of the necessity of working within the system. Ivens would move back and forth in the next half-century, depending on the possibilities within the various political climates in which he would find himself, more often outside than in (though his work for the authorities in the US during the war and in the Soviet-bloc countries during the Cold War parallels Grierson's reliance on state sponsorship, and at one point during the war Ivens would accept a commission from Grierson's state film agency in Canada). But there would never be any question that such temporary re-absorptions were a matter of survival and livelihood. The two divergent trajectories can be said to epitomise those of the social-democratic or liberal tradition and the Communist Party respectively over the next generations.

Nieuwe Gronden previewed all of the major formal innovations that *Borinage* would pioneer, with the major exception of that film's socialist realism-inspired dramatisation – *Nieuwe Gronden* incorporated new dramatised footage but not individualised characterisation – and for the same reason its experiments in subject-generated activism. Otherwise, *Borinage's* skilful use of its intertitles as a kind of interpretative and expository direct address grew out of *Nieuwe Gronden's* spoken and musical commentary, but *Nieuwe Gronden's* status a masterful milestone in the evolution of the compilation

mode would only be nodded to by *Borinage*. Moreover, the mood of defiance in the soundtrack of *Nieuwe Gronden*'s coda and the view of hunger and unemployment marches on the image-track of this final movement endow the entire film with the kind of 'ideal dynamic' that Ivens refined in *Borinage*, the heroic contour implying the inevitability of resistance and final victory.

In any case, it is easy to see how *Nieuwe Gronden*'s energetic assumption of these new formal possibilities explored by *Borinage* resulted in it quickly and totally eclipsing *Zuiderzee* in the public eye. There is also the consideration that the montage coda of the film, with its emphasis on the world context, provided easier access to international audiences than the limited Dutch setting of the earlier version.

As I have suggested, it was not Ivens's changing aesthetic goals alone that dictated the reworking of *Zuiderzee*, but also the rapidly changing political and economic situation as well. Ivens's new formal discoveries of the *Borinage-Nieuwe Gronden* moment were hastened and confirmed by the pragmatic requirements of the immediate political conjuncture. The last image of *Zuiderzee* had been the sight of foam receding from the newly drained land. With that stirring symbol, it seemed obvious that a sequel would be necessary to show the eventual harvests on the newly created fields, consistent with the step-by-step logic of the film as a whole, as indeed Van Dongen's 1933 'record-film' for the Dutch government set about to do. However, the actual sequel to the closing of the dike had confounded expectations. The army of 10,000 workers who had worked for ten years on the project had been thrown into unemployment after the completion of the drainage. The forecasts for the new harvests had been fulfilled but as just one more unsalable surplus glutting the paralysed markets of the world. The children that Ivens had depicted watching their fathers at work would not have access to the fruits of this labour after all. The new version of *Zuiderzee* would have to express the unexpectedly tragic ending of a national epic.

The first task undertaken by Ivens and Van Dongen was to reduce the original running time of *Zuiderzee* to approximately one-third (600 metres, two reels or about 22 minutes) before the updated new material could be added. This meant that the original deliberate pace and step-by-step exposition of the original film had to be sacrificed. The slow accumulation of details in sequential order was sharply compressed and whole stages of the process were omitted, as well as certain details from other phases. The more impressive sequences of *Zuiderzee* such as the conduit and rock-moving sequences and the sequence in which the long willow coils are carried into the sea were retained and situated prominently, but in order to function as symbolic suggestions of the various stages of the project rather than to provide precise information. When it came to the climactic closing sequence of which the filmmakers had been

so proud, this was also greatly abridged, though the triple dynamic of land, water, and human perspectives was retained. Van Dongen remembers some of the members of the group being sorry to see their masterpiece shortened for popular consumption, but the editing process was not entirely destructive (Van Dongen Durant, interview with author, February 1976). The shorter version is somewhat more forceful cinematically than the original in that there is a sharper impression of the movement of groups of workers than of the mechanical details of each stage of the work. Furthermore, at each stage of the project the editors were forced to choose the most powerful, typical, and expressive shots.

This version of *Zuiderzee* then became the departure point for the new film. An additional reel bringing the running time up to about 30 minutes covered first of all the settlement, preparation, and cultivation of the newly drained land, highlighted by long graceful aerial sweeps over the new fields or along the new canals. One sequence constructed in the *Zuiderzee* style follows a group of workers installing power lines and poles on the new land (including a view of one worker lunching on top of a pole) and another treats the excavation of the new canals with blasting and still more cranes. There follows as well a short sequence scanning the new buildings on the drained land, giving Ivens yet another chance to include footage of bricklayers and roofers at work on new barns, footage that harks back to the very beginning of the whole project in construction films of five years earlier. A final sequence dealing with ploughing, harrowing and sowing the new land is then introduced by more aerial scans and characterised by the usual Ivens alternation between close-ups and epic vistas of horizons being transformed.

It is when the camera turns to the harvesting, by means of an elegant low-level track through the ripened crops on a mechanical harvester and then a close-up of grain pouring into a trough, that Ivens springs the famous about-face on the public. He suddenly confronts them with the utter futility and waste of the preceding decade of labour and hope. As the grain pours across the screen, the sounds of a stock market floor are gradually superimposed onto the soundtrack, ushering in the montage coda aurally first of all. Then follows Ivens's denunciation of the system that has precipitated the international economic crisis and his revelation of the horrors of starvation and waste that culminated in the dumping of the grain that 10,000 men had laboured ten years to produce. Ivens details the structural transformation of the film that occurs at this point:

The continuity of *The New Earth* follows that used in telling a joke.

Three-quarters of the story is told in an elaborate build-up to what seems to be a foregone conclusion and then in the last quarter you pull a switch

not hinted at in the build-up. We show a tremendous engineering work that conquered the sea, that is going to bring happiness and prosperity to everyone concerned and then we say, 'But...'. (Ivens, 1969, 95)

21. *Nieuwe Gronden* (1933). Pastoral harvest imagery precedes Ivens's 'famous about-face' enacting the catastrophe of the Depression and capitalism. Frame enlargement, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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Up until this point, the universe of the film had been completely purposeful and rational: perseverance and strength are rewarded with new land and a plentiful harvest. This discourse of rationality and coherence is then punctured and the discourse of denunciation, irony, and declamation is introduced. This point, the moment of the 'didactic switch', can be seen symbolically as the actual point of the radical disjuncture in Ivens's career, the point where the indirect narrative mode is replaced by a discourse employing direct address and embodying structurally in itself a challenge to the system that had made the former discourse impossible.

The intensifying stock market noise introduced during the harvest visuals ushers in a collage of expository newspaper headlines detailing hunger marches and the international wheat crisis. There then follows a return to the idyllic view of a field of waving grain now transformed by the intervening montage into an image of devastating irony. This is replaced by long silhouetted files of unemployed workers, intercut with flashbacks to similar images from happier days of the same files then carrying the coils for the dike construction. The next movement of the coda includes American newsreel footage of hunger marchers in New York, demonstrators in London, and strikers again in the US. The harvest motif then returns, this time intercut with close-ups of hungry children from *Borinage* and with fields of cranes, once engaged in frenetic choreography but now idle. The newsreel images of crops being poured and burned continue, with the images of the children repeated.³³ The montage becomes more and more chaotic as continuing repetition of the children and harvest motifs are alternated with newsreel images of the Ku Klux Klan

and the American Farm Board President's famous pig eating surplus wheat, jobless crowds, and clouds of smoke. The final images are low-angle close-ups of workers carrying off sacks of grain to be dumped into the sea, the central image of the song accompanying this last movement of the montage:

22. *Nieuwe Gronden* (1933). Dramatised shots accompany the bitter Brechtian song lyric, 'Throw half the harvest into the water, throw it in my boy. What a winter it will be'. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



*I would like to be in a country where
The wind from the sea ripples over the wheat.
In this land of fertile promise they ask for
Workmen to throw the wheat into the sea.
There is too much grain in the fields –
Bread seems to be a gift of the devil.
One bagful brings too small a price.
Throw half the harvest into the water,
Throw it in my boy.
What a winter it will be. (Ivens, 1969, 98)*

This Brechtian ballad by Julian Ahrendt, sung in a way that expresses its ironic bitterness of tone to the fullest, provides a stunning climax to the film, matching as it does the alternation of idyllic images and ironic reversals. The final images of the grain and the sea give an overall imagistic coherence to the film, underlining the final irony that the sea, the adversary of the workers during the first two reels of the film, should eventually claim the produce of the lands wrested from it: the image of men throwing grain into the sea echoes visually the image of men enthusiastically throwing earth and stones into the sea.

The use of the song as a summation of the film (in much the same way that Eisler's 'Ural' chorus had worked for *Komsomol*) is not the only structural use of sound in the film, but rather the climax to a film which in its entirety can

be seen as the first fully realised structural combination of sound, music, and voice-over narration of Ivens's career. Although this is Ivens's third sound film (not counting the sonorised *Regen*) it is still quite early in the development of the sound documentary: the GPO film unit was not to acquire a sound studio until early in 1934, the year of both *Pett and Pott: A Fairy Story of the Suburbs* (Cavalcanti, 29) and *Song of Ceylon*, the two British pioneers in the field, and Cavalcanti's breakthrough experiments with documentary sound are still two years off. Compared to the relatively modest attempts at background sound effects and commentary in *Philips-Radio* and the more developed use of sound in *Komsomol*, the *Nieuwe Gronden* soundtrack is considerably more sophisticated and complex. Very often, for example, an ironic relationship between image and sound is explored in the film, with the same effect that the ironic image juxtapositions had in *Borinage*: the shouts of the hunger marchers are superimposed over the idyllic harvest images early on in the coda, and then when the image track arrives at the hunger marchers their sounds have been replaced by the voices of the agri-bosses crying, 'We are smothering in wheat!' Over the faces of the *Borinage* children are heard the voices of stock market speculators announcing the price of wheat. The commentator's voice often plays a similar role: over early images of the wheat harvests, the narrator 'sticks a pin', as Ivens puts it, in the presumed happy ending of the film – 'but the grain is not for food, but for speculation. There is too much grain and not enough work'. A variation of this relationship follows when the commentator quotes the American Farm Board president: 'One active useful pig eats as much wheat as a family of five. Give the wheat to the pigs. Wheat is too cheap'. Then the image obeys the narrator's command and the pig is shown. Throughout the earlier part of the film, the shortened version of *Zuiderzee*, the sound effects are somewhat less aggressive, but no less masterful. Now grafted onto the familiar images of the struggle between man and the sea are the surging sounds of the motors of the cranes, the rush of water fighting against the encroaching dike, and the sound of the plane during the aerial shots. The voice-over has much the same discreet role until during the harvesting sequences the narrator starts firing off the statistics of the rich harvest in a tone of mounting excitement, this setting up the bubble that is about to burst. Ivens himself narrated the Dutch version.

A more enduring impression in an era when overlaid documentary soundtracks are more of a cliché than a novelty is created by the score. For the score, Ivens solicited once more the help of Hanns Eisler who had done the music for *Komsomol* and who had been in exile since Hitler's coming to power the previous year. For *Nieuwe Gronden*, Eisler reworked many of the motifs from his famous score for *Kuhle Wampe*, done just before *Komsomol*, in many cases synchronising them very precisely to the continuity of the new film and

in some cases influencing the shape of the editing with his music. The goal of using music in the same dynamic way as the sound effects and commentary, asynchronously and structurally, was clearly an important one for the partnership. Ivens had explained to an interviewer in 1933 that the music for *Nieuwe Gronden* would constitute a dynamic factor in the completed film in contrast to *Regen* where the music was solely an accompaniment and where the score formed a self-contained composition (Hulsker, 1933, 148).

The director and composer were quite proud of their accomplishment in providing an almost independent dramatic function to the music. Each of the three or four themes does have a very distinct emotional timbre to it, although the overall impression from Eisler's very particular combination of atonality, tension, and unresolved melodiousness is tragic and plaintive. Even the most exuberant passages of the *Zuiderzee* portion of the film seem to forecast the tragedy of the last reel. In this regard, Eisler saw his score as having a specific ideological function in support of the theme of the film. He later commented in connection with the music for the conduit sequence:

The pressure and difficulty of their working conditions is transformed into solidarity by the music. To achieve this, the music could not confine itself to reproducing the 'mood' of the scene, a mood of gloom and great effort. This very mood had to be transcended. The score tried to make the incident meaningful by an austere and solemn theme. Although the rhythmical beat of the music synchronized with the work rhythm of the incident on the screen, the melody was rhythmically quite free and, strongly contrasting with the accompaniment, pointed beyond the constraint represented on the screen. (Eisler, 1947, 47)

Similarly, at another point in the climactic closing sequence, the score's rhythm is patently faster than that of the cutting, creating a feeling of urgency and tension. At other times however, the synchronisation between score and image is somewhat more literal than Eisler suggests in his discussion. At one point, for example, a series of arpeggios are in exact synchrony with first a series of small stones being dropped and then with big ones, and, at another, a 'hurry-up' gesture (in the rock-moving sequence) is matched by an appropriate melodic twirl. The reason for this possible discrepancy between theory and practice is not clear: Van Dongen's sound editing may have been less dominated by theoretical formulations than Eisler's post-facto conversations.

In sum, however, Van Dongen's and Eisler's achievement, with its combination of suggestive counterpoint and literal synchronisation, is commanding. There are also times of carefully calculated discretion when the soundtrack yields to a stretch of silence or of pure sound effects which gain

thereby in their impact. In general, there are few better examples of the creative collaboration of filmmaker and musician being brought to the full support of a film's conception in this way.

The premiere of *Nieuwe Gronden* took place in Paris's Cinéma des Champs-Élysées in December 1933 and replayed the equally prestigious Salle Pleyel in early 1934 before a group called 'Architecture aujourd'hui'. Ivens's by now habitual battles with censors all over Europe inevitably ensued with the result in France at least that the film was distributed without the montage coda (not without Ivens [1969, 99] being enormously flattered after being told by a 'sweet little old lady' censor that his film showed '*trop de réalité*').

The reaction to the film was generally warm wherever it was shown in its entirety. Despite the somewhat stereotyped vilification of American society in the montage sequence, Ku Klux Klan and all, the American reaction to the film would be the most enthusiastic, primarily among the politically sympathetic film communities on the East and West Coasts. Otis Ferguson (1936) in *The New Republic* would give the film a glowing rave, calling it 'more exciting than rapid fiction and twice as beautiful'.³⁴ The film would be voted the second best foreign film seen in New York in 1936 by the National Board of Review. A 1938 review in *The Magazine of Art* would sum up the enthusiasm with which Ivens's mastery of his new mode of filmic discourse was greeted in American left-liberal and artistic circles:

[The film] is cast in a form as direct and terse as a social reform tract. Like the tract, *New Earth* also is an expression of indignation, but without the impersonal, generalized character of this form. The model for such a film form did not exist for Ivens to turn to. It was a new type of documentary, broader than any filmmaker outside the Soviet Union had conceived it – namely the theme documentary. Although Western European documentarists had graduated from the travelogue to impressionist reportage, beyond that they had not traveled far, not further than the abrupt economic conclusion of Grierson's *Drifters*. The subject of *New Earth*, the shattering contradictions between the worlds of production and consumption, involved Ivens in the discovery of new film grammar and vocabulary. (Leyda, Meyers, and Stebbins, 1938, 41)

The generosity of the American response was probably responsible for Ivens's and Van Dongen's gaining a foothold in the American film community in 1936 and their decision to settle there for almost a decade. But first we must come back to the Low Countries and consider the last film Ivens produced out of Europe for more than a decade.

The highly productive period between Ivens's first visit to the USSR and his final stay there in 1934-1936 involved such radical steps forward between one phase of the rapidly maturing artist's career and the next that it is difficult to isolate a single one of those steps as an especially important one. Each film from the period is so distinct and engaged in such a unique problematic that it is difficult to point to a single one as overshadowing the others in their significance. The masterpieces from this period – *Zuiderzee*, *Nieuwe Gronden*, and *Borinage* – as well as the rich but uneven lesser works, such as *Philips-Radio* and *Komsomol*, crowd upon each other so closely that it is not easy to isolate a single breakthrough.

Nevertheless, Wegner (1965, 41) identifies *Komsomol* as the key film, that is particularly formative in the transition of the poet to the militant. Wegner is right insofar as Ivens's immersion in the economic struggles of the Five Year Plans and the ideological struggles of the socialist realism period did give him an enthusiasm and an aesthetic model that would shape most of his succeeding films in some way or other – the personal, emotional appeal, the narrative form, the didactic orientation, and the frequently direct mode of address of socialist realism. Even more important, however, is the first film to test that enthusiasm and that model in the considerably more perilous pre-revolutionary context that was to be the backdrop for most of Ivens's career. This film is *Borinage*, seen by Ivens (1969, 87) and by his Dutch biographer-critic Han Meyer (1970, 33) as the real point of disjuncture of his career. Where *Komsomol* today seems in many ways firmly rooted in (if not limited by) its historical context, a kind of historical artifact, *Borinage*, along with the two earlier Dutch films I have called masterpieces, *Zuiderzee* and *Nieuwe Gronden*, are artworks of continuing eloquence and resilience.³⁶ *Borinage* testifies to a creative struggle of enduring significance and to the still exemplary intervention of an artist into a specific social problematic. Moreover, it continues to be a spare, unmannered artistic utterance of profound emotional and political authenticity. Ivens (1969, 79) gave his reminiscences of the shooting of *Borinage* special emphasis in *Camera* a decade or so later, providing a record of the major risks, innovations, and discoveries provoked by this film that has proven to be a reliable one. Earlier notes for the memoirs stated the film's place as a milestone in the career even more definitively than the final version:

Great turning point in my work – (Big switch in form, content and method), because in *Industrial Symphony* and *Creosote* I started to become slick. All tricks of filmmaking I had mastered. 1. Technical proficiency – BUT – No way of using what I'd found in Russia – feeling of what the

hell it's all about. Stress complete participation, absorption in lives, fight against mine-owners; very simple style, away from fancy camera movements, fancy lights, no payment – lived on money earned, from commercial jobs.

This happens to all artists – artisans excellent style, their [work] continues same style all life. This is the graveyard of artists and writers. But must choose – make clean break; Huxley on Goya's later life and works – *Desastres de Guerra*. (Ivens, n.d. [c.1943], notes for *Camera*, JIA)

Ivens's sense of *Borinage* as a clean break is accurate: seen in the context of the preceding films, its proposal of a new form and a new praxis is a bold one. The artist's relationship to his subject and his method in *Zuiderzee* and *Komsomol* seems utterly unproblematical in comparison, less than hazardous, and even, in the case of the latter film, complacent. *Borinage* is a film that makes Ivens's reference to Goya seem not in the least immodest.

Interestingly enough, Ivens returned from the USSR the second time with as few ideas about his future work as the first time when the call from Philips had been waiting for him. Now, however, Ivens was ready to turn down industrial commissions and was apparently able to do so because his income from previous projects permitted him to select carefully (Ivens, 1969, 81). We have seen that just previous to his departure for the second Soviet trip Ivens was already full of the impossibility of continuing to pursue his interests in Western Europe, of the futility of attempting to make films that were both commissions and fulfilments of the artist's role as 'representative of the masses'. It is not at all certain what changed his mind and persuaded him to return to try once again, perhaps only the strength of family and personal ties and the fact that *Zuiderzee* was still unfinished. It is also conceivable, if Gross's ([1967] 1974) account is to be credited, that Mezhrabpom, the studio controlled by WIR, may have placed special emphasis on preparing its expatriate guests for re-absorption back into capitalist society.

In any case, when the opportunity to shoot *Borinage* did present itself, Ivens leapt at it with the energy and purpose that we have already seen he habitually applied to projects not initiated by himself. The project was to be about the Belgian coal-mining district, the Borinage, and was to be a collaboration with the Belgian documentarist Henri Storck. Storck had at that time directed a number of short documentaries on indigenous Belgian subjects, which Ivens (1969, 85) described as 'pleasant and sensitive'. He had done so within the context of a Belgian avant-garde community similar in many respects to that of *Filmliga* in Holland, with the difference that the Club de l'écran in Brussels was somewhat more politicised than its Amsterdam counterpart, many of its members being active Socialists. Storck had also contributed to a few fictional

174 | films at that time, notably Jean Vigo's *Zéro de conduite* (*Zero for Conduct*, 1933, France, 41). The attribution of responsibilities respectively to the various collaborators (including the French camera operator François Rents who did some of the shooting) is difficult. Ivens seems to have worked together with Storck as closely and as instinctively as he would with his later collaborators. Ivens (1969, 85) describes their division of responsibilities thus: 'We agreed to share the duties of story and photography, while I took responsibility for the whole production'. As for the editing, it seems that Storck and Ferno, with whom Storck was subsequently to develop a long personal and professional association, were responsible jointly for most of the work in Brussels, in occasional consultation with Ivens whose other interests called him elsewhere after the shooting. In any case, the success of Ivens's collaboration with Storck confirms Ivens's extraordinary flexibility as a freelance artist, as a filmmaker who could be parachuted into unfamiliar cultural and political situations and seemingly profit from such a challenge.

Labour struggle had been endemic in the Borinage for several generations. Ivens (1969, 83) would proudly remember that Karl Marx, Émile Zola, and Vincent van Gogh had all preceded him in pointing out the extraordinary poverty and militancy of the miners in this area.³⁷ The Borins were also notable for their thriving musical, literary, and artistic proletarian culture. The previous year a long series of wage cutbacks had finally provoked a massive strike of 100,000 miners all over Belgium. When this larger action petered out, most of the Borin miners had held out and some who returned were locked out. Meanwhile, the traditional Socialist leadership of the unions was being challenged by the Communists because of the vacillation of the former, and the WIR was active in bringing relief to the most destitute of the strikers and their families. One WIR doctor, Paul Hennebert, was active in the Monobloc, the company housing-estate of a shut-down mine in Levant de Mons, where the company had cut off power and water to force out locked-out miners. Hennebert was one of the initiators of the film and would be depicted in one especially stirring sequence visiting a striker's family. In July 1933, Hennebert published a WIR-sponsored inquiry entitled *Comment on crève de faim au Levant de Mons?* (*How One Dies from Hunger at the Levant de Mons?*), which Hogenkamp (1979, 11) has shown would serve Ivens and Storck as the preliminary 'treatment' or 'script' for the subsequent documentary film. Two other initiators of the project were lawyers with the Belgian section of the International Red Aid (MOPR), also affiliated with the Communist Party, and adherents of the Brussels Club de l'écran, Jean Fonteyne and Albert Van Ommeslaghe. They had already made a film, in 16mm, on the demonstrations marking the first anniversary of the death of a worker from police violence in July 1932. They showed the film to Storck and invited him to make a longer, more ambitious film on the same

subject, focused on the Monobloc, where the conditions due to the continuing evictions were the worst. These three men and other local leaders would play an instrumental creative and liaison role during the filming.

Storck, feeling that his middle-class background was a liability, discussed the project in Paris with Louis Aragon and Vladimir Pozner (who was to figure largely in Ivens's career in the next two decades), members of the Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires (AEAR), as well as with Buñuel, who had just finished shooting *Las Hurdes*. This association and its parallel Belgian one had apparently replaced Filmliga, dissolved in 1931 (though the publication continued), as the locus of Ivens's institutional support. The body set up to produce *Borinage*, *Éducation par l'image*, was affiliated with the AEAR, and also included executive members of the Club de l'écran and the WIR lawyers. Meanwhile, Storck soon persuaded Ivens to co-direct. The producers quickly raised a starting budget, about 10,000 francs, upon the promise of a theatre owner to run the film for four weeks, and ultimately secured another 20,000 francs from an elderly capitalist who was repenting of a lifetime of class exploitation.³⁸ The filmmakers proceeded immediately to the area, Storck in early and Ivens in mid-September, and started filming the evictions in an atmosphere exacerbated by lingering stalemates, deteriorating living conditions, and declining morale.

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The film's function would be to call attention to the desperate conditions in the area and to stimulate European public support for the miners' cause. For Ivens, this function was ideological:

Our job was to penetrate the deeper guilt of an economic situation which permits such terrible circumstances – and we had to do this without slogans and big words. [...] I wanted the spectators of the finished film to want to do more than send these workers money. This film required a fighting point of view, it became a weapon, not just an interesting story about something that had happened. (Ivens, 1969, 87, 89).

The conception of film as weapon had not yet had much mileage in Ivens's public rhetoric up to this point but an interview appearing at the same time as the *Borinage* premiere extended this new conception of his work:

Cinematic expression being one of the best means of effectively helping the working class in its struggle and its vital demands, we have found therein an opportunity that we had been searching for a long time, to participate directly in this struggle and to draw from it an authentic document, composed of real and verifiable facts.

The frightful poverty of the *Borinage* miners, the repression

unleashed upon the miners in revolt against their crushing exploitation seemed to us to underline quite specifically the economic anarchy of the capitalist system (Grelier, 1965, 144-145).³⁹

This explicit linking of the *Borinage* events to their global context, the capitalist crisis, Storck (quoted in Hogenkamp 1979, 12) retroactively considered to have been Ivens's most important contribution to the film. The directness of this commitment was a long way from the anonymity of Ivens's CPH film work, the reportorial objectivity of *Wij Bouwen* and *Zuiderzee*, or the covertly suggestive ambiguity of *Philips-Radio*. Here was the point at which Ivens's practice finally 'caught up' with his political theory. The witness to the social dynamic became a participant. The *Komsomol* project had offered Ivens, a foreigner, a similar opportunity for social intervention, but it was only on home ground, within and in opposition to capitalist society that the crucial setting for this role could be found. In the future this would be a model often returned to, an alliance with a cause or a community struggling against the larger framework of established order. Ivens's anecdotes of the hardships shared among crew and workers, of their ingenious efforts for keeping one step ahead of the police, of the risks taken in common, provide some of the most memorable pages of Ivens's autobiographies (Ivens, 1969, 90-93; Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 114-120). The exhilaration stimulated by this relationship of artist and community exudes from every frame of *Borinage* as well.

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The socialist realist model provided by *Komsomol* is a determining influence on the film although it has been significantly adapted to fit the context of the film: the extreme haste of the ten-day shoot, the lack of adequate preparations and orientation, the severe budgetary limitations, the police harassment, and the urgent short-term agitational priority of the project as conceived by its producers. Because of all these factors, the model of the Afanaseyev story is reproduced less coherently and continuously in *Borinage*. Except for an introductory montage sequence somewhat in the manner of the *Komsomol* prelude, and a capsule summary of the background to the *Borinage* events also using stock shots, the core of the film is largely a dramatic semi-documentary narrative as in *Komsomol*.⁴⁰ However, instead of a single dramatic focus extended throughout, *Borinage* is a series of short dramatic vignettes, each dealing with a certain aspect of the situation or with an event that had taken place. Although these are shorter and more scattered than the Afanaseyev story, they attempt the same kind of personalisation and specificity as in the Soviet model, short of the quasi-fictive continuous identification sought in that film by the development of the chief character. Though the *Borinage* vignettes are no less overdetermined in their didactic content than the Afanaseyev story, they are somewhat more successful in retaining the rough atmosphere of natural-

23. *Borinage* (1934). Ivens's collaboration with the teenaged miner and his mother expanded the scene's narrative logic towards accusation. DVD frame capture. © Fonds Henri Storck/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



ism and spontaneity that the Soviet film's over-scripted romanticism had prevented.

The *Borinage* vignettes are built upon the same basically narrative syntagm that Ivens had employed in various degrees from the very first. One typical vignette follows a teenaged miner named Delplanck⁴¹ home from work and reveals the hardships of his family situation, his widowed mother and younger siblings subsisting in the most stringent conditions, as can be seen in the following shot list:

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TABLE I – SHOT LIST FOR ‘TEENAGED MINER’ SEQUENCE⁴²

The English subtitles to the original silent film's Dutch/French intertitles, provided by the 2008 DVD restoration, are reproduced on the right; the time code figures and shot length calculations are likewise taken from this version of the film.

Shot No.	DVD time code (shot length)	Description	Text
1	09:12 (6 sec.)	Workers leaving the coal mine, approaching camera. Long shot.	
2	09:18 (4 sec.)	Tracking shot of young miner walking along the row of homes of the coal mine workers, long shot view from behind.	

3	09:22 (7 sec.)	Continuation: tracking shot of young miner walking, closer view from side/front.	
4	09:29 (8 sec.)	The young miner heads for the square decorated with a big church, rear diagonal long shot.	
5	09:37 (9 sec.)	Long shot panning left, he crosses square to enter a worker's home.	Intertitle – 09:46 – This fifteen-year-old miner doesn't work above ground level, but in the damp, deep corridors of the mine to earn an extra 5 francs for his widowed mother. This way he receives a weekly salary of 73.50 francs five days a week, eight hours a day.
6	09:56 (5 sec.)	Interior. He hands his salary over to his seated mother. Medium shot against curtained window.	
7	10:01 (5 sec.)	Close-up of the coins, panning.	
8	10:06 (3 sec.)	Close-up of young miner, speaking.	
9	10:09 (2 sec.)	Close-up of the money, continuation of 7.	
10	10:11 (2 sec.)	Close-up of the young miner.	
11	10:13 (1 sec.)	The mother counts his money and divides it up. Shot/countershot, medium close, lit from side through curtained window.	Intertitle – 10:14 – Twenty francs a week for lodging paid to the mining company. Fifty francs to sustain a family of four for a week.

12	10:20 (7 sec.)	Continuing, same shot of mother counting money.	<p>Subtitle - Above ground, he had a daily salary of 12.70 francs</p> <p>Intertitle – 10:27 - The utilities have not been paid. There is no water, no electricity. The inhabitants drink stagnant water from the cistern or the flooded basement.</p>
13	10:34 (4 sec.)	The mother goes out into the yard with a bucket, long view.	
14	10:38 (4 sec.)	She draws water from the cistern, close-up.	
15	10:42 (3 sec.)	Extreme close-up of the dirty water in the bucket.	
16	10:45 (7 sec.)	Four children come out of the house into the yard towards camera, two older sisters carrying infants. Long to medium shot.	
17	10:52 (3 sec.)	Close-up of an electric ceiling socket without a bulb, covered in flies.	
18	10:55 (8 sec.)	The cellar, artificial spot light. Young miner comes down stairs bearing bucket and candle.	
19	11:03 (4 sec.)	Closer view, he fetches a bucket of <i>terrouille</i> (coal dust mud).	
20	11:07 (1 sec.)	Upstairs, two-shot, the mother burns <i>terrouille</i> in a Louvain stove.	

21	11:08 (1 sec.)	Close-up of the burning stove.	Intertitle – 11:09 – For fuel they use the mud that remains after washing coal, which only burns when mixed with wood. Since there is no money for wood, shutters, fences, and floorboards are used as fuel.
22	11:19 (3 sec.)	Close-up of the window.	
23	11:22 (4 sec.)	The mother looks after the fire, continuation of 21.	
24	11:26 (3 sec.)	The mother heating water in a pot on the stove, medium.	
25	11:29 (5 sec.)	Daughter asleep on the table in front of window, medium long.	
26	11:34 (7 sec.)	The mother puts a child to bed, long-shot rear view through bedroom doorway, harsh artificial light.	
27	11:41 (5 sec.)	The toddler in its bed, high angle, medium close.	
28	11:46-11:48 (2 sec.)	Closer view of another baby in its rocking cradle.	

This traditional *mise-en-scène* using short shots and shot/countershot constructions serves to give a vivid dramatic specificity to the two figures and obviously required the kind of director-subject interaction that had drawn Vertov's criticism in Moscow. One can clearly visualise the widow and her son going over the scene with the crew, obliging them by moving into the sunlight by the window to count the money, and posing for the close-ups in order to facilitate the takes. The repeated close-up emphasis – on the wage transaction, and then on the socket, the water, and the sleeping child – serves to expand the purely narrative logic of the *mise-en-scène* to its rhetorical and expository function. The effect of the shots is, as Ivens puts it, accusatory.

The visual quality of this and the other similar scenes is striking for its bareness. The simple directness of the *mise-en-scène* is reinforced by an avoidance of complex compositions and of romantic lighting effects, a refutation of both the baroque decorativeness of Ivens's avant-garde films and the heroic mythologisation of *Komsomol* and *Zuiderzee*. The adoption of this new simplicity was a crucial turning point in Ivens's aesthetic development. He remembered it in this way in *Camera*:

During this work in the Borinage our film aesthetics underwent considerable revision. The approach used in *Philips-Radio* had to be dumped overboard. The urgency in which this film was made kept our camera angles severe and orthodox. Or one might say, unorthodox, because super-slickness and photographic affectation were becoming the orthodoxy of the European documentary film. This return to simplicity was naturally a stylistic revolution for me. It was right because I felt it necessary to resist communicating personal pity for these people – what had to be stressed was the harshness of their situation without being sentimental or pitying. Every sequence should say I ACCUSE – accusing the social system which caused such misery and hardship.

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Our job was to penetrate the deeper guilt of an economic situation which permits such terrible circumstances – and we had to do this without slogans and big words. Critics have said that the absence of ‘interesting’ photography in *Borinage* can be explained by the poor and primitive equipment that was used. This is not the explanation. The style of *Borinage* was chosen deliberately and was determined by the decency and the unrelieved plight of the people around us. We felt it would be insulting to people in such extreme hardship to use any style of photography that would prevent the direct, honest communication of their pain to the spectator. Perhaps every sincere artist who has seen the Borinage has come away from it a different person. (Ivens, 1969, 87)

Ivens goes on to explain how this ‘aesthetic revolution’ led to specific techniques to counteract the ‘danger of aesthetic pleasure’:

During the filming of *Borinage*, we sometimes had to destroy a certain unwelcome superficial beauty that would occur when we did not want it. When the clean-cut shadow of the barracks window fell on the dirty rags and dishes of a table the pleasant effect of the shadow actually destroyed the effect of dirtiness we wanted, so we broke the edges of the shadow. Our aim was to prevent agreeable photographic effects distracting the audience from the unpleasant truths we were showing.

We often encountered this danger of aesthetic pleasures, lights and shadows, symmetry or balanced compositions that would undermine our purpose for a moment. In the cramped and filthy interiors of the *Borinage*, an agreeable aesthetic value might prevent a spectator from saying to himself, 'This is dirty – this smells bad – this is not a place for human beings to live'. Without this sort of precaution there was always a danger that these tiny dilapidated barracks (sometimes covered with ivy) might look picturesque instead of appalling. There have also been cases in the history of the documentary when photographers became so fascinated by dirt that the result was the dirt looked interesting and strange, not something repellent to the cinema audience.

The filmmaker must be indignant and angry about the waste of people before he can find the right camera angle on the dirt and on the truth. I saw enough in the *Borinage* to encourage me to want to make more than a sentimental film about the miners. (Ivens, 1969, 88)

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At this point, Ivens (1969, 88) footnotes the negative example of Grierson's 1935 *Housing Problems* (UK, 16) (which he says 'fell into the error of exotic dirt. You could not smell those London slums') and the positive examples of Chaplin, Lorentz's *Fight for Life* (1940, USA, 69) and Storck's *Les Maisons de la misère* (1937, Belgium, 20) in which this problem is overcome.⁴³ Storck's memory of the project does confirm that the pair were seriously concerned with this problem:

We were no longer thinking of the cinema nor of its framings. We were dominated by the irrepressible need to give the cruel facts that reality was throwing in our faces an image as stripped down, as naked, as sincere as possible. All aesthetics appeared to us indecent. Our camera was no longer anything but a cry of revolt. (Storck, 1963, 94-99)

This aesthetic position must be situated within the context of a concurrent debate responding to the post-Expressionist German aesthetic movement of New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*). This movement Ivens had first encountered in the 1920s, thanks to the evident echoes of, and affinities with, this modernist photographic trend in both *Brug* and *Regen*, with their aestheticisation of objects and surfaces of the urban every-day (Krull was also associated with the movement).⁴⁴ As European avant-gardes veered increasingly political in the 1930s, New Objectivity was often accused by critics from the Left of the same sentimentalisation and aestheticisation of poverty that the filmmakers were so intent on avoiding in *Borinage*. Walter Benjamin was a leader in recognising the elements of aesthetic compromise in the pseudo-progressive

posturings of New Objectivity documentary realism. Benjamin focused his criticism upon the delusions of the left-wing intelligentsia who were the predominant producers and consumers of this aesthetic trend:

[This intelligentsia's] political significance was exhausted by the transposition of revolutionary reflexes, insofar as they arose in the bourgeoisie, into objects of distraction, of amusement, which can be supplied for consumption. [...]

This left-wing radicalism is precisely the attitude to which there is no longer in general any corresponding political action. [...] For from the beginning all it has in mind is to enjoy itself in negativistic quiet. The metamorphosis of political struggle from a compulsory decision into an object of pleasure, from a means of production into an article of consumption – that is this literature's latest hit. [...] Constipation and melancholy have always gone together. (Benjamin, [1931] 1974, 28-31)⁴⁵

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With reference to photography itself, another lecture by Benjamin given in Paris three months after the Brussels premiere of *Borinage* is more explicit in its echo of the thinking that Ivens and Storck had been involved in so recently:

For we are confronted with the fact of which there has been no shortage of proof in Germany over the last decade – that the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication is capable of assimilating, indeed of propagating, an astonishing amount of revolutionary themes without ever seriously putting into question its own existence or that of the class which owns it. [...] New Objectivity photography] has succeeded in turning abject poverty itself, by handling it in a modish, technically perfect way, into an object of enjoyment. For if it is an economic function of photography to supply the masses, by modish processing, with matter which previously eluded mass consumption – spring, famous people, foreign countries – then one of its political functions is to renovate the world as it is from the inside, i.e. by modish techniques. (Benjamin, [1934] 1973, 95)⁴⁶

The same proposition was enunciated in less analytic terms at about the same time from within the workers' photography movement, also sponsored by the WIR:

The workers' world is invisible to the bourgeoisie, and unfortunately to most proletarians also. If the bourgeoisie depicts proletarians and their world of suffering, it is only to provide a contrast, a dark background to

set off the glories of bourgeois 'culture', 'humanity', 'arts and sciences', and so forth, so that sensitive folk can enjoy a feeling of sympathy and 'compassion' or else take pride in the consciousness of their own superiority. Our photographers must tear down this facade. We must proclaim proletarian reality in all its disgusting ugliness, with its indictment of society and its demand for revenge. We will have no veils, no retouching, no aestheticism; we must present things as they are, in a hard merciless light. We must take photographs wherever proletarian life is at its hardest and the bourgeoisie at its most corrupt; and we shall increase the fighting power of our class insofar as our pictures show class consciousness, mass consciousness, discipline, solidarity, a spirit of aggression and revenge.

Photography is a weapon; so is technology, so is art! Our world-view is militant Marxism, not mere academic wisdom. And we worker-photographers have an important sector of the front to hold; we are the eye of the working class, and it is we who must teach our fellow-workers how to see. (Hoernle, [1930] 1978, 47)

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Ivens's and Storck's strategies and rhetoric, then, must be seen as shaped by this lively international consensus about aesthetics and politics, of which the foregoing citations are typical. In fact, two German adherents of the workers photography movement were on location with the filmmakers in the Borinage, took many photographs that, having the advantage of being instantly available, were used in political organisation during the actual shoot, and were subsequently published in the Socialist illustrated press in Belgium. Such photography was widely disseminated in this manner throughout Western Europe. Hogenkamp (1979, 16) is not wrong in concluding that radical documentary photography was one or more steps in advance of film in its evolution at this point.

Aware of the ideological problematic that Benjamin and the proletarian photographers were pointing out in another context, Ivens and Storck availed themselves of several strategies beyond the tactic (elaborated above) of stripping down the image to its bare denotative essential. One of these strategies, as can be seen in the scene detailed above, is to apply in the images and in the exposition a rigorous material analysis to the dramatic vignettes. The 'Teen-aged Miner' sequence is oriented almost entirely towards revealing the simple physical details of the family's living conditions. The mother and her children are not simply aesthetic subjects but concrete individuals who consume water and fuel every day and pay 20 francs a week rent. It is part of Ivens's genius that he can continually translate such prosaic details of the quotidian, a pail of stagnant water or a bulbless socket, into a vivid social document. Similar

sequences to this one employ the same keen materialist eye, for example, a vignette in which an unemployed miner must take a daily four-hour bicycle trip to get a loaf of bread for his family from his parents-in-law. The account includes point-of-view travelling shots of bakery windows lining his route, the inaccessible goods clearly visible. This sequence was one of several reconstructed from cases documented in *Comment on crève de faim au Levant de Mons*. Still another sequence demonstrates the desperation of the fuel situation by showing grim elderly women and children picking up bad coal from the huge mounds. In such cinematic discourse one can clearly see the ancestor of Ivens's and Marceline Loridan's measurement of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the same material terms 40 years later. They would tirelessly ask their subjects their wages, rent payments, food prices, and fuel and water sources, transforming this prosaic detail into a cinematic tour de force of *Yukong*.

While such sequences in *Borinage* underline the desperate means of mere survival resorted to by the miners, other sequences adapt another aspect of socialist realism in their attempt to avoid the trap of 'negativistic quiet', namely, what has already been pointed out in *Komsomol* as 'the ideal dynamic' of socialist realist dramaturgy. In other words, Ivens and Storck are careful to provide as highlights of the film instances of exemplary positive action taken by the miners in order to fight back. In fact, the conditions of their poverty are given less stress than the means of resistance by which the miners attempt to change their situation. One vignette shows how a family and its neighbours foil an eviction by literally sitting down on the family's furniture to prevent the bailiffs from taking it. Two other vignettes along this line depict the rules by which strikers are able to hold illegal meetings right under the noses of the police, and a climactic spontaneous demonstration. There is even a short sequence in which a negative individual model of resistance – begging in the street – is contrasted explicitly for being counterproductive. The positioning of the demonstration vignette as the film's climax gives the entire film the same 'ideal' shape that the individual segments aimed for; the formulation of a long-term political strategy has priority over the mere revelation of the workers' poverty. The purpose of this shape was, Ivens declared at the time,

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To show, to give to the workers this certitude that a strike is never lost, that even a provisional defeat is only a stage of the struggle and that the struggle continues on the base of workers united for precise goals. It's at this period that I began to feel deeply the unity that must exist between the artist and man. (Ivens, quoted in Grelier, 1965, 76)

24. *Borinage* (1934). The film's climactic, catalytic demonstration gave it an 'ideal' shape, an assurance to workers that 'a strike is never lost'. DVD frame capture. © Fonds Henri Storck/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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One of Benjamin's remarks about New Objectivity photography points to another strategy employed by Ivens and Storck to avoid 'the danger of aesthetic pleasure': 'What we must demand from the photographer is the ability to put such a caption beneath his picture as will rescue it from the ravages of modishness and confer upon it a revolutionary use-value' (Benjamin, [1934] 1973, 95). The lengthy texts supplied by the filmmakers were at first read above the projection, and only later integrated as intertitles (Storck wryly recollected that they were often longer than the images); they must be seen as a kind of 'caption' designed to inject a 'revolutionary use-value' into them (Storck, interview with author, January 1976). Ivens's former inclination in *Brug* towards the 'sufficiency of the object' or his tendency in *Philips-Radio* to treat people as aesthetic surfaces are completely reversed in *Borinage* by the rescue of the image by the text. Brecht's ([1931] 1964) concept of the 'literarization' of the image is also relevant to this makeshift 'commentary' on a project unable to afford sound.

Ivens's and Storck's 'captions' take several different directions during the course of the film. Where the *mise-en-scène* is already engaged in demonstrating, in pointing out the abuses of the situation, as in the emphatic close-up structures of the 'Teenaged Miner' vignette detailed above, the commentary explicitly underlines the points already being made visually, for example, by repeating over an image of a stripped window the information that the family must use the window shutters for fuel. Or else it provides details not elaborated visually such as the proportion of the widow's income spent on rent. Elsewhere the text goes even further and offers an interpretation of an image: the introductory newsreel montage of Depression and strike footage concludes on an accusatory note – 'Anarchy of the economic system'; the incident of the foiled eviction concludes, 'The solidarity of the miners has prevented the eviction – at least temporarily'. The finale of the film, a climactic reprise of a dozen or so of the central images of the film does not permit any ambiguity to linger in the spectator's mind:

The proletariat knows that the contradictions and poverty in the *Borinage*, as in all of Belgium, as in the whole world, are the fruits of capitalism and that humanity will only be saved from disorder and from the exploitation of man by man by the dictatorship of the proletariat for the coming of socialism.

Ivens's sense of *Borinage* as a turning point is thus correct in this sense: it contains the first systematic use of 'revolutionary use-value' 'captions' in an Ivens film. There is now imposed upon the indirect address, visual diegesis of the image-track, a textual diegesis on a whole new level, so much so that the Belgian Socialist paper *Le Peuple* called the film a lecture accompanied by projections (Storck, interview with author, January 1976). Ivens had arrived at the model of the classical sound documentary with its resource of direct address and verbal diegesis, yet had done so, ironically, in a silent film. This model offered Ivens for the first time the possibility of direct intervention in a social problematic and the possibility of addressing his public without equivocation or compromise, as well as, as Nichols (1976, 38) has pointed out, with the 'advantage of analytic precision'.⁴⁷

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A third strategy of the film that raises it above 'the danger of aesthetic pleasure' is one first tentatively glimpsed in *Wij Bouwen* and confirmed with exuberance by Ivens in *Magnitogorsk*: the participation of a film's subjects in the process of its production. This strategy has results in *Borinage* that are so strikingly innovative and prophetic that Ivens becomes an important early precursor of direct cinema (Marsolais, 1974, 66). The film's affinity to direct cinema goes beyond the feeling of naturalism and unrehearsed spontaneity in certain scenes shot in the streets of the town with Ivens's little Kinamo camera. In the Belgian setting, the active participation of the subjects in the filmmaking process is directly related to the active menace of police and management harassment, as well as budgetary and technical limitations. The film simply would not have been made without the local leaders and organisers nor without the miners and their families taking on a direct role in the filmmaking, providing initiative, resources, support, and crew members. More important perhaps was their very real creative input. In scenes such as the episode in which the eviction is prevented by group effort, or in which the miners in the street act out for the camera the way they spontaneously hold forbidden meetings, the role of the filmmakers is almost reduced to that of technical resource-people, since the idea, the dramatisation, and the performances all come from local initiative. The wording of Ivens's (quoted in Hogenkamp, 1979, 12) description of the filming of one striker's lack of shelter for his family keynotes this aspect of the film: 'I arranged with C. to take a film this morning of his wretched circum-

stances. He agreed, as he knows that with this film we join in the fight in which he takes part daily’.

The catalytic effect this participatory process had on the morale and solidarity of the strikers is not incidental to the question here but of its very essence – from Vertov to Challenge for Change, the Sandinistas and Anand Patwardhan to Wapikoni and the other innumerable community digital projects of the 21st century, film history has been dogged by the utopian dream of community use of film as an instrument of change (Baker, Waugh, and Winton, 2011; Ramirez, 1984; Bernier, 2014; Dyer, 2014). *Borinage* takes a step towards this dream. Ivens’s analogous example, cited in a 1953 conversation about *Borinage*, of a Soviet director discovering that steel production was accelerated during factory filming seems trivial by comparison (Ivens, [1953] 1965, 49). The final scene of the film is the most dramatic expression of this potential of film as social catalyst. At first, like several other scenes in the film, the scene was to be a re-enactment by original participants of a demonstration that had taken place at Wasmes, the communist stronghold, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Marx’s death earlier that year (Ivens, 1969, 91-92). For Ivens also, it was to have the additional excitement of a practical application of the subjective camera experiments he had pursued since the very beginning – the camera was to be a participant in the march, not only symbolically but literally, in a number of handheld camera movements that would suggest the movements of a marcher. Moreover the energy of these movements was stepped up by the necessity of passing the Kinamo from hand to hand to avoid its confiscation by the police. Many of the Workers Film and Photo League demonstration films of the same period included similar experimentation, for example *National Hunger March* (Sam Brody et al., 1931, USA, 11) (Campbell, 1978, 146-148). In any case, the re-enactment went beyond being merely that, and the reconstructed march became a spontaneous demonstration in its own right with workers and their families coming out of their homes to salute the gilt-framed portrait of Marx at the head and to join in with the marchers. The sequence ended with an unfilmed beating for all by the police that was more than compensated for by the new feeling of solidarity generated by the event, and the genre of the demonstration film was set in motion (Waugh, 1999).

Such scenes are characterised by a certain dramatic and visual simplicity, even primitiveness at moments, but they succeed remarkably in communicating the fervour of the participants who are collectively refusing to accept their powerlessness and poverty, and are demonstrating their tactics of resistance. It is important that Storck and Ivens should have incorporated in their film the solutions already entered upon by the subjects and reflected the level of consciousness already in existence in the *Borinage* rather than imposing ready-made solutions from outside. Because of their pioneering success in

subject-generated documentary, Benjamin ([1936] 1969, 232) attaches considerable importance to this very film, praising it along with *Three Songs About Lenin* as an example of the cinema's potential, a forecast of that utopian situation in which 'the distinction between author and public [loses] its character', a realisation of 'modern man's legitimate claim to be reproduced'.

A final means resorted to by Ivens and Storck for ensuring the 'revolutionary use-value' of their film is the compilation mode. A brief montage sequence, similar to that in *Komsomol*, introduces the film by setting the world political context in focus. This succession of images includes closed-down factories, immobile cranes, strikers, and US police riots, plus the ubiquitous Depression iconography of burning coffee and wheat and the spilling of milk. Such juxtapositional rhetoric is not confined only to these montage tropes; throughout the film the contrast of two disparate images is used to surmount the inadequacy of the single image – e.g. wealthy church construction/starving children. This approach reflects both Ivens's and Storck's previous experience with newsreel stock footage. In 1932, Storck had made a short compilation of 1928 newsreel clips entitled *Histoire du soldat inconnu*, denouncing the arms race through ironic juxtaposition. This paralleled Ivens's experiments in the same vein. The humorous touch in some of the *Borinage* contrasts may have been Storck's as much as Ivens's, such as the juxtaposition of a miner's hovel with an official-looking Institute of Hygiene. At any rate, such juxtapositions were in the air, perhaps hanging over from the surrealist currents of the twenties: Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*, shot earlier that same year by Ivens's *Zuiderzee* collaborator Éli Lotar had a similar attitude to churches, and both *À propos de Nice* and the American WFPL's *Bonus March* echoed Storck's armaments and anti-clerical conceits (Campbell, 1978, 148-149). Ivens (1969, 97) also mentions Shub as an inspiration for his montage experiments.⁴⁸

Despite the fact that most of Storck and Ivens's archival images were already quite familiar to the European leftist public – Brecht's and Dudow's trainload of young socialist athletes in *Kuhle Wampe* have a lengthy conversation about the relevance of burning coffee to their own political situation – their compilation has the simple but eloquent effect of connecting the *Borinage* event to the general world context, of emphasising how such events never occur in isolation. The wheat and milk shots are repeated later in the concluding peroration already mentioned. This time however they have accrued a certain new resonance in the course of the film and their juxtaposition to the *Borinage*'s huge unused coal stockpiles (*terrils*) create a new level of meaning. These *terrils* automatically recall the preceding views of aged women scrounging for scraps and pregnant women shivering from exposure and thus become one more devastating visual symbol of an economic and social system gone mad. A critic who saw *Borinage* and *Nieuwe Gronden* in the US recognised the

significance of the use of montage to Ivens's new level of filmic discourse. For him Ivens was

a man who profoundly understands the art of realistic montage. For it is clear that sheer 'true to nature' presentation, 'naked reality', does not in itself contain the compelling force of proof: the emotional appeal inherent in facts has to be brought out. We are not mere onlookers, we want to change the world! The manner in which the arrow is poised and let loose will determine whether the spectator is to remain neutral or to be profoundly stirred. (Wolf [Ben Maddow], 1935, 9)

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Ivens's accession to a new level of filmic discourse was not unproblematical. If for Nichols (1976, 38), the direct mode of address poses 'the perennial risk of dogmatism', for Ivens and Storck in 1933 it created risks that were much less theoretical, risks of censorship and limited distribution. Certainly in terms of the direction of Ivens's own career, the new explicitness had immediate ramifications. For one thing, the inevitable rupture with the avant-garde constituency was finally consummated. According to *Camera*, the predominant Dutch reactions to the film were 'Joris Ivens is now becoming a propagandist', and 'as his social concerns go up, his artistic standards go down' (Ivens, 1969, 93). An Amsterdam paper stated, not without some truth, that Ivens's popularity in his own country was then virtually exhausted and that with *Borinage* 'our only cinematic artist of truly great appeal bids adieu to his country and to his people' (*Groene Amsterdammer* 1934).

The success of *Borinage* in reaching its intended audience was also threatened by the new explicit level of discourse. If a film can be judged according to Benjamin's criterion of 'revolutionary use-value', the film met with such barriers to its distribution after its March 1934 debut as to hold up this value to question. Dutch, Belgian, French, and some local American censors objected to a picture of Lenin visible in the background of one sequence, and, in the case of the last-named, to the exposed genitals of a worker's small son during Dr. Hennebert's examination (Storck, interview with author, January 1976). Apparently, however, this official reaction did not prevent the distribution of the film to limited audiences through political organisations such as the WIR in France, or the Association of Friends of the Soviet Union in Holland.⁴⁹ The film's chilly reception by its Socialist-dominated Belgian sponsors and intended primary audience must be seen in the light not only of traditional Socialist-Communist rivalry among the miners' unions of the Borinage, but of their bitter enmity on the global scale during this pre-Popular Front, ultra-left period of the Communist Party's evolution. In short, the two or three explicit Marxist-Leninist references in the film do not seem to have been designed to

reach a wide constituency. Pierre Vermeyleen, one of the WIR lawyers, asked the filmmakers for a few strategic cuts, including the sequence of the spontaneous demonstration around Marx's portrait and the sequence with the Lenin portrait that the censors had also objected to. Storck was anxious for the film to receive Belgian distribution in the powerful Socialist exhibition network or in the Cinéac theatre chain that specialised in newsreels and was thus willing to compromise by accommodating Vermeyleen, who as a Communist himself was certainly not acting for sectarian reasons. But Ivens (1969, 192) was intransigent and a systematic mass distribution of the film was forestalled. However, within the limited alternative networks, the demand for the film was steady in Belgium throughout the thirties, and Ivens reported that some adjustments to the labour situation in Belgium resulted from a labour leader's having seen the film. In the Netherlands, where the producers had not even dared to submit the film to the censors, the film reached only the Filmliga audience and some pro-communist clubs, such as the Association of Friends of the Soviet Union. Dutch-language critics were mixed with regard to this latest effort of the native son: whereas L.J. Jordaan reliably declared *Borinage* 'a work of stature! ...more stirring, warmer, more vigorous than Ivens's work thus far', an influential Flemish critic Maurice Roelants intensified the rhetoric of redbaiting that was gathering around the 'dogmatic' and 'demagogic' filmmaker (*De Groene Amsterdammer* 17 March 1934, *Forum* 1934, both quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 189). Only in Switzerland was there a commercial distribution deal (Stufkens, 2008, 186).

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As for Ivens's collaborator, Storck regretted the Dutchman's inflexibility, not the least because he found himself branded as a communist and out of work for some time thereafter (Storck, interview with author, January 1976). A long letter written to Ivens after the completion of the film expressed several reservations about the events that had taken place.⁵⁰ Storck felt that the film should have been about the entire situation, not just the dismissed workers, and that the filmmakers should have been better informed about the subject before starting rather than doing their research behind the cameras. Above all he expressed reservations about the explicitness of the film's analysis: the spectators he said should have been permitted to come to their own conclusions. The film should have been an instrument of propaganda, not propaganda itself.

Ivens's first experiment with radical film praxis in the capitalist West had thus inevitably collided with the major litmus test, distribution; the collision would be enacted again. It may have been the blockage of mass distribution in the West that encouraged Ivens to undertake a Soviet sound version during his third Soviet visit of 1934-1936, or simply the obsolescence of silent film, which must surely have added to the film's distribution problems. In any case,

as Hogenkamp states, Dutch exhibitors of the film had unwittingly suggested the new version by adding the last reel of *Komsomol* to their print of *Borinage* in order to provide an edifying contrast for their public. The new Soviet version of *Borinage* was produced at Ivens's and Van Dongen's old studio, Mezhrabpom, towards the start of their extended final visit to Moscow, from June 1934 to June 1936.⁵¹ The Mezhrabpom version is based on a frame of Soviet-shot material: a preface shot by Ivens showing the visit of a Belgian workers' delegation to the construction site of the Moscow metro in which the two groups of workers compare their lives, and a concluding sequence, not by Ivens, on a new miners' village of Gorlovka in the Donbass region of the Ukraine. This epilogue provides a strong contrast with the Belgian film (slightly altered) in that it shows workers moving out of hovels into decent housing, instead of vice versa. The happy Ukrainian miners eat a cake shaped like the abandoned hovels. Both Soviet sequences are stiff and uninspired, perhaps because of the sound technology, but without the suggestive austerity of the Belgian segments. Stufkens indicates that this version not surprisingly incorporated 'communist' material that had not been included in the silent original such as

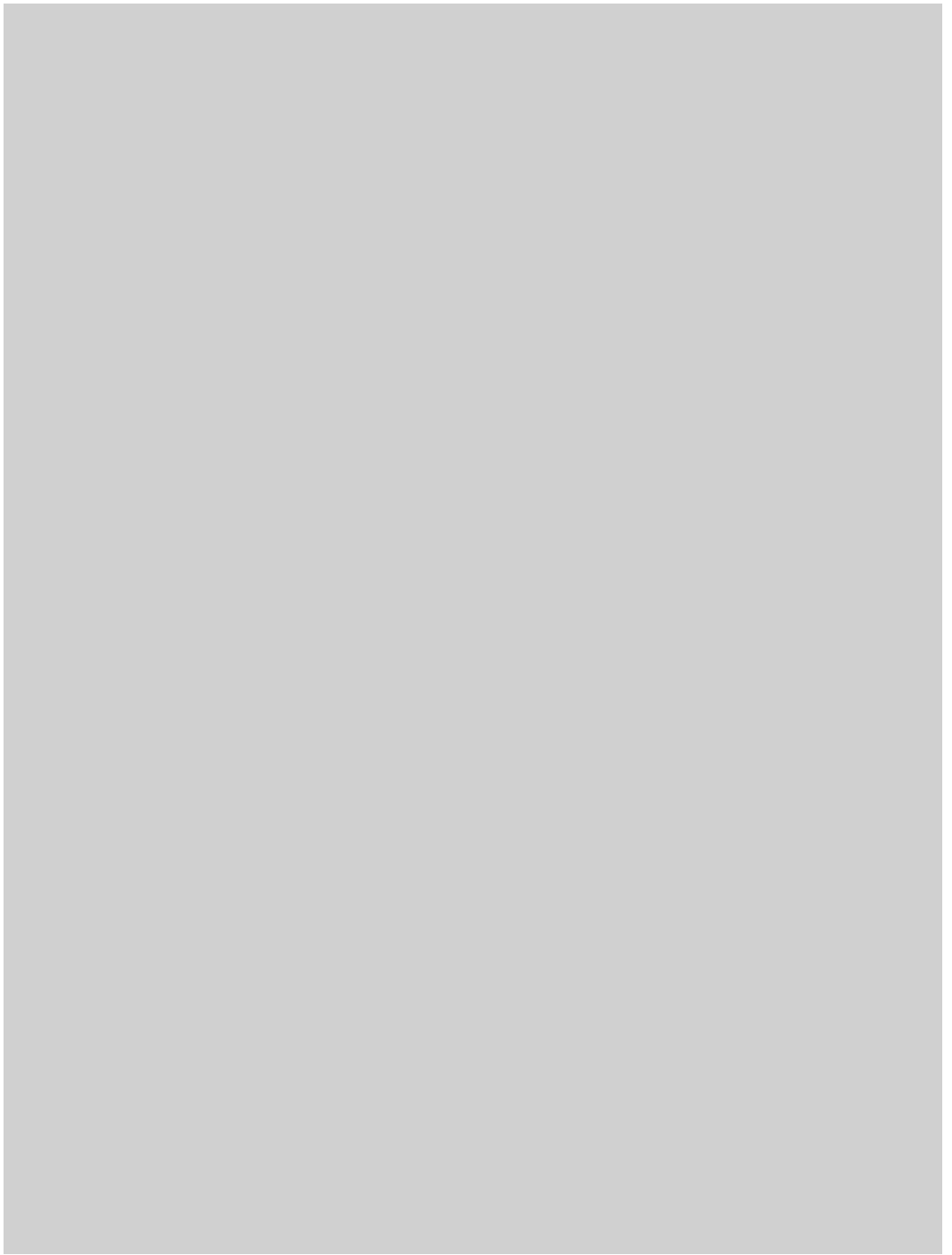
Speeches of three communist leaders – including Joseph Jacquemotte and Henri de Boeck – the membership book of the *Sécours ouvrier international* [WIR], the demonstration of *Les Disciples de Liebnecht Lenin*, the unemployment benefit coupon book, the occupation of a factory and a new copy of [striker] Félicien Buize's rental contract. (Stufkens, 2008, 186)

The editing link between the face of a Borin woman and her Soviet counterpart is impressive, however, and suggests that the talents of the editors, Ivens and Van Dongen together with American expatriate and Eisenstein acolyte Jay Leyda, were being challenged creatively by the exercise despite the loss of freshness otherwise. The entire work is held together by an unrestrained commentary that duplicates Ivens's terse narrative images and by a vigorous score by Hans Hauska. This version was widely viewed in the USSR, and accompanied Ivens in 1936 to New York, and was eventually deposited in the new Museum of Modern Art film collection. Raves followed by American critics across the ideological divide: *Borinage* was praised by the *New York Times* (February 1937, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 189) for its 'strong, dark' echoes of Van Gogh, and not surprisingly the communist-affiliated *New Theatre* was adulatory about Ivens's editing skill and success in moving beyond merely showing 'reality' (Wolf [Ben Maddow], 1935). But the Soviet version was superseded in turn by a 1960 sound version by Storck with a commentary based on the original titles, and once more of course in 2008 by the definitive restored silent version assembled by Stufkens for the DVD box set.⁵²

The major film project other than *Borinage* that occupied the two of them during this period was a film to be produced by Gustav von Wangenheim, one of the many Mezhrabpom expatriates. This film was to be called *Bortsy* (*The Struggle*, 1936, 95) and was intended to use the story of Georgi Dimitrov, a Bulgarian communist accused by the Nazis of the Reichstag arson, as a model of German resistance against fascism. Ivens was apparently less involved in the project than Van Dongen, who was assistant director and editor (and had assumed more and more responsibilities in the partnership in her role as the stationary one who looked after the shop while Ivens was on his tours). Ivens, however, did work for a few months on the project, researching, assembling documents on Dimitrov and his Leipzig trial and other material, and did some interviews. There was also talk in the air about a film on aeronautics and another on 'internationalism' in the USSR. It is unclear why nothing came of these various projects, aside from the possible factor of an illness that lasted several months. Piscator was the only one of Mezhrabpom's illustrious stable of expatriates who brought a major film to fruition, *Vosstanie rybakov* (*Revolt of the Fishermen*, 1934, 89) – it seems it was no easier bringing a film through the various stages of studio production in Moscow than it was to produce a dissident independent film in the West.

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In any case, by 1936, the short period during which the foreigners had been welcome contributors to the Soviet film industry was drawing to a close, replaced by one of increasing frustration and danger (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 105-108). The WIR, sponsor of many of the expatriates in the USSR, was closed down by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in 1934, and Mezhrabpom met the same fate, although productions initiated at this studio apparently continued to trickle into release as late as 1938. Gross's ([1967] 1974, 297) account of this period in Moscow describes growing elements of paranoia within the expatriate community. Leyda's (1960, 338) account is more temperate but equally suggestive. Unwilling to assume Soviet citizenship, as a new regulation required, Leyda, himself a Mezhrabpom guest, was to leave shortly after Ivens and Van Dongen. The renaissance of the Soviet film that was to follow the socialist realist breakthrough *Chapaev* (Sergei and Georgi Vasilyev, 1934, 95) had no apparent need of foreign inspiration.



25. French poster for *The Spanish Earth*, whose French version was produced by the Popular Front organisation 'Ciné-Liberté', whose kingpin Jean Renoir wrote and spoke the commentary. Original in colour. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen

Anti-Fascist Solidarity Documentary

Men cannot act in front of the camera in the presence of death.
– *The Spanish Earth*

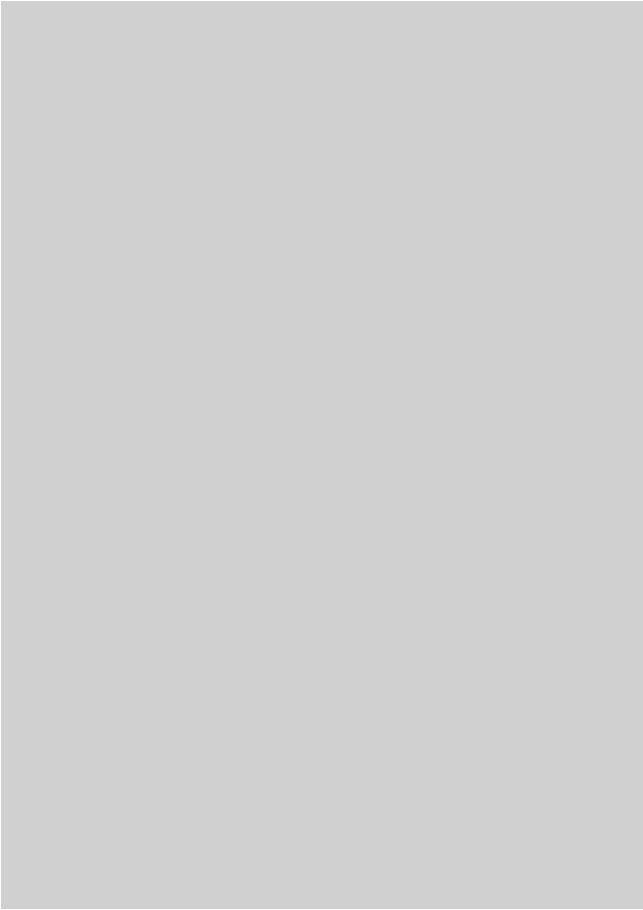
THE SPANISH EARTH

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In July 1936 when General Franco launched his revolt against the Spanish Republic, Joris Ivens, the 38-year-old Dutch avant-gardist-turned-militant, was in Hollywood showing his films to film industry progressives – in fact 1200 of them packed into the Filmarte Theatre (James, 2005, 469)! One year later, Ivens was in Hollywood again, this time officiating at the world premiere of *The Spanish Earth* (1937, USA) before a glittering cross section of the same community. A hasty, spontaneous response to the Spanish plight, directed by a Dutchman who spent only a few months in the US, this iconic 53-minute solidarity documentary was also the prototypical cultural product of the American left in the era of the Popular Front, a time when the left was closer to the American mainstream than at any time previously or since.

Spanish Earth represents also the convergence of two basic traditions of radical filmmaking in the West, of which Ivens was the chief pioneer and standard-bearer throughout his 75-year career. It is the definitive model for the ‘international solidarity’ genre, in which militants from the First and Second Worlds used film to champion each new front of revolutionary struggle, and of which the El Salvador and Nicaragua films of the 1980s and the Arab Spring films of the 21st century are subsequent chapters.

It is also the model for the more utopian genre in which the construction of each new emerging revolutionary society is celebrated and offered for inspiration for those still struggling under capitalism, a genre for which Nicaragua and Zimbabwe offered stimuli toward the end of Ivens’s life, as I undertook this book. As I was finishing it dozens of other less-state-dominated and more community-based sites of experimentation with democracy offered other kinds of sparks, ranging from the epic of national resistance to globalisation *The Take*



26. *The 400 Million* (1938): Ivens helping cameraman John Ferno change the magazine on their large camera, near Tai'erzhuang, with hand camera running nearby (another crew member, or the Guomindang censor?). Production photo, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © EFJI, Nijmegen.

(Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein, 2004, Canada/Argentina, 87) to manifestos of local empowerment, green (*The Garden* [Scott Hamilton Kennedy, 2008, USA, 80]) and creative (*Art/Violence* [Mariam Abu-Khaled, 2013, Palestine/USA, 75]).

Spanish Earth, finally, has a central place within the evolution of the documentary form, aside from its strategic ideological position. It defines prototypically the formal and technical challenges of the 30-year heyday of the classical sound documentary, 1930 to 1960, in particular its first decade. It confronts, with still exemplary resourcefulness, the problems of sound and narration; the temptation to imitate the model of Hollywood fiction with *mise-en-scène*, individual characterisation, and narrative line; the catch-22's of distribution, accessibility, and ideology; the possibilities of compilation and historical reconstruction, and of improvisation and spontaneity. This list sounds so contemporary it sounds as if my film production students might have drafted it.

Joris Ivens disembarked in February 1936 in New York for what was to become a decade of work in the United States, the second decade of his career.

He was entering a political context strikingly different from the familiar ones of Western Europe and the USSR, where his output that we have traced in Chapters 1 and 2 included avant-garde film poems (*Regen* [*Rain*, 1929, Netherlands, 16]), epics of collective labour in both his native Holland (*Zuiderzeewerken* [*Zuiderzee*, 1930-1933, 40-52]) and the USSR (*Pesn o geroyakh* [*Komsomol*, 1933, 50]), industrial commissions (*Philips-Radio* [1931, Netherlands, 36]), and militant denunciations of the capitalist system (*Misère au Borinage* [*Borinage*, 1934, Belgium, 34] and *Nieuwe Gronden* [*New Earth*, 1933, Netherlands, 30]).

The left intellectual milieu to which Ivens and his longtime co-worker-editor-girlfriend Helen Van Dongen attached themselves upon their arrival (she arrived in July 1936) was deeply concerned by the build-up to war already evident in Ethiopia, China, Germany, and soon, Spain. Their first months in the US found them toying with projects around domestic social and political issues like race in Harlem or healthcare in Detroit, as well as a few feature film adaptation ideas ranging from *Pygmalion* to the Belgian folk classic *Till Eulenspiegel* (which he would wait another two decades to make). He even made a short called *The Russian School in New York* (1936, USA) for the Soviet distributor Amkino, which did not survive (Jansen, 2002). But it would be the growing international crisis that would soon command his attention. Ivens had made his previous political films during a period when the international socialist movement had been oriented toward militant class struggle. *Borinage* and *Nieuwe Gronden* had reflected this orientation with their uncompromising political postures and their confrontational rhetoric and form. In the US, the militant newsreel work of the Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL) had matched this tendency in Ivens's work.

The militant era and the WFPL, however, were both on their last legs at the time of Ivens's arrival. The Nazis had eradicated the Workers International Relief (WIR), the Berlin-based, Comintern-sponsored parent body for radical cultural groups throughout the capitalist West. But the main reason for the about-face of mid-decade was an official change of policy promulgated by the Communist International at its 1935 World Congress and obediently followed by all the national parties including the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). The crucial political struggle of the day was to be not socialism vs. capitalism, but democracy vs. fascism. CPUSA chief Earl Browder declared that democracy in the United States was to be preserved by a vigorous defence of civil liberties, increasingly menaced by fascist reaction at home and abroad. The earlier view of Roosevelt as warmonger and of the New Deal as incipient fascism yielded to a new image of Roosevelt as champion of democratic rights and of the state as potential ally of progressive forces. Communists were to be ready to participate in joint action within popular fronts with the Socialist parties, civil libertarians, liberal intellectuals, and even clergymen. American Commu-

nists thus allied themselves enthusiastically with the social programs of the New Deal.¹ As for Ivens, his US tour was part of this new political orientation: Schoots reveals that he continued to report to and be paid by Mezhrabpom during his tour,² and that his assignment was not only to brush up on American film techniques but also to stimulate independent film production and if possible to make a film (Ivens, letter to Shumyatsky 24 September 1936, quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 110). The mission was accomplished.

Leftist cultural strategy in the West inevitably followed the political platform. Militant vanguardism symbolised by the WFPL and the John Reed Clubs of proletarian culture was replaced by efforts by left cultural workers to express themselves within the mainstream of American culture. They were largely successful: the last half of the decade saw the left achieve its point of maximum impact within American culture and a close interaction between the cultural and political spheres. The influx of leftist intellectuals and artists from Europe, most of whom were political refugees from fascism (unlike Ivens – yet), stimulated this interaction, and the active involvement of the state in the cultural domain sustained it. The Federal Arts project of the Works Progress Administration was launched in the fall of 1935 and the same year saw the Farm Security Administration of the Resettlement Administration move into the field of still photography. The New Deal would expand into motion pictures the following year and enlist the talents of hundreds of leftist artists, including Ivens himself, before the decade was out.

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The documentary movement was another dominant influence on Ivens's American cultural context. This movement shaped not only all the arts during this period, even modern dance, but also the humanities and the social sciences, and the fields of journalism, education, and, yes, advertising. At the centre of this current was the work of still photographers, such as Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Margaret Bourke-White, who began photographing the economic crisis in the first years of the decade. The infusion of state sponsorship into the documentary movement after 1935 ensured that still photographs of the ravages of the Depression would become its most recognisable artistic legacy, but they do not represent its full scope. Photographers and filmmakers, especially those on the left, spread out from providing local evidence of hunger, unemployment, and police repression, as the first WFPL images did, to shaping encyclopedic manifestos in which the entire politico-economic and cultural system would be analysed, challenged, and sometimes celebrated. All of this Frontier Film's *Native Land* (Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand, 1942, USA, 80) finally did when it was belatedly released in 1942 and Ivens set out to do in his never-completed *New Frontiers* (1940). Stott (1973) is still the most comprehensive overview of the documentary movement.

At first, the left documentary constituency thrived mostly on imports. Sovi-

et documentaries, for example, were continuously on view in New York and other large centres throughout the thirties – Vertov's *Tri pesni o Lenine* (*Three Songs About Lenin*, 62) was a hit in 1934. British films were also prestigious and popular, beginning with Grierson's *Drifters* (1929, 49), which appeared in New York in 1930.

The first documentaries by American directors to play theatrically in New York, outside of the WFPL agitprop milieu, appeared in 1934: Louis de Rochemont's unsuccessful *Cry of the World* (1932, USA, 65) and Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934, 77), produced under Grierson's British wing. However, the appearance of Time-Life's commercial newsreel, *The March of Time*, the following February (1935), injecting dramatic and interpretive elements into the traditional newsreel, precipitated a floodtide of new documentary work in the US. The non-theatrical showing of Ivens's films in the spring of 1936 added to the momentum. By this time, interest in documentary was so high that the work of the obscure Dutchman was praised rapturously, not only in leftist periodicals but in the liberal media as well. The *National Board of Review Magazine's* discovery of *Nieuwe Gronden* led to the introduction of the nonfiction category to its influential annual ratings. Ivens's cross-country campus tour, organised by an WFPL offshoot, the New Film Alliance, is a good index of the scale of the documentary movement in 1936. It extended, as I said at the outset, as far as Hollywood.

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The Rockefeller Foundation and the Museum of Modern Art were important institutional props to the growing movement. The latter sponsored the official Washington premiere of Pare Lorentz's New Deal-funded *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (25) in May 1936, presenting a program that also included five European documentaries. White House staff, diplomats, and members of the Supreme Court all showed up. Buoyed by this sendoff, *Plow* went on to 16,000 first-run showings and raves in every newspaper. The New York World's Fair in 1939 became the showcase for this first phase of the documentary movement, with Ivens's work much in evidence.

The strong popular foundation of documentary culture was essential to Ivens and other leftist filmmakers. Unquestionably a mass phenomenon, its artifacts ranged from Warner Brothers' *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932, 92) to *Life* magazine (founded in 1936). For socialists in the era of the Popular Front, mandated to enter the politico-cultural mainstream after years of marginality, to seek out allies among 'unpoliticized' classes and groups, and to combat fascism on a mass footing, here was a vehicle for their aims. For socialist filmmakers still too distrustful of monopoly capitalism and the entertainment industry to attempt an infiltration of Hollywood, the independent documentary seemed to offer a cultural strategy that was as clear as black and white.

What was less clear at mid-decade was the direction that the socialist doc-

umentary of the future would take. Members of the WFPL were sharply divided as to whether they should take advantage of the gathering stream of the documentary movement, as shown by the box-office success of *The March of Time*, or whether they should stick to their original 'workers' newsreel' mission, with its marginal base and confrontational aesthetics.

Leo Hurwitz, a chief architect of the decade, as early as 1934 established three priorities for radical filmmakers,³ which ultimately became part of a new consensus during Ivens's first years in the US:

1. *Mass access for radical film work through commercial or theatrical distribution.* Leftists were greatly encouraged by the work of their colleagues in Hollywood who had contributed to such 'progressive' films as Fritz Lang's *Fury* (1936, 92) and the Warner Brothers biopics such as *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (William Dieterle, 1935, 86). The New Film Alliance, Ivens's hosts, sponsored symposia on *The March of Time* and on progressive commercial features from pre-Hitler Germany such as *Mädchen in Uniform* (*Girls in Uniform*, Leontine Sagan and Carl Froelich, 1931, 87) and *Kameradschaft* (*Comradeship*, G.W. Pabst, 1931, 93). Ivens (n.d. [c. late 1930s], lecture notes, JIA) repeatedly praised such films on his tour and stressed the importance of 'combining our work with the mass movement', and, as he would put it a few years later, of 'break[ing] into commercial distribution [in order to] recover the social function of documentary'. Significantly, while in Hollywood Ivens contributed to the making of the WFPL-style militant short fiction about unions and scabs, *Millions of Us* (Jack Smith and Tina Taylor, American Labor Productions, 1936, 20), and for her part Van Dongen stayed behind in the dream factory to study narrative editing. Where an earlier generation of documentarists, including both Ivens and the WFPL, had assimilated the technical and aesthetic strategies of the European and Soviet avant-gardes, the generation of the Popular Front was looking west.
2. *The development of new 'synthetic' film forms.* Hurwitz ([1934] 1979, 91) argued that the form of the earlier workers' newsreels had simply been an economic and technical necessity, not an ideological or aesthetic choice per se, and that these forms must now give way to sophisticated hybrid forms including 'recreative analysis and reconstruction of an internally related visual event', or, in other words, *mise-en-scène*. He stressed the professionalism of the required new filmmakers who would replace the earlier amateur and artisanal cadres. This position was anathema to Hurwitz's opponents, who invoked Soviet authority and the name of Vertov, conveniently overlooking that reconstruction or *mise-en-scène* had long since taken a central place in the master's work. Ivens's films, screened repeatedly for the New York radicals upon his arrival, unambiguously

bolstered the Hurwitz side with their rich mix of actuality, compilation, *mise-en-scène*, narrative, and even scripting (in his Soviet film *Komsomol*). ‘We must learn’, he argued in a manifesto of the early forties, ‘to think of documentary as requiring a wide variety of styles – all for the purpose of maximum expressiveness and conviction’ (Ivens, 1942, 299). The hybrid films brought out in this milieu alongside *Spanish Earth* also built directly on the model. Herbert Kline, the director, who acknowledged Ivens’s support of his project (cited in Campbell 1982, 166), was responsible for the first of them, *Heart of Spain* (1937, 30), which followed *Spanish Earth* into release by only a month. This film would follow Hurwitz’s model as closely as Ivens did, blending proto-direct ‘spontaneous’ material mostly on medical relief, with capsule *mise-en-scène* personalisations.

3. *More profound political analysis.* For Hurwitz ([1934] 1977) the early WFPL newsreels of strikes and demonstrations had been too ‘fractional, atomic, and incomplete’ for adequate political analysis. The new ‘synthetic’ forms would facilitate more ‘inclusive and implicative comment’, and could ‘reveal best the meaning of the event’. This ‘meaning’ was to be a deeper, materialist analysis of the class struggle within capitalist society, and the forward movement of the working class, in both world-historic and individual terms, not just in the local and collective terms that the workers’ agitprop newsreels had seemed to emphasise. Once again, Ivens found himself on Hurwitz’s side of the debate. Earlier films, he stated in a lecture on his tour, including his own, were ‘just seeing things, not understanding’. Art must have a ‘definite point of view’, and must express this without ‘aestheticism’ or sentimentality. ‘The difference between newsreel and the documentary film’, he later explained, is that ‘the newsreel tells us *where-when-what*; the documentary film tells us *why*, and the relationships between events’, thus providing historic perspective. The new ‘deeper approach’, in particular the tactic of introducing identifiable characters into nonfiction filmmaking (which Ivens began calling ‘personalisation’ soon after his immersion in the US milieu), is capable of ‘penetrating and interpreting the facts; achieving a real interrelation between the particular and the general’ (Ivens, 1969, 209, 211).

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The debate among leftist filmmakers was accompanied by organisational changes. Nykino, a new film production outfit, had been formed by Hurwitz and his allies as early as the fall of 1934, in order to put into practice the new priorities. The East Coast radicals were thus already set on a path closely parallel to that traced by the films Ivens showed in New York in 1936, that is, the evolution from agitational newsreel work to more systematic and ambitious explorations of new outlets, new forms, and deeper analysis. Ivens’s effect,

then, was one of reinforcement of the direction already chosen and tentatively tested, or, as Hurwitz (1975,4) would put it, 'a very important stimulus and source of encouragement'. Another Nykino leader described it as 'a turning point [...] a shot in the arm [...] assistance from a recognized filmmaker who confirmed the theories of Nykino' (Lerner, quoted in Campbell, 1982, 189). Ivens's Soviet credentials – he was fresh from almost two years with the Soviet film industry – added in no small way to the impact of this encouragement.

Ivens officially cemented his affiliation with the Nykino tendency in the spring of 1937 when that group inaugurated yet another production company, fully professional this time, to accomplish their goals: Frontier Films. Though in Spain at the time, Ivens joined the dazzling array of American artists and intellectuals who signed up as founding members of the Frontier production staff, board of directors, or advisory board. The Popular Front line was doing all right: both the West Coast and the East Coast were well represented, from Hollywood star Melvyn Douglas to Broadway playwright Lillian Hellman, from liberals to fellow travellers to party members. Ivens had clearly aligned himself with the winning side. In fact, he had anticipated the Frontier Films approach the previous fall when he had enlisted many of the same luminaries to provide mainstream support – both moral and financial – for his first American film, *Spanish Earth*.

As soon as it first became apparent that the Franco rebellion posed a serious threat, Ivens had got together this group of leftist artists and intellectuals who were to become the producing body for a Spanish film.⁴ Their idea was to bolster American support for the Republican cause by means of a short, quickly made compilation of newsreel material. This would explain the issues to the American public and counter the already skilful Franquist propaganda. They called themselves Contemporary Historians, Inc., and had as their spokespeople the Pulitzer poet Archibald MacLeish and the novelist John Dos Passos, both well-known fellow travellers. The functioning producer was to be Herman Shumlin, Hellman's Broadway producer, with Hellman and Dorothy Parker rounding out this core group. Van Dongen was to put together the film. It soon became clear, however, that not enough good footage was available and that even the shots at hand were of limited use since they were taken from the Franco side – burning churches and the like – and were expensive and difficult to pry out of the notoriously reactionary newsreel companies. The group then decided to finish the project as quickly and cheaply as possible, which Van Dongen did using a Dos Passos commentary and relying on Soviet footage of the front. This feature-length work, called *Spain in Flames* (65), was hurriedly released in February 1937. Meanwhile, the producers decided to put most of their hopes on a film of greater scope to be shot from scratch on Spanish soil, personally underwriting a budget of \$18,000. Ivens would direct.

As the autumn progressed, the need for the film became more and more urgent: the left press began denouncing the German and Italian interventions and the Western democracies began nervously discussing neutrality. By the time Ivens arrived in Paris in the first bitter January of the war, a tentative scenario in his pocket, he had already been preceded by the first of the International Brigades, and by a growing stream of Western artists, intellectuals, and activists, including filmmakers from the USSR and England.

In Valencia, suddenly the new Republican capital because of the presumed imminence of the fall of Madrid, Ivens and Ferno got right to work, joined by Dos Passos for several days in April. They soon concluded, however, that their script was unworkable in the worsening situation. Drafted by Ivens together with Hellman and MacLeish, it had emphasised the background to the war and a diachronic conception of the Spanish revolution, calling for considerable dramatisation. The Republicans they consulted urged them instead to head straight for Madrid to find their subject in the action on the frontline. As the film's commentary would later make clear, 'Men cannot act in front of the camera in the presence of death'.

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The abandoned script merits a brief look, however, as an indicator of where American radical documentarists saw themselves heading in 1936. Based largely on dramatised narrative and semi-fictional characterisation, its only American precursors would have been the films of Flaherty, some scattered WFPL shorts, and Paul Strand's anomalous Mexican *Redes* (*The Wave*, 1936, 65), completed but not yet released at this point. The more likely model was the Soviet socialist realist semidocumentary epic, of which Ivens's own *Komsomol* was an important prototype. The *Spanish Earth* script followed the chronology of a village's political growth over a period of six or seven years, from the fall of the monarchy until the fictional retaking of the village from Franquist forces during the present conflict. A single peasant family was to be featured, particularly their young son, whose evolution would be emblematic of the Spanish peasantry's maturation during those years. The village would be a diagrammatic cross section of Spanish society as a whole, and various melodramatic or allegorical touches would highlight the various social forces in play: there were to be representative fascists, militarists, landowners, clergy, intelligentsia, even German interventionists and the ex-king! Ivens was clearly intending to expand his first experiments along these lines in *Komsomol* and *Borinage*. The script called for some elements of newsreel reportage to be worked in as well.

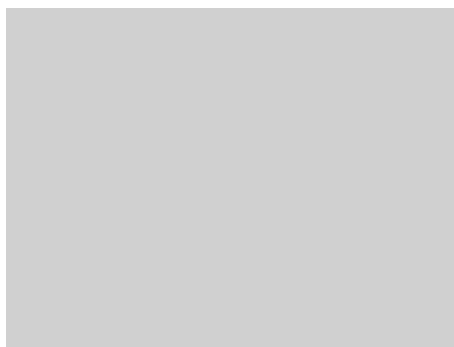
The final version of *Spanish Earth* turned out to be much more complex formally than the original outline called for, an improvised hybrid of many filmic modes, but certain elements of the outline remained. The most important of these was the notion of a village as a microcosm of the Spanish revolution. The

chosen village, Fuentidueña de Tajo, was ideal in this and every other respect. Its location on the Madrid-Valencia lifeline was symbolically apt, a link between village revolution and war effort. It was also visually stunning, set near the Tagus River amid a rolling landscape, and accessible to Madrid. Politically too, the village was ideal: the community had reclaimed a former hunting preserve of aristocrats, now fled, and had begun irrigating their new land. The filmmakers could thus keep their original theme of agrarian reform as well as hints of the original dramatic conflict between landowners and peasantry.

As for the original cloak-and-dagger plot about the young villager, Ivens and his collaborators attempted to telescope it into a simple narrative idea involving Julian, a peasant who has joined the Republican army. Even this scaled-down role was only partly realised since Julian disappeared in the frontline confusion after his village sequences had been filmed. Julian, an indistinctive-looking youth, appeared in only four scenes of the final film, stretched out by the editor to a maximum: a brief moment on the Madrid front where he is seen writing a letter home, the text provided in an insert and read by the commentator; a scene where he is seen hitching a ride back home on leave to Fuentidueña, with a flashback reminder of the letter; next, his reunion first with his mother and then with his whole family; and finally, a sequence where he drills the village boys in an open space. The footage was insufficient even for these scenes, so that the commentator must ensure our recognition of Julian by repeating his name and fleshing out the details of the narrative. The reunion scene would be the biggest challenge to editor Van Dongen. She was to improvise with covering close-ups of villagers apparently shot for other uses, and ingeniously fabricate a fictional mini-scene from unrelated material, where Julian's small brother runs to fetch their father from the fields upon his arrival. The family thus shown in this sentimental but effective scene would be largely synthetic. After Julian's disappearance, a symbolic close-up of an anonymous soldier was taken for the defiant finale of the film.

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27. *The Spanish Earth* (1937). Julian drilling the Fuentidueña boys: 'personalisation' was a challenge on the front and the exemplary peasant soldier became a hybrid construction. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



But this forced postponement of Ivens's dream of 'personalisation' did not stand in the way of other efforts to heighten the personal quality of the film. At every point in *Spanish Earth*, the filmmakers would intervene in the post-production to make individual figures come alive dramatically: through the commentary, as when a briefly seen Republican officer is identified by name and then laconically eulogised when it is disclosed that he was killed after the filming; or through complex editing procedures, as when a miniature story of two boys killed in the bombing of Madrid is chillingly wrought out of non-continuous shots and a synthetic flash-frame detonation; or through lingering close-ups of anonymous bystanders and onlookers, some of whom are even dramatised through first-person commentary. Several years later, Ivens (1969, 212) would conclude that such vignettes, 'hasty and attempted identities now and then walking through a documentary', had fallen short of his goal of continuous 'personalisation', and that his next project on the Sino-Japanese front, *The 400 Million* (1939, USA, 53), had been no less frustrating. It would not be until Ivens's third American film, *Power and the Land* (1940, 33) that the relative luxury of peacetime filmmaking would allow him to experiment with fixed characters developed consistently throughout an entire film – in this case, a wholesome American farm family.

'Personalisation' was not the only aspect of the Fuentidueña shooting that imitated Hollywood narrative. Using their heavy tripod-based Debrise camera, Ivens and Ferno developed a kind of documentary '*mise-en-scène*', a collaborative shooting style 'staging' 'real' actors in 'real' settings that eventually made up about two-fifths of the finished film. Ivens's *mise-en-scène* was an even more aggressive intervention in the events being filmed than Flaherty's collaboration with his subjects. Ivens matter-of-factly used the vocabulary of studio filmmaking such as 'retake' and 'covering shot'; on location, he set up shot/countershot constructions with his peasant subjects that aimed at the spatiotemporal continuity of studio fiction of the period, complete with complementary angles of a single action and insert close-ups of detail. This approach enabled not only a clear chronological summary of the Fuentidueña irrigation work as it progressed before the camera – Ivens's emblem of the Spanish revolution – but also the balanced and lyrical, even romantic, framings and movements that idealised the workers and their relationship to the Spanish earth.

Ivens was of course not alone in 'setting up' his subjects: the other major documentarists of the period, from Basil Wright to Pare Lorentz, all used variations of the same method. It is this element that looks most dated to our *cinéma vérité*-trained eyes. For Richard Leacock (quoted in Campbell, 1982, 413), narrative *mise-en-scène* led to the 'dark ages of the documentary' and for 1970s modernist critics like Vlada Petric (1973, 460-462), *mise-en-scène* meant the

28. Irrigating the countryside: using their heavy tripod-based camera, the filmmakers' documentary '*mise-en-scène*' enabled romantic framings that idealised the workers and their relationship to the Spanish earth. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



abandonment of the concept of film as 'a genuine visual art which draws its content from those kinesthetic qualities only cinema can bring to life'.

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Ivens, however, did not often have to answer to such ahistoric criticism at the time. The interventionist orthodoxy of the late thirties was no less universal than the direct cinema or '*vérité*' orthodoxy has been intermittently since the 1960s. Filmmakers and critics of the late thirties agreed on the need for a dramatisation of the factual, its 'vivification', as some put it. Ivens's *mise-en-scène*, undertaken in collaboration with the subjects was partly a reaction to the impersonality of the newsreels and the other journalistic media. 'Was I making a film or just newsreel shots?' Ivens (1969, 82) would ask of *Spanish Earth*. Truth was not a function of phenomenological scruple, but of political principle. Truth was not to be found on the surface of reality, but in deeper social, economic, and historical structures. The aesthetic of naturalist spontaneity in film was to be distrusted as much as 'spontaneism' in the arena of political strategy. The generation of filmmakers who developed *mise-en-scène* as a documentary mode believed, like their cousins the socialist realists, that their work had the purpose not only of reflecting the world but also of acting upon it, to change it. This was true even for liberals and social democrats like Lorentz and Grierson who did not subscribe to Marxist ideals. Ivens's (1942, 299) primary question was not whether he had shown the 'truth' but whether 'the truth has been made convincing enough to make people want to change or emulate the situation shown to them on the screen'. This is not to say that documentary *mise-en-scène* would have appeared to thirties spectators in the same way as fictional narrative cinema. An overwhelming network of 'documentary' codes prevented it from doing so, from non-synchronous sound to non-made-up faces, to specific marketing approaches, to the replacement of 'psychological' typing by 'social' typing.

Mise-en-scène, however, a luxury affordable in the calm of Fuentidueña, was rarely possible on the front lines. In Madrid, the filmmakers attached

themselves to the communist-affiliated Fifth Regiment in the Casa de Velasquez. Here they shot the siege of the city from the point of view both of its defenders in the frontline suburbs and of the air raid shelters within the city itself. By the time of the key battle of Brihuega (Guadalajara) in March, Ernest Hemingway, a recent convert to the Republican cause, had replaced Dos Passos as the production's guide and literary mentor. At Brihuega, buoyed by an important contingent of the International Brigades, the Republicans won a major victory against a twelve-to-one firepower disadvantage and prevented the besieged capital from being cut off. The battle's additional political significance was the incontrovertible proof it offered that organised Italian units were taking part: Italian casualties and their letters home are shown in a particularly moving scene of *Spanish Earth* (a scene that would lead to a fruitless screening at the League of Nations). Brihuega features prominently in the last half of the final version of Ivens's film. The battle material, from both Madrid and Brihuega, as well as from one other village that the filmmakers shot under bombardment, Morata de Tajuña,⁵ has a style whose spontaneity is diametrically opposite to the orderly, lyrical *mise-en-scène* of Fuentidueña.

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The 'spontaneous' mode, relying primarily on the crew's two small hand-cameras, is notable for the unrehearsed flexibility and mobility required to cover the soldiers and civilian victims who could not 'act before the camera'. This proto-direct mode, as Ivens had not foreseen while scriptwriting in New York, would make up more than half of the finished film. With this style, the camera operator, rather than rearranging an event in front of the lens, follows it spontaneously – the storming of a building, a run-for-cover during an air-raid, the evacuation of children, panic in the streets of the bombed-out village. The principles of spatio-temporal continuity were left for the editor to find in the cans: it was too dangerous for the operator to think about retakes and reverse shots. 'Spontaneous' shooting provided spectators with its own distinctive documentary codes, distinct from those of *mise-en-scène* material which was often present in the same film, as in *Spanish Earth*, or even the same sequence: unmotivated and random detail of behaviour or atmosphere, the flouting of taboos on out-of-focus material, looking at the camera, illegibility, etc. The mystique of 'life-caught-unawares' was still an essential element of the documentary sensibility despite the universal acceptance of *mise-en-scène*. Because of this mystique, 'spontaneous' elements often had the greatest impact on spectators, or at least on reviewers: the reviews of the day never failed to mention a woman seen wiping her eye amid the rubble of her village. The great affect of 'spontaneous' material such as this in *Spanish Earth* would confirm Ivens's reputation as a major inheritor of Vertov and a precursor of direct cinema.

29. *The Spanish Earth* (1937): the 'spontaneous' mode and the still essential mystique of 'life-caught-unawares'. Reviewers always mentioned this bombing victim wiping her eye. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

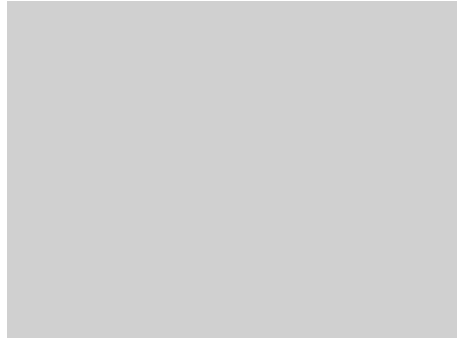


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It was in Madrid also that Ivens shot some material in a third cinematographic mode that constitutes only a fraction of the finished film but deserves brief mention nonetheless. What I am referring to is static, controlled images of public events, taken with a heavy, stationary camera. I call this the 'newsreel' mode because its repertory is identical to that of the newsreel companies of the period – ceremonious long shots of files of dignitaries, cheering crowds, military parades, or beauty contests. Though Ivens and other leftists and liberals usually avoided 'newsreel' shooting, as much out of distaste for clichés and superficiality as from any ideological scruple, the opportunity to use a borrowed newsreel sound truck to record a People's Army rally was one that Ivens could not refuse. Newsreel-style cinematography was the only means by which thirties documentarists could attempt synchronous sound on location – 20 years would pass before technology would catch up, in the television age, with the aspiration to hear as well as to see 'life-caught-unawares'. In any case, the rally scene of *Spanish Earth* featured the stirring oratory of La Pasionaria and other Republican leaders (re-recorded the following day in a more controlled studio setting, with some redubbed in New York because of technical problems), and, for this reason, as well as for its skilful editorial compression, would avoid the pitfalls of the mode. It was up to Riefenstahl and the Nazis to elevate to a new art form the 'newsreel' clichés of orators intercut with cheering crowds. The only phase of Ivens's career to depend on this mode was his Cold War exile in Eastern Europe, where he presided over several official rally films of the fading Stalin era.

Spanish Earth, then, unexpectedly became a cinematic hybrid in the uncontrollable laboratory of war and revolution. In this, as a compendium of different filmic modes, it was typical of most documentaries of the late thirties. Other national traditions were varying the hybrid model according to local factors. Grierson's British directors tended to use *mise-en-scène* more than Ivens, even resorting to studio work on occasion; Henri Cartier-Bres-

30. *The Spanish Earth* (1937): the 'newsreel' mode. A static, controlled image of a public event, the People's Army rally featuring the Republican heroine La Pasionaria thanks to a borrowed newsreel sound truck. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



son's cinematography for Frontier Films' second Spanish project, *The Fight for Life* (Lorentz, 1940, USA, 69), was predictably more 'spontaneous' than any other comparable film. However, the general trend was towards greater and greater use of *mise-en-scène*. In this respect, Ivens's evolution paralleled the work of almost every documentarist of the period. Wherever circumstances and resources permitted – which was not always the case as the build-up towards world war continued – documentarists almost unanimously built up the *mise-en-scène* components of their hybrid works, experimenting more and more with characterisation, narrative vocabulary, and even scripting. Writers became standard crew members, not only for commentaries, but to provide plots, continuity, and dialogue. During the forties, this mode became the basic component of most documentaries, rivalled only by the compilation mode for which the War had created a special market, and the dominance of *mise-en-scène* would continue right up until the explosion of direct cinema in the late fifties.

Meanwhile Van Dongen had begun assembling the consignments of rushes in New York as they arrived from Spain, wiring the filmmakers whenever she thought that a given topic was now well covered or that another was weak. Ivens left Spain at the end of April and Ferno wound up the shoot in May, whereupon Van Dongen began the edit in earnest, shaping images shot according to each of the three modes outlined above according to the methods of narrative continuity that she had perfected in her recent Hollywood apprenticeship. Individual sequences began emerging – the Fuentidueña irrigation project, civilians under bombardment, the Madrid and Brihuega fronts – each built strictly with the sequential and temporal logic of short fictive units. Obviously, the 'spontaneous' rushes presented the most challenge since they had not been shot for the editor. But she responded with ingenuity, building up to each split-second bomb impact with systematic precision, and then having the clearing smoke reveal the rubble and the panic, or following each Repub-

lican artillery shot with an image denoting an ontarget hit. Part of her skill was in picking out visual motifs to assure a narrative fluidity; images of children in a bombed out street, or a repeated glimpse of an ambulance or an artillery shell, for example, would underline an implied continuity. Sometimes a minor but identifiable bystander would function as a hinge for a continuity: her choice to cut at the point when a background figure in the People's Army rally blows his nose has drawn the admiration of at least one critic. Seldom before had the principles of fictional narrative editing been so skilfully and unobtrusively adapted for the purposes of nonfiction. The abandonment of the modernist-derived editing strategies of the young Ivens in his avant-garde days – for example, unsettling contrasts in scale, angle, and movement direction, or ironic or dialectical idea-cutting, often Soviet-inspired – was a price that Ivens and Van Dongen were willing to pay to achieve the Popular Front goal of speaking the narrative film language of the people.

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Within the emerging film as a whole, Van Dongen alternated short scenes of the military struggle and the social revolution, interweaving the themes of the combat in Madrid and Brihuega with the progress of the Fuentidueña irrigators. Two stunning scenes depicting the bombardment of civilians were placed at a climactic point about two-thirds of the way through the 52 minutes, so that the concluding movement, the victorious battle interpolated with the completion of the irrigation system, seems like a defiant riposte of the people against their oppressors. A coda alternates single shots of water rushing through the new irrigation trough and images of a lone rifleman firing, so that the two themes, defence and revolution, are summarised and fused, two dimensions of a single struggle. This montage finale would be widely echoed, though not necessarily imitated. *Heart of Spain*, edited in an adjacent room, would substitute a similar fusion of the clenched fists of the blood donor and of the Republican salute for Ivens's images of irrigation.

The alternating pattern of civilian and military struggles was therefore not just an effective editing device but a crucial ideological statement. In countering images of victimisation with images of resistance and revolution, *Spanish Earth* articulates a world view that sees people as agents of history, not its casualties. The final word is given, not to the airborne mercenaries and their bombs, but to the people rooted in the central symbol of the film, the earth. And in alternating the military resistance with the civilian struggle, *Spanish Earth* equates them, merges them into the ideological concept of the people's war. Ivens would return again and again to this visual and ideological construct as he continued to chronicle the people's struggles of the century from China and the USSR to Cuba and Vietnam, each time echoing the *Spanish Earth* equation of peasants in their fields and soldiers on the frontlines, of hoes and guns.

Ivens and Van Dongen brought to the soundtrack of *Spanish Earth* the same embrace of popular narrative film language as was evident in the shooting and editing, and the same creative resourcefulness in integrating it to their political task. The modernist virtuosity and clamorous experimentation of Ivens's early sound documentaries yielded to the subdued purposefulness of the Popular Front. The sound effects were innovative to the extent that Van Dongen experimented with more convincing laboratory synthesis (on-location sound effects were still primitive) and varied the newsreel cliché of wall-to-wall noise with moments of well-chosen silence and subtle transitions. However, the sound effects functioned essentially as support for the narrative thrust of the film, heightening the especially powerful scenes such as the bombardment episodes, injecting dramatic and informational energy into scenes that were less interesting visually, such as the long-shot Brihuega ones, and in general providing 'realistic' background texture to each of the films' narrative lines.

Continuing the Popular Front practice of lining up prestigious contributors, Ivens recruited two of the best-known East Coast composers to handle the music: Marc Blitzstein, the in-house composer of the New York left, and Virgil Thomson, who had been widely acclaimed for his brilliant folk score for *Plow*. Blitzstein and Thomson, pressed by the filmmakers' tight schedule, compiled Spanish folk music, both instrumental and choral, for the score. This choice reflected not only their haste but also the influence of the documentary movement on musical taste of the late thirties and the impact of *Plow*. The filmmakers fit the music to the images with discretion and sensitivity, with expressive pauses that contrast sharply with the 'wall-to-wall' tendencies of the period, even of 'prestige' films like *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl, 1935, Germany, 120) and *Man of Aran*. The tedious over-synchronisation that is also noticeable in these two films was likewise avoided, with general atmospheric matching being the guiding principle instead: sprightly dance rhythms accompany the villagers at work in the field and a soft dirge-like choral piece follows the village bombardment with just the right understated elegiac touch.

It was the commentary, however, that attracted more attention than any of the other soundtracks, and not only because of its star author. Hemingway's text is a high point in the benighted history of an art form of dubious legitimacy, the documentary commentary, and unusually prophetic in its anticipation of future developments in documentary sound. What was most striking to contemporary spectators was its personal quality. Ivens, Van Dongen, and Hellman made a last-minute decision to replace Orson Welles's slick reading with a less professional recording by Hemingway himself. This voice, with its frank, low-key roughness, added to the text's aura of personal involvement. It was a striking contrast to the oily, authoritarian voice-of-God for which *The*

March of Time was famous and which most documentaries imitated. Instead of an anonymous voice, the commentator became a vivid character on his own terms, a subjective witness of the events of the film, a participant. Though this function of the narrator was already common in Popular Front print journalism, Hemingway's contribution to *Spanish Earth* set off a trend in documentary film that would last throughout World War II, with filmmakers as different as Flaherty, John Huston, and Humphrey Jennings benefiting from his example. It was an effective substitute for the still impossible ideal of using sound to make subjects come alive on location.

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Hemingway's text had other innovative aspects too: its obliqueness, its variations in tone, its detail and immediacy, its multiplicity of postures towards the spectator, its ability to be at times dramatic and at times lyrical or reflective without being overbearing. Most remarkable, perhaps, was its restraint. Ivens and Hemingway concentrated on 'let[ting] the film speak for itself', on avoiding words that would duplicate the image-continuity, on providing 'sharp little guiding arrows' of text, 'springboards', often at the beginning of a scene, to invite the audience's involvement (Ivens, 1969, 128). The commentary's role as information and exposition was secondary. Not surprisingly, it is in the strongly narrative *mise-en-scène* passages set in Fuentidueña that the commentary intervenes least, and in the extreme long-shot accounts of artillery and infantry combat where it is, of necessity, most present, and, arguably, most effective. Hemingway's text was ultimately laid over only one-fifth of the image-track. This was an all-time record for conciseness in the classical documentary (during the war, Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* films would sometimes approach four-fifths and the Canadian National Film Board films did so regularly), but Ivens's record was often rivalled by some of his more visually orientated contemporary documentarists.

A careful look at the commentary in *Spanish Earth*, as well as in most films by the 'art' documentarists of the day, undermines a prevailing myth of how sound operated in the classical documentary. This myth depicts the classical sound documentary as an 'illustrated lecture', a film whose dominant diegesis was a direct-address commentary to which images played a mere supporting role.⁶ Trained within the silent avant-garde cinema, Ivens and Van Dongen had nothing but contempt for this 'illustration' approach, and usually succeeded in avoiding it, commissioning commentaries only after an autonomous image-continuity had been established and then reducing them ferociously. Most of the British directors in the Grierson stable did the same, as did Flaherty, Lorentz, and Vertov. Jennings and Riefenstahl did away with the commentary almost completely. Van Dongen had her own simple test of silencing the soundtrack to test the visual sufficiency of a given film. *Spanish Earth* must be seen as a highlight of a whole tradition of experiments in sound-im-

age structures that fought against the voice-of-God tedium of the newsreels (and the later wartime compilation films) in search of creative alternatives for the still new audio-visual art form. Our sense of documentary history must be revised to accommodate this tradition, just as the dream-factory assembly-line model of Hollywood history has long since been shaped to account for the Capras, the Welleses, and the Fords as well as against-the-grain institutional resistance.

Hemingway's commentary was delivered live at a June preview of *Spanish Earth*, in silent rough-cut, at the Second National Congress of American Writers, a grouping of leftist and liberal writers. Hemingway (1963, 533-534) declared to the assembly that 'Spain is the first real battlefield in an evil and international conflict that is certain to recur elsewhere', something presumably most of those present already knew. In order to ensure that the film would reach those who did not already know this, a massive publicity campaign got underway. That same month, a major coup saw *Life* magazine (12 June 1937) run a series of stills from the film along with Robert Capa's soon-to-be immortal action shot of the falling Republican soldier. In July, a White House preview led to a plug in Eleanor Roosevelt's column, the impossible dream of all Popular Front filmmakers. Immediately thereafter, Ivens and Hemingway arrived in Los Angeles for huge sell-out premieres and private fund-raising screenings within Hollywood's progressive circles, where \$20,000 was collected for Republican medical relief.

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The glitter and the publicity photos with Joan Crawford were not for the sake of vanity. The West Coast connections were deemed essential to the filmmakers' hopes for commercial distribution. Political documentaries had never received distribution by the 'majors' up to this point, but the overwhelming feeling was that a breakthrough was imminent, thanks to Lorentz's obstinate and successful campaign the previous year to distribute *Plow* through independent exhibitors. But the fanfare was deceptive. *Variety* summed up Ivens's predicament on 21 July:

This can make money where any picture can make money but it won't make it there. It won't make it there because it won't get in there. It will have to depend as it did here in its world premiere, on lecture halls which are wired for sound and can gross enough in one performance to justify a week's build-up. (Scully, 1937)

Nothing is new under the sun. The filmmakers resigned themselves to the traditional marginalised distribution that political, documentary, and Soviet films had always relied on. The premiere had taken place in July in the Spanish pavilion of the Paris International Exposition of 1937. There, with felic-

itous synchrony, it competed for space with that other iconic testimony to the great collective trauma of the war, Picasso's new mural *Guernica*. Shortly thereafter a Los Angeles preview attracted 6000 viewers (Stufkens, 2008, 212). But the US opening was 20 August at New York's 55th Street Playhouse. This art house, managed by Herman G. Weinberg, functioned as a showplace for prestige foreign features, including much of Renoir's work and most non-Soviet documentaries that achieved a New York airing: *Heart of Spain* played immediately before and after the *Spanish Earth* run respectively, the latter on a double bill with Renoir's *Les Bas-fonds* (*The Lower Depths*, 1936, France, 95). While this art house was one level above the usual Soviet purgatory downtown, Ivens's disappointment was profound, and record-breaking capacity crowds scarcely consoled him. However, the film's small leftist distributor, Garrison Films, still tried to repeat *Plow's* success. The ads played up the Hemingway name so much that *Spanish Earth* was often called a Hemingway film, a prestige-oriented tactic that was buoyed by the film's inclusion in the National Board of Review 'ten best' list for 1937. Audiences more interested in entertainment were assured how undocumentary the film was: it was 'The Picture with a Punch', and a 'Dramatic Story of Life and People in a Wartorn Village in Spain'. Further publicity resulted from short-lived censorship squabbles in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. A review in the liberal *The Nation* (20 November 1937), appearing during the film's third New York month, while acknowledging the bind of independent distribution, optimistically reported that Ivens was making progress and announced that more than 800 theatres across the U. S. had been signed up. The real figure was closer to 300. In other words, the film made an enviable splash in the art house political circuit, but a mere ripple in the commercial sea. Ivens would not achieve his breakthrough until his own New Deal-sponsored film, *Power*, in 1940.

Looking back at his most famous film for *Cinéma politique* (Raverat et al., 1978) from the vantage point of the late seventies, Ivens felt that he could identify a certain impact that *Spanish Earth* had exerted on its own period:

Of course you must not think that you are going to change the world with a film; all the same, there have been examples in history of films that have helped the revolution, like the Soviet films at the beginning of the October Revolution. In my own life, I saw the influence of *Spanish Earth*. [...] It really provided information about a problem that spectators were not very familiar with, and it helped the anti-fascist movement enormously [...] directly even. People gave money for the International Brigades. There are militant films that have enormous power, and that is linked to the moment at which they are shown.

Ivens's estimation is not unreasonable. Although his film along with the other Spain films in circulation like *Heart of Spain*, had no impact on the League of Nations or Western governments, they were part of the expanding cultural and political movement of the Popular Front period, providing an impetus while it was still growing in influence and expanding its base.

As part of this movement, *Spanish Earth* reflected many of its cultural and ideological tactics that were not directly related to the Spanish subject. The agrarian theme, for example, with its basic icons of bread, earth, and water, was central to the Depression imagination. Ivens's climactic image of water rushing through a new irrigation trough had already appeared in King Vidor's *Our Daily Bread* (1934, USA, 80) and Vertov's *Three Songs About Lenin*; impoverished migrant workers and sharecroppers had been the focus of countless photographic essays and books, as well as Lorentz's first two films. The Fuentidueña peasants were thus recognisable, universal, as were Hemingway's vague references to the 'they' who 'held us back'. Yet Ivens's socialist realist-tinted vision of the cheerful collective work of his villagers lacks the plaintive, almost defeatist feeling of most American or Western European agrarian imagery. The primitive irrigation project of *Spanish Earth* will seemingly feed an entire besieged capital. What is more, the collective, non-hierarchical initiative of the peasants is behind this success, not the expertise of the New Deal agronomists who dispense their advice on crop rotation upon the helpless denizens of Lorentz's films from on high.

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All the same, Ivens's refusal of socialist realist dogmatism in his vision of collective work has a certain Popular Front ring to it. There is a clear division of responsibilities among the workers, and the Mayor displays a kind of leadership, even delivering a subtitled speech announcing the project. Ivens carefully avoids all possible innuendos of collectivisation, forced or otherwise; authority springs, spontaneously, out of an implied tradition of folk common sense. Though the Fuentidueña scenes establish a full catalogue of the material terms of the village collective, with impeccable Marxist attention to the forces of production⁷ – with even a close-up of the union stamp on the bread distributed by the smiling village bakers – they do so in a way that lets the signals of tradition, exoticism, and patience, conventionally attached to the peasant icon in Western culture, overshadow the signals of revolutionary change. Discretion is the distinguishing feature of this vision of the agrarian revolution taking place in the Spanish countryside during the Popular Front.

Another theme emerges in *Spanish Earth* for virtually the first time in Ivens's career since his juvenilia: the family. This theme revolves primarily around Julian's homecoming sequence, but it is also notable elsewhere: in the images of two distraught mothers, one trying to load her children on an evacuation truck in besieged Madrid, the other in the bombed village inconsolably

bewailing her slaughtered children and in a young soldier's good-bye to his wife and child before the final battle, elevated by Hemingway into a symbol of the strength, courage, and tragedy of the family unit at war: 'They say the old good-byes that sound the same in any language. She says she'll wait. He says that he'll come back. Take care of the kid, he says. I will, she says, but knows she can't. They both know that when they move you out in trucks, it's to a battle'. Compared to later American populist-agrarian films like Flaherty's *The Land* (1942, 43), Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940, 129), or Renoir's *The Southerner* (1945, 92), the family accent in *Spanish Earth* is decidedly minor. Nevertheless, it clearly points to Popular Front strategy of recuperating the values of mainstream culture (and as we have seen, Ivens's party advisers urged him to play it up): idealised families were highly visible in Frontier Films productions as well.

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Spanish Earth, the first of the major anti-fascist films with wide distribution, initiated a preoccupation with military imagery that would dominate the screens of the next decade, and does so in a specifically Popular Front manner. Beyond Ivens's respectful treatment of soldiering as work, not surprising in the vision of a filmmaker who had romanticised the construction of North Sea dikes and Soviet blast furnaces, his emphasis is on the humanity of the Republican troops. The soldiers are presented as little men, non-professionals. Shots showing 'unsoldierly' signals – untidiness, awkward drilling, grins at the camera – are present throughout. In one sequence about life in camp, the emphasis is on everyday non-military activities such as getting haircuts, eating, reading newspapers; the implication is that the stake of the war is the quality of everyday life. In the parade scenes, there is more interest in the rawness of recruits eagerly joining up than in the precision of seasoned troops, more interest in small irregular groups than in the symmetrical formations of Riefenstahl's films. The Nazi ballets of banners and boots have nothing in common with the 'human' scale and detail of Ivens's People's Army.

At the same time, Ivens's attitude towards the Communist Party, its participation in the Republican government, and its leadership of the People's Army follows the usual Popular Front practice of 'self-censorship'. Specific political affiliations, whether of Ivens's subjects, his hosts, or of Ivens himself, were not a topic for discussion. A film courting mass distribution and Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as following the CPUSA line, declined of necessity to identify the lineup of Communist speakers during the People's Army rally scene: for example, Communists La Pasionaria, José Díaz, and others appear as 'the wife of a poor miner in Asturias', a 'member of Parliament', etc. Explicit political labels complicated the broad-based popular coalitions that were the mainstay of the Popular Front, as well as the effectiveness of Republican propaganda within the Western democracies. The existence of the International

Brigades, composed primarily of Western leftists, passes unmentioned. Other important gaps in Ivens's coverage of the war are conspicuous: Soviet aid to the Republicans; the question of the Church, a major focus of pro-Franquist propaganda; the identification of the enemy – the Italians and the Moroccan mercenaries are discussed in surprisingly respectful or pitying terms, but the Spanish classes who supported Franco's insurrection are omitted, as is the name of Franco, and even the word 'fascist' (other than in one excerpted speech); and finally, acknowledgement of the political struggle going on within the Republican camp at the time, which would later come to a head in the Communist-Anarchist showdown in Barcelona near the end of the war. Although this latter decision to underline Loyalist unity is hardly surprising, there are works, André Malraux's novel *L'Espoir* (1937), for example, that reflect the diversity within the Republican ranks in a positive way (unlike the 2012 TV movie *Hemingway & Gellhorn*, which depicts Comintern agents in fur hats prowling and growling menacingly around the Spanish landscape in a huge black sedan, 'disappearing' sympathetic and handsome young friends of the eponymous couple).

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Of course, all of Ivens's elisions can be justified in terms of dodging domestic red-baiters, religious groups, and censors (who had the habit of cutting hostile references to 'friendly' powers such as Italy), but they are also part of a systematic effort to depict the war as a simple non-ideological struggle of 'little people' against 'rebels' and invaders. The stakes of the war came across as 'democratic' in a very loose sense, rather than those of class struggle. Ivens was perfectly consistent with CPUSA policy, which preferred in the late thirties to call its ideology 'Americanism', stressing 'democracy' and 'civil liberties' rather than class allegiance, and soliciting the support of non-left allies.

Ivens's carefully constructed image of the Spanish war and civil revolution succeeded on that level without a doubt. *The New York Times* was persuaded after seeing the film 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' (McManus, 1937). *Spanish Earth* was the first film to formulate the concept of the people's war, a concept that would gain considerably in currency over the next generations of world history, and to insert this concept into mainstream public discourse. The film also quickly acquired 'classic' status as the memory of the Spanish Civil War faded: while the Mannheim Festival poll of 1964 classed it as one of the best twelve documentaries of all time (Vernon, 2011), and at the height of the New Left the Swedish authors Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson ([1968] 1971, 114) defined it as not only Ivens's most important film but also one of the best of its kind ever made, tastes would change and by the 21st century *Spanish Earth* would no longer be on the lists. Of course, Ivens and his collab-

orators were not shooting for immortality, and the price they paid for their achievement in its contemporary context – the soft-peddalling of specific radical programs and identity, the adoption of popular filmic forms – is fiercely debated even to this day. But it was a price that the filmmakers of the Popular Front paid in full conscience.

What of Spain? How successful were the filmmakers in their short-term pragmatic objectives? The commercial success of their film in its art-house, political circuit was not only a likely contributor to a slight Gallup upswing in US pro-Republican sentiment (Van Hensbergen, 2005, 106, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 214), but also responsible for quickly accumulating the funds to buy eighteen ambulances, which were sent to Madrid for assembly and deployment. The premiere of an unauthorised French version, *Terre d'Espagne*, produced under Jean Renoir's supervision with additional commentary and an increased emphasis on the agrarian theme (Stufkens, 2008, 214), took place seven months after New York, and it played elsewhere in the European democracies, heightening anti-fascist alarm as the continent geared for war. As the situation became increasingly hopeless in Spain (for ambulances save lives, not wars), Hemingway presided over a special launch of the Spanish version in May 1938 in Barcelona, where a real air raid temporarily interrupted Van Dongen's synthetic ones. The film was revived in New York in February 1939, just in time for the final triumph of Franco. Its next revival came upon the death of Franco in 1975, throughout Europe and nowhere more eagerly than in Spain, a monument to the struggles two generations earlier of the Popular Fronts of both the Old World and the New, inspiration and instruction for the struggles that were still ahead.

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THE 400 MILLION

The Marco Polo Bridge incident in Manchuria in July 1937 was the pretext for the Japanese to resume their invasion of China just as Ivens and his collaborators were finishing *Spanish Earth*. Soon, the Western media and the US left were as preoccupied with the renewed aggression in Asia as they had been the preceding year with Spain, though the newsreel companies were not as ready to connect the two conflicts as leftist analysis, and were much more accustomed to treating catastrophes visited upon Asian millions than the bombings of white European civilians.⁸

As the editing for both *Spanish Earth* and *Heart of Spain* came to an end, another team of filmmakers from Frontier Films was editing a film that suddenly seemed much more current – *China Strikes Back* (Harry Dunham, 37). This film premiered in October 1937 one month after the Guomindang (Kuo-

mintang)⁹ had reluctantly agreed to form a United Front with the Red Army to fight the invaders. *China Strikes Back* had undergone as many last-minute changes as feasible to include the rapid developments in the Chinese defence strategy; because of its topicality it fared extremely well in the theatres, saturating the New York market and becoming a major title in the documentary 'boom' of late 1937. At the same time, American interest in China had been stimulated by an influx of new journalism dealing with the Communist-controlled areas of northwestern China – namely Agnes Smedley's (1938) writing on the subject and Edgar Snow's 1937 book *Red Star over China* and publicity lecture tour of the same year accompanied by a 16mm film of Yanan (Yenan). Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's well-timed box-office and prestige hit, *The Good Earth* (Sydney Franklin, 1938), premiering February 1937, also contributed to the phenomenon.

It is not surprising that discussions about a new film on China by Joris Ivens began even before *Spanish Earth* had settled into its distribution pattern, nor that the discussions involved the same group of New York intellectuals as had formed Contemporary Historians, Inc. The group recruited some important new blood, namely Dudley Nichols, then at the peak of his career as John Ford's favourite screenwriter. Another important recruit was Luise Rainer, the expatriate German actress and veteran of Max Reinhardt's Berlin theatrical troupe; Rainer was then riding the short-lived crest of her fame as the 1936 Academy Award Best Actress and star of *The Good Earth*, and, not incidentally, solidly linked to the New York radical intelligentsia by virtue of her marriage to playwright-screenwriter Clifford Odets. Rainer's role in *The Good Earth* endeared her to the Chinese-American community (it brought her second Oscar during the final preparations for *400 Million*) and enabled her to secure the financial backing for the film from Chinese-American businesspeople in New York, instead of from the producers themselves. Her help turned out to be essential since one major underwriter, K.C. Li, a leading New York import merchant, was a strong supporter of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-chek) and did not see eye-to-eye with the producers on the political situation in China. Another Hollywood supporter was Frank Tuttle, a prolific director of Bing Crosby hits among other accomplishments and member of Tinseltown's CPUSA network, who had hosted Ivens the previous year, and would now act as film industry point man, ensuring that the negative would be developed at his studio, Paramount.¹⁰ Herman Shumlin continued to function as producer, and Hellman and MacLeish continued to be mainstays of the support group, which re-incorporated under the name of History Today, Inc.

The group considered that another fuller film on the Chinese defence was needed for several reasons. *China Strikes Back*, for one thing, rapidly became dated, not only because of the United Front between Jiang and the Commu-

nists, but because of the lightning Japanese advance throughout the fall: by the end of September both Beijing (Peking) and Tianjin (Tientsin) had fallen, by November Shanghai and Tai-yuan, and in December, as the film preparations drew to an end, it was the turn of Nanjing (Nanking), the capital throughout the thirties. Each new reverse came after brutal, widely publicised sieges and bombardments.

China Strikes Back, furthermore, was only 23 minutes long. It was thought that a less superficial, medium-length or feature film would attract more attention, deal more thoroughly with the situation, rally more support for the Chinese defenders, and reinforce the growing agitation against US isolationism. One particular reason that *China Strikes Back* was outmoded was that it had been centred around footage secretly taken in 'Soviet China' in late 1936 or early 1937; since 'Soviet China' and the Red Army had now become the 'Special Administrative District' and the Eighth Route Army, integrated with the forces of the former arch-enemy, the Guomindang, a new orientation was needed.

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The target for the film, once again, was western public opinion and relief support. Though the newsreels were not unsympathetic to the Chinese, and though the US neutrality policy did not prevent the sale of arms to China in this undeclared war, public opinion and the sentiment in Congress were both strongly opposed to intervention and even to proposed sanctions against Japan. In October 1937, 40% of the American public considered themselves neutral, according to one poll, and 63% of China supporters were against an embargo of war materials for Japan, despite Roosevelt's pronouncement of his support for a 'quarantine' against the aggressor nation the same month.¹¹ The US left was conducting a major campaign in support of sanctions against Japan, an issue not broached by *China Strikes Back*; it was therefore an important theme of *400 Million* with its images of US scrap metal bound for Japanese munitions factories. Garrison Films was to distribute another film originating in the US left early in 1938, specifically on the subject of the proposed boycott, entitled *Stop Japan*. Ivens's (1969, 141) more general aim was 'to tell America about a China which they had never before been told about truthfully and completely',¹² a China that was certain to include the 'Special Administrative District' nonetheless.

The projected outlay for the film was \$50,000, more than double the budget for *Spanish Earth*. Ivens had now had full exposure to wartime filmmaking conditions, had encountered enough Hollywood amusement at his miniscule Spanish budget, and was tired of having to comb desperately through his rushes for useable material even to the extent of having to repeat shots. He was ready to make the next film at the professional level. This also meant increasing his crew. In addition to hiring Ferno once again, he arranged for another assistant, Robert Capa, the now-famous photographer whom they had met in

Spain. Capa was not only another ‘big name’ lending his name to the project (officially he would be covering the war for *Life*, who could partly cover expenses). A third crew member with miscellaneous duties was considered a necessity after Spain, where the assistance of first Dos Passos and then Hemingway, and other Americans and Spaniards, had been invaluable in making logistical arrangements (Ivens, 1969, 142). Spain had convinced Ivens of the importance of having a writer on location as well, a conviction also connected to the mode of *mise-en-scène*, and Nichols was to accompany the crew in this capacity. The period of the shoot was indeterminate but the crew was apparently ready to stay longer than they had in Spain, though not so long as the seven months they eventually took. Arrangements were made for Paramount to develop the rushes in Hollywood and to provide some advice on subtropical filming. Fredric March was to be the commentator, another Academy Award winner, who would bring to the film the prestige of the leading man to Garbo, Hepburn, Shearer, Sidney, and, most recently, Gaynor and Lombard. Yet despite the numerous ‘big name’ Hollywood connections and the increased aura of professionalism surrounding the project, contacts with the Frontier Films milieu were still strong: WFPL stalwart Ben Maddow would be credited as ‘assistant’, a credit referring to a supportive role in the editing and narration, and Garrison would distribute.

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In November 1937, Ivens made a trip to Europe to recruit Fernhout and Capa for the project. This time Ferno would receive equal billing, though there is no evidence that his role was substantially different from what it was on *Spanish Earth* nor that he participated in the editing of the film. Hankou, the current Chinese capital, was much further than Madrid from the sources of supply, so the technical preparations were especially thorough – extra equipment was purchased in addition to the two men’s hand-cameras and Ferno’s large Debie. One result was that the crew was perhaps over-equipped and would have to be accompanied by, in addition to the censor and censorship assistant imposed by the Guomindang, a business manager, a personal assistant, a servant, and, on frequent occasions, a file of as many as 24 ‘coolies’ (Ivens, 1969, 160). One apparently typical shooting excursion on the Shandong front would involve a truck and only six porters (Grelier, 1965, 151). This factor was to contribute no doubt to the problems of immobility and official interference that would plague the project in China, of which the filmmakers had not yet had a taste. In New York, Ivens discovered that K.C. Li was attempting to stall the project and therefore had to undertake further last-minute fundraising activities. In California, just before boarding his Pan-American China Clipper flight, he encountered a further reversal: Dudley Nichols backed out of the trip to China, but agreed to continue as writer.

After a long calamitous trip, which is documented vividly in the dia-

ry excerpts in *Camera*, Ivens arrived in Hong Kong on 8 February. There he secured additional supplies with the help of an experienced Dutch expatriate and visited Soong Ching-ling (Madame Sun Yixian [Sun Yat-sen]), who was spearheading the campaign to raise support for China in the West. She provided him with an orientation to China somewhat different from that which her brothers-in-law Jiang and Kong, the Guomindang leaders, would later provide, and agreed to be filmed on the filmmakers' passage back out of China. The filmmakers' China headquarters was to be Hankou (Hankou and Guangdong [Canton] were to fall in October, shortly after the crew had filmed the bombardment of this latter city and had returned to the US).

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Ivens's frustrating seven months in China, as recorded in his notes, diaries, and correspondence, involved 'one hundred times more difficulties' than in Spain (Ivens, draft letter to Shumlin, n.d. [c. winter 1938-1939], JIA). Not only did the Guomindang interference, bureaucracy, and censorship cause disruption and delays and seriously affect the shape and content of final film, but they also prevented him from realising a major professional and political goal, a pilgrimage to Shanxi (Shensi) province, where most of the Communist areas were. Everywhere in China, Ivens remembers seeing streams of young people moving north to Yanan but was prevented from following them and thus from linking the military struggle to social revolution as he had in Spain (Devarrieux, 1978a, 108). Instead of the exhilarating record of political inspiration and high morale found in the Spanish accounts, the China documents reveal anger and disappointment.

As Leyda (1972, 115) recounts, the Guomindang seemed more afraid of leftist filmmakers than they were of the Japanese and successfully prevented Ivens from even meeting the dynamic Hankou community of filmmakers, many of whom had similar political sympathies. Although Ivens attributed the interference to the routine Guomindang supervision of all foreign film production in China, and provides innumerable anecdotes of his hosts' apparent misunderstanding of the project, it seems highly unlikely that the Jiangs and their representatives would not have been more aware of what was at stake than they let on. Both Leyda (1972, 110-112) and Dorothy Jones (1955, 40) provide lengthy accounts of the Chinese diplomatic service's detailed and effective monitoring of Western film projects involving China. They must certainly have been aware of *China Strikes Back* and must have smarted at that film's homage to their rivals in the northwest. They surely could not have been unaware that Ivens was affiliated with the community that had sponsored that film and had vilified the Guomindang continuously throughout the thirties. The Guomindang's conveyed impression that the Ivens group were 'third-rate artists' unworthy of official sponsorship, has, in retrospect, the air of a ploy (Ivens, 1969, 152-153).¹³ For once, Ivens's official diplomatic and Hollywood

connections may have been a hindrance and actually prevented him and his huge retinue from slipping in and out of Shanxi unnoticed, the way the author of the prized footage in *China Strikes Back*, Harry Dunham, had done.¹⁴ In any case, in preventing Ivens from filming the Communist areas and the Eighth Route Army, the Guomindang did win a major propaganda battle. As for winning the war, it is another question: another detail of the episode, also elevated now to the status of legend, is that Ivens slipped his hand camera and some stock to Wu Yinxian, a member of the Eighth Route Army, told the Guomindang he had dropped them in the river, and thus participated vicariously in some of the first film shot in the revolutionary state, entitled *Yanan and the Eighth Route Army* (Yuan Muzhi, 1939). He eventually returned to find his old Kinamo enshrined in the Museum of the Revolution in Beijing (Leyda, 1964, 71).

In the meantime, however, the Guomindang interference ensured that the Communists make only a minor, unacknowledged appearance in the final film, and that Ivens's style and subject matter as they were evolving in *Spanish Earth* were radically affected, as my analysis will demonstrate. The crew had to spend their first six weeks in Hankou before being allowed to head for the combat zone (in Spain the initial delay had been only three days), their crew by now infiltrated with Guomindang spies. They then spent much of the first half of April filming on the Shandong front, where they managed to witness and film aspects of the only Chinese victory in 1938, Tai'erzhuang, which comprises the final climactic sequence of *400 Million*. After returning to Hankou via Zhengzhou, they devoted May to fruitless attempts to get close to the Communists in Shanxi. This not unamusing episode landed the group in Lanzhou on the Mongolian border because they had requested to shoot near the Great Wall in the belief that this would take them into Shanxi. Outsmarted once again, they saw another distant portion of the very long Great Wall, but used this occasion profitably to film the site of the supply route to the USSR. The film's dust-storm sequence was also shot in this desert region. At this point the remarkable exchange of telegrams with Hankou took place in which Madame Jiang encouraged the filmmakers to return to Hankou to 'take advantage of the June weather' (Ivens, 1969, 175). Finally the group succeeded in reaching Xi'an, on the edge of the Special District they were so anxious to reach, but to no avail. Here, trailed night and day by detectives, they met Agnes Smedley, and by accident, Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden.¹⁵ Further delays resulted when Ivens contracted the mumps. Upon their return to Hankou, the Guomindang, now having confirmed their suspicions that what Ivens was really interested in was Shanxi, tightened the clamps even more, and henceforth prevented the processing of any shot before a 16mm duplication of it had been developed in Hong Kong and approved officially. During this last vis-

it to Hankou, the group's only official contact with the Communists occurred: without permission they filmed a meeting of the National Military Council at which an Eighth Route Army delegation was present and a brief portrait of Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai) resulted.¹⁶ The final phase of the shoot was in Quang-dong, where the crew, filming from a high hotel that the Japanese command were sparing for their eventual headquarters, took the material on civilian bombardment required for the film. They then returned to Hong Kong to film Soong Ching-ling and made a hasty retreat to Hollywood in September. There the rushes had been developed and the cutting had already been commenced by Van Dongen.

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The whole project moved to New York after a month or so, followed by Nichols, who had to abandon his Hollywood work to finish the commentary. The dramatic voice-track was post-synchronised with Chinese-American actors in New York. Advance previews began taking place as early as November, though the final sound-editing lasted well into February 1939, with distribution problems causing further delays and disappointment. Ivens was reportedly at one point ready to destroy everything (Zalzman, 1963, 66-67).¹⁷ The film was released by Garrison on 7 March, the producers having failed once again to find a mainstream distributor, though this time the shock did not overwhelm the already low morale. As with the Spanish film, the world situation tended once again to upstage the premiere: attention had once again returned to Europe. Herbert Kline's and Hanns Burger's film *Crisis* (1939, USA, 95) on Czechoslovakia opened at the same time, and, of course, Hitler chose the same month to take over whatever parts of Czechoslovakia had not been absorbed the previous autumn following Munich.

Ivens's conception of the project evolved continuously during this tortuous itinerary and it is relevant to this study to analyse the various stages of the evolution. During the enforced idleness of the Pacific fight, Ivens applied himself energetically to the planning of the film, hoping all the while that the Chinese situation would permit the kind of heightened personalisation of the documentary form that had eluded him in Spain, 'the logical development of the documentary' (Ivens, 1969, 211).

Once more, Ivens was armed with a story outline by Hellman and MacLeish, aided this time by their Nationalist backer K.C. Li, that would prove as impracticable in the field as their earlier version of *Spanish Earth* had been. Later in Hankou, Ivens summarised the original outline in his notes:

Central figure young man. new China. cotton mill, cotton purchased by Japs. for Chinese mill, necessary road building. also girl...road is symbol of New China, struggle with Japanese buyers. building road coincides with invasion. war approaching village. air raid on road and bridges.

mobilization of village, defence of villager and troops. boy-girl. New China. New spirit of construction. Jap. danger. road symbol. war fight. (handwritten note, 23 April 1938, JIA)

The echoes in this sketch of the original Spanish project, not only the exemplary focus on village and road, but the chronological symbolic narrative that would require considerable fictionalisation, are surprising considering that History Today could hardly have been under the impression that it would be any easier in China to execute such a conception than it had been in Spain, regardless of whatever commercial advantages would accrue from the addition of 'boy-girl' elements. Isherwood ([1939] 1972, 54) reports hearing from the filmmakers on 9 March of plans 'to make a film about the life of a child-soldier, a little red devil, in one of the mobile units of the Eighth Route Army'. It is likely that the filmmakers, even at this early date, had an official film conception and a slightly different private one.

Ivens's Hankou note (written after he had returned from the Shandong front) indicates why he was coming to the conclusion that such an outline was not feasible:

too much accent on reconstruction and history – could be done in Hollywood, needs focus on war, concentration of all forces for war. Show new China in organization of resistance, uniting of all classes, history of aggression. (handwritten note, 23 April 1938, JIA)

All the same, he had not completely abandoned narrative elements involving personal characterisation, despite the hardships of the front and the virtual impossibility of undertaking this kind of filmmaking in these circumstances:

We try to get some more story or personal angle on the development of the battle from General Zhu. Many military people do not think in those terms. Too dry or too cagey. Our liaison and censorman, General Du, does his utmost to stop us getting close to the officers or men. (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 160)

Thus the inherent difficulties in filming combat at close range were compounded by the officers' interference, with the result that the battle material, as with *Spanish Earth*, would lack definition: at least one reviewer found the Tai'erzhuang battle sequence very flat compared to newsreel coverage while another (Nugent, 1939) even complained that battle coverage was missing.

At first, unsure of the quality, if any, of this Tai'erzhuang material, Ivens ([1938] 1969, 160) did not know whether it would be a separate sequence or fit

into the main continuity. Eventually, to compensate partly for the difficulties at the front, Ivens evolved a 'trptych structure' idea, of which the final part still clung to the idea of a personal narrative:

First a broad general section to say that the Japanese did not begin today, that the War is part of a plan which has been in the shaping process for over thirty years – hundreds of years if you like – and was specifically formulated in 1927 in the Tanaka Memorandum. This is our political and economic background of this historic period. The central panel of the triptych will be the war itself and the battle of Tai'erzhuang and future battles. Out of that must come the third section, a personal story of a young Chinese defending his country. (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 170)

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This idea is visible in the final film except that the final two panels are combined; the third panel of *400 Million* is devoted to the battle of Tai'erzhuang and at the same time focused around an apparently fictional exemplary narrator-protagonist, Sergeant Wang. The other two panels have also been reshaped, with the first one treating the historical China (historical background and the Japanese aggression), and the second one treating 'modern' China (united resistance and national construction). However, it is clear from the somewhat peripheral and contrived role of Sergeant Wang as internal narrator, functioning primarily as a narrative device without achieving any real definition as a character, that the circumstances continued to mediate drastically as late as April between Ivens's increasingly realistic conceptions and the rushes he was continuing to shoot daily.

I have already suggested that another essential element in the original conception of the film was to add to the views of the Eighth Route Army and the new Soviet zones of Shanxi that had been the basis of *China Strikes Back*. A number of the fictional characters considered in the early stages of the project were to encounter or to be part of this milieu. A journal entry from the Pacific flight sets forward this element that Ivens, leaving the Shandong front, would have to attempt soon or never:

It is good to think about the coming work. Guerilla warfare, one of the most important things. Maybe follow the activities of a guerilla general with the camera for three months... When the people produce their own commanders from among themselves, out of their own ranks, then they are good. I saw Lister and Campesino leading divisions of the People's Army in Spain. Great people. I'll find them in China too. (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 144-145)

The vagueness of this entry, possibly written with non-communist backers or censors in mind, does not conceal the specificity of the intent – the guerillas in which Ivens was interested acted in the northwest. On 15 May, while in the remote Lanzhou area, in a desperate attempt to be permitted to move beyond Zhou to the northwest district, Ivens drew up and presented to the Guomindang official, Colonel Huang, an outline for a strongly narrative episode including dramatic characters to be shot there and featuring the Great Wall and Madame Jiang. The sincerity of this proposal is questionable, followed as they are by an assurance that Americans were very interested in the Eighth Route Army, and possibly formulated at the time when Ivens thought that a visit to the Wall would automatically bring him among the guerillas.

However, Ivens probably no longer believed that such an admittedly melodramatic emphasis was feasible or desirable. This treatment may simply have been an attempt to mollify his guides, who were exerting a ‘terrific pressure [...] to get a full script of our film’ (Ivens, 1969, 174). Notes written three days previously to this, in Dutch significantly, are in obvious despair at the constant surveillance, and possibly at the news that they were being taken towards Mongolia. They suggest the splitting up of the group, and recommend the shooting of more straight documentary material because of the impossibility of the original story and the futility of looking for an actor in Xi’an while under surveillance. The notes go on to hope that later on there might be contact with the guerillas, since a story without them would have no sense, and to express, reassuringly, just a glimmer of ‘mad inspiration’ in the landscape (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 173).

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Yet another detailed formulation of a film outline for work in the Communist areas, dated 15 May, possibly written as notes for Ferno in the event that he would be able to detach himself from the excursion, has almost completely dropped the narrative, personalised orientation. Complete with student groups moving on foot towards Yanan, an encounter with Mao playing basketball with students and soldiers, re-enacted material on guerillas sabotaging a railroad, and much soldier-peasant interaction, it documents Ivens’s emphases and strategies in the shooting of the hybrid style of this period, as well as the ideological, formal, and topical accents he was hoping for at this time. This ‘Plan for Shooting Film of 8th Army’ concludes:

Emphasize in the pictures the important and excellent relation and close contact between army and population – Also the new and human discipline during the service, the warm and comradely relation in contrast to the other armies and schools. film in Y not too much. We need most material of the 8th Route Army. Make only minimum of re-enacted scenes. (handwritten notes, Xi’an, 15 May 1938, JIA)

If this scenario was submitted to Col Huang, as seems to have been the case, it may have been a last-minute gesture of suicidal defiance. In any case, it too had no effect, except that echoes are visible in the final film. Of interest, however, beyond its technical instructions, and its emphasis on preconceptions of the western audience, whether over the Great Wall or missionaries, is the caution Ivens advises on ideological and aesthetic grounds with regard to the personal narrative line and *mise-en-scène*. There is stress throughout on group activities and the specification that the images of young heroes and brave girls should not be 'portraits' of individuals but of groups at work. Undoubtedly, the de-emphasis on re-enactment in this proposal has been influenced by a reaction against the Guomindang insistence on *mise-en-scène* throughout; probably this outline if filmed would have resulted in a mix comparable to that of *Spanish Earth* with the 'spontaneous' mode greatly enriched by the intimacy of living and working within small groups for extended periods.

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In terms of specific content, the 'plan' is clearly designed to complement Dunham's material in *China Strikes Back* in the same way that the Spanish films had avoided overlapping each other's scope. The spontaneous flavour would have added a personal resonance to Dunham's footage, which was elegant, but formal and impersonal. The actual combat footage would have corrected Dunham's inability to photograph any military activity beyond manoeuvres. Ivens's emphasis on the civilian constituency of the army and their interaction would have filled out Dunham's meager coverage of the district as a functioning social order rather than a military stronghold.¹⁸ As with Spain, the military aspects were of no importance to Ivens without their social correlatives. It is tempting to speculate about the cinematic qualities and inestimable historical relevance of this film that was never to be made. A letter drafted to Shumlin after the completion of *400 Million* summarised Ivens's view of the Chinese experience. He bitterly complained that he had been prevented from making a film with a 'story' in China and had had to turn to a 'straight documentary film'. His unrealised goal, he said, had been to prove to himself and to others where the new documentary film was to go, but instead he had been forced to give up his 'original conception and styles'. Most angry about the censors and spies, he listed scenes that he had been prevented from filming, including images of a blind mother. Hinting about possible damage done to his own career by the episode, Ivens closed by affirming his conviction that the narrative idea, though still theoretical, is 'ten times right' (Ivens, draft letter to Shumlin, n.d. [c. winter 1938-1939], JIA).

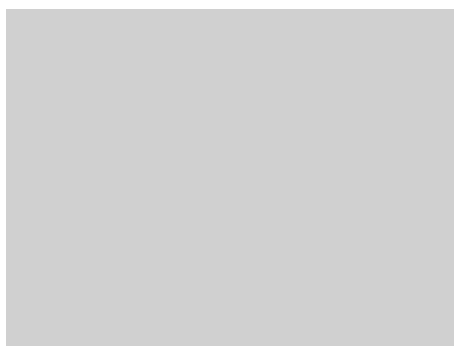
Looking back after the completion of *Power*, Ivens was less bitter about the failure of the project of personalisation in China. He still hoped, however, that the goal had been partially achieved insofar as 'after seeing the film you could think you know one or two Chinese; you could like them or dislike

them' (Ivens, 1969, 212). Ivens was presumably referring not only to Sergeant Wang, but also to the portraits of the Guomindang leaders (clearly in the 'dislike' category), to the even more fleeting encounters with Soong Ching-ling, to the historian and writer, Guo Moruo, who speaks at a public ceremony in one sequence, and to a few other minor dignitaries, some anonymous. Perhaps more memorable for Ivens was a couple depicted searching for their belongings in the ruins of their house near Tai'erzhuang, too distant from a camera that is understandably discreet, but decidedly discernible as 'characters'. Towards the end of the post-production, Ivens made an attempt to step up the personal quality of this short scene by adding to the commentary the names of the husband, Li Bo, and of the village, plus the judicious revelation not provided by the image that the husband had first searched for his hammer but that the wife had tried to uncover her grinding-stones. The random concreteness of this revelation adds greatly to the personal effect of this scene. The vignette method that had been Ivens's last resort in Spain, then, served him in China as well. One reviewer declared that the personal vignettes were the highlight of the film and that they should have been extended, a prescription with which Ivens would have been in complete agreement. The Li Bo episode for this reviewer 'dwarfed' the entire battle scene:

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Ivens does his best war correspondence with portraiture. The faces of China unite the soundtrack. They tell the whole story of the war. He could have made it a better film, I think, and made a more potent brew from the bitter caldron of war, had he studied those faces longer. (Nugent, 1939)

31. *The 400 Million* (1939): vignette of Li Bo family searching for their belongings in the ruins of their house, accenting the personal quality of the film. DVD frame capture.
© CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



It would only be another film on China 35 years later that would permit the detailed portraits Ivens was seeking.

The final structure of the 'straight' documentary that Ivens made 'against his will', when all was said and done, was not dissimilar in very general terms

to that of *Spanish Earth*. The same propaganda structure of idyll-threat-resistance is still present, though in modulated form. An initial exposition of the Chinese historical, geographical, and cultural context, extolling Chinese contributions to human society, leads into the presentation of the history of Japanese aggression and the current attack. Next, a long series of sequences detailing the unification of the country and its modernisation under the Guomindang's 'New Life' Program follows, and finally the climactic battle of Tai'erzhuang that shows the people triumphing over the aggressor. As in *Spanish Earth*, there are two vivid atrocity sequences showing synthetically edited civilian bombardment. One is located at the beginning of the film, as a kind of prologue, apparently a late addition to the film to enliven the original beginning's lyrical exploration of Chinese landscape and culture. The second bombing sequence, placed near the end, purports to show Japanese revenge for the Tai'erzhuang defeat, coming between the victory and an exultant torchlight celebration that concludes the film. This latter placement was apparently intended to qualify the euphoria inherent in the victory and in the overall structure of the last movement of the film. As in *Spanish Earth*, there is also a basic alternating rhythm of positive and negative sequences, aggression and resistance, denunciation and affirmations of calm and endurance.

With *400 Million*, Ivens continues the same basic hybrid mix of cinematographic modes that characterised *Spanish Earth*, though there are significant inflections arising from the shooting situation. The proto-direct 'spontaneous' mode, which had dominated *Spanish Earth* in proportion to its running time and spectator impact, is significantly reduced in this film. Two anecdotes from *Camera* suggest the reason for this:

We are waiting for a refugee train. We have often seen them, but haven't filmed one yet. But one doesn't come in today. It is the old lesson: film a certain thing the moment we see it even if the light conditions are not exactly right. The censors also try to stop us when we attempt anything spontaneous and then we discuss away the freshness. Discussions with censors and light metres are dangerous. (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 171)

The other anecdote describes a spontaneous demonstration that the group came across by accident in Xi'an, a kind of spontaneous musical street-theatre organised by four students:

The whole market place was alive. The elementary latent force in these people – found all over China – was being brought to life by these students. It was a great manifestation. But we were not allowed to film it

because it would give the impression that the Chinese mass was dirty and not well organized! We argued with the censor. No luck. [...]

The next morning about seven o'clock our Chinese company hurried us out because they had arranged something terrific for us. On the great square, without anything typically Chinese, they had lined up about 10,000 people. All nicely arranged. Children with children, men with men, bicycles with bicycles. Four shiny loudspeakers and forty students instead of yesterday's four were facing the crowd. 'Here's your chance', they said. (Ivens, 1969, 176)

These anecdotes suggest several reasons for the suppression of the 'spontaneous' mode in *400 Million* at the instance of the censors. The Chinese insistence on the propaganda value of images of organisation and modernisation is not incomprehensible. In fact, it seems even very contemporary in its instinctive understanding of the complicity of the code of the 'exotic' in China's historic colonial humiliation, a code that Ivens's ([1938] 1969, 173) innocent phrase 'typically Chinese' hints may be more residually present in the project than his disavowals of 'tourist' attitudes elsewhere would suggest.¹⁹ It is clear at the same time that the class identification of the Guomindang hosts was threatened by the filmmakers' interest in the proletariat and the peasantry (natural subjects for the 'spontaneous' mode in their presumably widespread media innocence), a threat not necessarily related to the Chinese elite's conscious fear of the filmmakers' communist sympathies.

The existence of purely cultural factors in the Guomindang's repudiation of the 'spontaneous' mode cannot be discounted, nor is it easy to confirm. Ivens was not the first nor the last of Western filmmakers to encounter in China what was to western thinking an incomprehensible aesthetic of photography, or to imply that purely cultural variants were responsible.²⁰

Over the last generation, there has been a consensus within the discipline of film studies about the ideological pitfalls of Euro-American cinematic depictions of the postcolonial 'other' (Rony, 1996). This includes the specific perils, both ethical and aesthetic, posed to roving artists filming in 'exotic' locations, even paradoxically those most well-intentioned projects that are produced 'in solidarity' with postcolonial peoples. These liabilities of the foreign filmmaker's gaze, ranging from 'unthinking Eurocentrism' to paternalism, exploitation, and cultural damage, are of course sometimes balanced by a potential for a Bakhtinian cultural interaction, mutually enriching, and an opening of a space for transnational knowledge (Richards, 2006, 55-64). The solidarity genre exemplified by Ivens's Chinese work (his final 1988 project *Une histoire de vent* [*A Tale of the Wind*, France, 78] is less typical of the genre than his earlier three initiatives of the 1930s, the 1950s,

and the 1970s, all more explicitly political) calls for a nuanced reflection on this potential paradox and balance.

Ivens provides a third anecdote that illuminates the problem from yet a different perspective:

About a hundred badly wounded soldiers arrive at the station. [...]

We decide to film this in detail. I asked Jack [the business assistant] to try and have the bearers and wounded not look too obviously at the camera. He doesn't respond in his usual manner and I can see that the directions he gives are vague. I worry because the picture will not give the audience the feeling of naturalness so I ask him to be more to the point with the bearers. He refuses and runs away. John and I continue the picture as best we can. And I use the only Chinese words I know: *Bu Yao Kan* – *Don't look at the camera*. Works all right, but it is a little mechanical. Later, on the way home, I find Jack and have a long talk with him.

In a way he is right. He says, 'I couldn't yell at my own people. They have fought so hard and they are so badly wounded. I have too much respect for them, and therefore I am silent. Directing them to look or not to look would be cruel. I would like to help them in some way'.

There it is! But our way of helping is to make a good film. To move people by its professional quality so they will feel and understand that the wounded soldier needs a good stretcher for his very life. John, Capa and I have the same respect as Jack for the wounded Chinese; but we cannot allow it to influence us when we are doing our work. (Ivens, [1938]1969, 168-169)

The cultural dynamic is displaced in Ivens's analysis by the ethical, the political, and the aesthetic, but it is still present. Ivens is asking his subjects to pose but in a different way from the posing preferred by the Guomindang in the street-theatre incident. The codes of the 'spontaneous' mode called into question in the incident with Jack, 'professional quality' and 'the feeling of naturalness', are not 'natural' in the least but culturally determined and as dependent on artificial conventions of representation as the variation of the 'newsreel' mode preferred by the Guomindang and not a few occidental filmmakers and governments. The Chinese elite's visual culture, rather than being 'the first stage of camera culture', as Sontag (1978, 71) might have inferred, may, ironically, simply be a variation of Ivens's own camera culture based on related styles of 'posing' and conceptions of 'the feeling of naturalness'. After all, in the sequence treating Guomindang government, military, and ladies' council meetings, a perfect familiarity with Ivens's code of 'naturalness' is displayed.

As late as 1963, Hugh Baddeley in *The Technique of Documentary Film Pro-*

duction makes explicit the code of representation that Ivens was assuming unquestioningly 25 years earlier:

One of the documentary producer's greatest problems is to make the ordinary people that he films appear natural on the screen. They should look as though they are unaware that a camera is anywhere in the vicinity. [...] Most people are capable of appearing perfectly *natural* in front of a camera while they are doing their normal job on some everyday action. But they must be given clear instruction. Their instinct is to look at the camera – which is exactly what they should never do. As soon as a character is seen glancing, even momentarily, at the lens, all *the illusion of naturalness* is gone. The camera should be the unseen eye and the audience should have the impression that they are observing the natural world *without a mechanical barrier intervening between them and it.* (Baddeley, 1963, 99-100, emphasis mine)

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Baddeley adds details of camera placements, ruses, and long-focus lenses that can aid in creating 'the illusion of naturalness'. It is surprising that more documentarists of the thirties did not attempt to challenge these codes, since it was very much the fashion for still photographers to incorporate their subjects' camera-conscious posing into their work, and especially since a small number of filmmakers as diverse as Vertov (both *Entuziazm: Simfoniya Donbassa* [*Enthusiasm: The Donbass Symphony*, 1931, USSR, 67] and *Three Songs About Lenin*), the GPO unit (*Housing Problems* [Arthur Elton and E.H. Anstey, 1935, UK, 13]) and Flaherty (*Land*) do the same (Vertov and the GPO were encouraged to do so by the primitive mechanics of direct sound recording). In the last named of these films, one character who is so alienated that he does not take note of the camera becomes the pretext for the narrator to comment upon this unusual phenomenon with pity! It is interesting that Ivens's third and most successful documentary filming excursion to China, in the seventies, would be built almost entirely on his subjects' eagerness to 'pose' for the camera, though *Yukong* also included, as we shall see, transitional and establishing scenes that seem mildly jarring because they use the classical codes of illusion that Ivens insisted on in 1938.

This curious tangle of cultural politics should not obscure the essential fact that the perceived 'immediacy' and 'intimacy' of much of *Spanish Earth's* 'spontaneous' material – the scenes of the evacuation of the children, the after-effects of the bombardments, the farewells before battle – are by and large missing from *400 Million*. Here the visual characteristics of this mode as I have isolated them in *Spanish Earth* and earlier films appear only in glimpses: in some of the bombardment, battle, and refugee sequences, for example,

where trauma and other preoccupations have interrupted the dynamics of illusionism and censorship, and an instantaneous nuance of improvisation is legible in a foreground blurred figure or a sudden or jerky pan. The scene derived from the incident of the wounded soldiers in the station includes a few of these nuances. Not all of the bearers' glances at the camera have been removed. One senses that the out-takes from this material might have provided even more 'spontaneous' nuance in the form of 'unnatural' stares, but it is of course anachronistic to make a hindsight demand of Ivens so much in contradiction of the prevailing camera culture of the day. The Li Bo vignette also stands out for its 'spontaneous' resonance, an example of an event too poignant even for the intervention of *metteur-en-scène* and censor, and as I have stated, even for the approach of the camera:

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We accomplished a lot of fine work in Tai'erzhuang today. Three hundred and fifty refugees have returned to the places where their houses once stood. Out of three thousand that once lived there, we filmed the first to come back, a man and his wife. They paid no attention to the camera, they paid no attention to anyone except themselves. They remained close together. The man finds a hammer and the woman a small millstone and shows it to her husband. They will have to start all over again, staying close together. (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 164)

It is no accident that virtually all of the 'spontaneous' moments in *400 Million* have some calamity as their pretext.

With the reduction of the 'spontaneous' mode, the *mise-en-scène* mode has correspondingly grown to dominate the *400 Million* text. This increase of *mise-en-scène* in the film was not the only subject of Ivens's bitter complaints: an even more serious complaint was that the filmmakers themselves were not often enough the *metteurs-en-scène*. Ivens's conception of his hybrid style from this period put the emphasis on balance – neither 'naturalism' nor 're-enactment' should dominate (Ivens, 1940, 35). That he had intended to increase the proportion of the latter in the Chinese film is clear from the various early treatments that have already been discussed and from the expanded crew and the plan for an accompanying writer. However, instead of the customary interaction of filmmakers with subjects that he was counting on, the sponsors and censors attempted to impose their own conception of *mise-en-scène* interaction onto the situation. For example, Ivens approached the filming of the site of the famous Jiang kidnapping²¹ by stationing two children looking up at the inscriptions on the site. Their censor replaced the children with three 'stiff' soldiers, which the filmmakers refused to shoot, rejecting a change of content

rather than a change of principle (Ivens, 1969, 176). Elsewhere Ivens used an identical tactic of animating an object by having subjects look at it within the frame, usually a poster or a map. Another aspect of the problem around the kidnapping site is used elsewhere as well: on other occasions Ivens used *mise-en-scène* involving children as a means of ensuring a flavour of naturalism, for example a shot of a group of children running quickly towards the camera, a frequent device in Ivens's work. Shots such as this, where Ivens had a relative amount of control over the *mise-en-scène* stand clearly apart from those affected by the Guomindang meddling.

The Ivens *mise-en-scène* material stands out either because of a clearly visible interaction based on the shared and consensual understanding of the process, as in the brief encounter with Soong, or because the customary Ivens visual style or iconography is recognisable. Some of the most elegant sequences of the film belong in this latter category: a view of a field-telephone operator on duty at the base of a blossoming fruit tree introduced by a slow pan down from the mass of flowers, a shot that dazzled reviewers; or a precisely articulated sequence of recruits doing Taiji (Tai-chi) warm-up exercises in a sunny courtyard, established by a symmetrically composed long-shot pan and then detailed at medium range; some shots treating the country's mobile inland cottage industries, in which shoemaking is studied as carefully as work in any previous film, with concise pans from the object to the worker's face and vice versa; or, a whole narrative sequence depicting a group of peasants in a rice field being summoned to battle and picking up their hidden weapons to fall into formation. This latter sequence, also held up for praise in the reviews, is a unit of twelve shots, including the customarily scrupulous continuity and intricate pan reframings.

In contrast, the three formal Guomindang meeting sequences appear stiff and inauthentic. Though Ivens halfheartedly claimed that such scenes had never before been filmed, reviewers were unimpressed: one critic found the Guomindang 'neither cinematic nor illuminating' (Nugent, 1939). Ivens and Van Dongen solved the problem of the stiffness of the Guomindang-orchestrated Xi'an demonstration in the editing – they intercut it with the encounter with Soong.

With regard to the actual combat material, Ivens used *mise-en-scène* as well, partly because he was almost always relatively far from the heat of battle, unlike in Spain. At one point, his diary describes a fairly productive day of shooting on the front in the vocabulary of the studio: 'Today we took 585 feet of film, about eighteen set-ups. Practically no retakes. You can't do many retakes at the front' – details for which 'spontaneous' shooting would hardly be conducive. The following day, 'the battery fired twelve shots especially for us' and the crew learned the key phrase, already mentioned, 'Don't look at the

camera'. On the day after the battle (8 April), the entry notes with relief that the filmmakers can use their large camera again (the normal equipment for *mise-en-scène*) because the danger is past (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 160-164).

In short, *mise-en-scène* had become the dominant mode in Ivens's hybrid form of documentary. Though he assured an interviewer for *The Herald-Tribune* that the film included 'no staging', it is clear that he meant outright fabrication of events through scripting and actors, rather than the border regions between fiction and non-interventionist 'spontaneous' shooting that comprised the bulk of his work on this project (Barnes, 1939). As he himself described this mode in a pencil note during the filming, it is 'halfway between Hollywood and newsreel'.

The reader will already have observed the similarities between the Guomindang style of *mise-en-scène*, with its ceremonial stiffness and self-consciousness, and the mode I have defined as the 'newsreel' mode. Nevertheless, there are several sequences that stand out by themselves as corresponding precisely to this mode as it appeared in *Spanish Earth*, a higher proportion, not surprisingly, than in the Spanish film. The Guomindang's reliance on public ceremony and the trappings of power for their legitimacy is reflected in three major such sequences in the film: a public ceremony commemorating the sacrifice of the unknown soldier, featuring youthful orators, addresses by literary and military dignitaries and mass pageantry; the aforementioned street rally in Xi'an, a scene that occupies more attention in the film with its processions and chorus lines than Ivens implies in *Camera* and which drew the note at the rough-cut stage, 'danger of repetition' (Ivens, outline, 15 December 1939, JIA); and the final torchlight demonstration to celebrate Tai'ierzhuang. The mode is discernible elsewhere in the film in various other processions and troop parades, in arrivals of officials at meetings of various sorts (a favourite cliché of the newsreel companies), and in an arms-display procession as competent and uninspired as any tank-parade in film history. Much of this material recapitulates the shot/counter-shot structures of performers and spectators as they are used in *Triumph of the Will* and the 'rally' sequence of *Spanish Earth*. Since Ivens did not have synchronous sound recording equipment, the 'newsreel' sequences structured around oratory were all post-dubbed.²²

Three additional modes make a limited appearance in *400 Million*. Absent in *Spanish Earth*, the 'compilation' mode is conspicuously important in the following film. Several sequences, most importantly the initial synthetic bombardment sequence, rely extensively on newsreel library shots. The filmmakers undoubtedly found this necessary because they had managed to film only the Quangdong bombardment, yet the theme of civilian bombardment was fundamental to anti-Japanese propaganda. Ivens (1969, 209) himself mentions

that he uses a famous newsreel shot of a baby in the middle of a bombed railway station in this sequence.²³ Some reviewers complained about the recourse to compilation: one recognised that ‘a few thriller shots from the newsreels have been cut into the continuity’, adding that ‘*The March of Time* did a better job of showing the China that Japan decided to crush’, and that ‘the newsreels have been able to show more of the war’ (Winsten, 1939); a second said that the shots of the bombardment of Shanghai and of the decimation of Tai’er-zhuang were ‘not unfamiliar to those who stay to see the newsreels’ (Barnes, 1939b), a sentiment echoed by two others (*Variety* 1939; Cameron, 1939); a final one protested the ‘overenthusiasm for old newsreel shots’ (*Time* 1939). The first of these is the most perceptive. The word ‘thriller’ accurately reflects the use to which Ivens put most of the stock shots, the heightening of the intensity of certain ‘action’ scenes, risking both the danger of overkill that he had carefully avoided in *Spanish Earth*, and, at the other end of the spectrum, the danger of not being able to beat the newsreels at their own game. The editors blended the borrowed shots seamlessly into the continuity, as the same critic mentioned, so that the compilation material does not stand apart as a discrete mode as it had in, say, *Borinage*, *Nieuwe Gronden*, and in the Frontier production *People of the Cumberland* (Elia Kazan, Jay Leyda [as Eugene Hill], Sidney Meyers [as Robert Stebbins], and Bill Watts, 1937, 18), where the visible juxtaposition of actuality and archival shots created such dialectics as here/elsewhere, then/now, and workers/bosses. The only explicit articulations of the compilation made in *400 Million* are the use of a stock shot of Sun Yixian from the days of the founding of the Chinese republic, a shot that functions within the historical exposition within the film, and a few minor ones in the chronology of Japanese aggression, including the one of Hirohito on horseback that appeared in every film of the period. Otherwise, the archival material is imperceptible within the overall texture of the film, undoubtedly because that texture is complex and hybrid in itself. However, the practice of welding archival shots into a fluid exposition was profitable training for both Ivens and Van Dongen, who would be employed for much of the imminent war as director and editor for American compilation propaganda films.

Note must also be made of a fifth mode – animation – that had been visible in Ivens’s work since the beginning, albeit on a minor scale, for example the diagrams and maps recounting the progress of the dikes in *Nieuwe Gronden*. On two significant occasions, animated maps carry the diegetic function of *400 Million*, presumably filling lacunae in the available footage. One illustrates the chronology of Japanese aggression in the Far East and the other demonstrates the tactics of guerilla warfare over a map of China. These sequences anticipate a basic method of the wartime films, as does some similar material in *China Strikes Back*, though the work appears somewhat less dramatic than

the later animations by the Capra group, who, after all, would have the Disney studios at their command.

Finally, a component discussed previously because of its subordinate presence in *Spanish Earth* here deserves separate but brief comment – landscape. At a few points this particular mode or sensibility is given the diegetic function, or at least a significant role in it, with effective results. Early in the film, lyrical visual meditations on huge funerary monuments serve as the ground for the commentary's homage to Chinese history and culture, and an equally suggestive evocation of a dust storm functions in similar symbolic terms as the commentator describes the ravaging of modern China. The undoubted inspiration of such passages may be the fact that the censors did not interfere with mere landscape cinematography, but it seems that the new landscape struck a responsive chord in Ivens the erstwhile and future lyricist as well:

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Here the green foothills, the villages, and the trees don't seem very different from other places. It is the same grass, the same telephone poles that everyone knows. But still the sum of all these things is different. It is this unexpected something that makes the landscape Chinese. Something unexpected about a heavy stone or a tree bending in a strange direction. Or a curious combination of colours. I lean out of the window and soak myself in it. (Ivens, [1938] 1969, 173)

Despite this clear anticipation of the stunning natural beauty of *Histoire* 50 years later, not all spectators were impressed by the landscape components. One reviewer (Lorentz, 1939) complained of the irrelevance of the landscape digressions and another (Nugent, 1939) objected to the symbolic exposition that the filmmakers imposed upon them. Later in the film, the landscape articulations seem less distinct as a mode and more interconnected with the other modes of the film, that is, less engaged in the 'exotic' code: the hills, rivers, and rice fields are settings for resistance; the same elegant pans as earlier this time decry the desolation of a social environment by the enemy; and this time the traditional statuary frowns upon real corpses.

In summary, then, the components of *400 Million's* hybrid form are not radically dissimilar to those used in *Spanish Earth*, but the proportional realignment of these components is profound. The heir of both Flaherty and Vertov has been forced to suppress almost entirely the legacy of Vertov. Though the shooting ratio of seven-to-one might suggest a higher proportion of 'spontaneous' material, this is not the case.²⁴ At the front on 13 April, Ivens estimated that up to that point, about 30% of the shooting had been with the hand-cameras, a figure that can be taken roughly as the proportion of 'spontaneous' shooting; this figure is higher than the final proportion for 'spontane-

ous' material, reflecting front conditions that encouraged more 'spontaneous' cinematography than normal.

Furthermore, this time, the filmmakers were less successful than with *Spanish Earth* in uniting these disparate cinematographic modes in a fluid narrative and expository continuity. Amid the praise for the film, which was not lacking, were observations, mostly 'commiserative not critical', as one critic put it, that the film was 'superficial and gap-toothed', 'episodic', 'sketchy and unresolved', 'less fluent' in its narrative than the previous film', somewhat diffuse and episodic', and lacking in 'unity' (Nugent, 1939).²⁵ *Spanish Earth* had achieved its compelling structural impact through the simple narrative momentum of its component parts and their ensemble; this had been reinforced by the simplicity of its major expository proposition, the link between village and war effort, itself given narrative dimensions through both the Julian story and the symbolic role of the road. *400 Million* lacks such strong structural principles, narrative or otherwise. The only purely narrative material was the climactic battle sequence that lacked a real battle, and scattered individual scenes.

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In addition, the geographical reference must have been so bewildering to lay spectators as to be unintelligible (this factor has ideological dimensions that will be analysed shortly); one consequence of this is that the landscape does not serve as a unifying setting as the simple coordinates of village-road-river-bridge did in the Spanish film. Finally, a baffling array of information is transmitted, both visually and verbally: cultural and political history, information about modernisation that covers road building and education, and both conventional and guerilla defence. Yet, since Ivens was unwilling to let the commentary bear the full weight of this informative function and since the visuals themselves cannot support it, the film sags under the weight of its encyclopedic mission. The critics were quite perceptive of these structural problems, perhaps because they had all seen many more documentaries between the release of the two films. *Variety* (1939) expressed it in terms of product classification – the film was an unprecedented mixture of marketing categories, 'newsreel, travelog, and educational'. *The New York Times's* critic put it more sympathetically: 'Had he simplified his story, admitted the impossibility of saying everything and trying to show everything, Mr. Ivens paradoxically might have said and shown a great deal more than *The 400 Million*' (Nugent, 1939).

Yet such reviews told Ivens nothing he did not already know. His innumerable plans for personal stories as a focus for the film had been designed to get around just these problems. Van Dongen struggled valiantly to solve them as well, but the material resisted her ever-increasing skills. The *mise-en-scène* sequences, particularly the more Ivensian ones, display the same

graceful classical continuity that characterised those parts of the previous film. The Guomindang *mise-en-scène* did not materialise quite so gracefully on the screen, though the editing is functional throughout and occasionally inspired. Frequently, quite disparate images are linked successfully through some kinetic or graphic principle discovered by Van Dongen in the rushes: for example, a shot of running children is matched with a procession of youths through a directional echo. The same principle smoothly effects several other transitions in the absence of Ivens's concise bridging shots of *Spanish Earth*. Yet the most accomplished editor could not ease the radical and jarring shifts in action, geography, and tone that the outline seemed to require, and the narrative impulse that might have compensated was not present.

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As for the soundtrack for *400 Million*, this was undertaken with the enterprising spirit of Ivens's and Van Dongen's work since *Philips-Radio*. On this occasion, they undoubtedly sensed that a particularly effective soundtrack might in some way compensate for the disappointment they felt in the images. The soundtrack that resulted was unusually complicated for the period and included from four to five tracks, of which two alone were sound-effects tracks, and many different voices on the commentary track beyond that of the commentator. Van Dongen innovated a recording system based on colour-coded re-recording logs for the purpose.

The writing of the commentary was in itself complicated. Ivens was still resisting the non-stop, voice-of-God tradition of the newsreels, though some tactical retreats had to be made, among which was the increase (more than doubling of the *Spanish Earth* ratio) of the proportional running time of the commentary to 43%. Dudley Nichols's overlong and redundant text had to be pared down to even this length, a reduction of about one-half, as well as drastically revised in consultation with Hemingway and Maddow. A tactful letter from Ivens to Nichols gallantly accepted responsibility for the initial failure, but Ivens was clearly frustrated by the scriptwriter's cancellation of his on-location collaboration and at not having had a writer in China despite the conviction that this was now indispensable. Among the deletions was some political analysis such as several detailed references to European fascism.²⁶

The final version of the text, as Ivens admits, is much more 'descriptive and explanatory' than the commentary for *Spanish Earth*, however, it also retains the broad range of interpretive functions that Hemingway's text had assumed (Ivens, 1969, 180). Among these, Nichols's original tendency to provide a symbolic gloss for the images is preserved, for example focusing on landscape tropes in the images, for example, the superimposition of the remark, 'China is robbed', over an image of a bare tree buffeted in the wind. At the same time, important additions were made, most significantly heighten-

ing the commentary's personal component. For example, the Li Bo episode is fleshed out and another brief encounter with a dazed refugee wounded by the Japanese is amplified by his personal point of view (the 'grenade' that wounded him becomes 'a thing with a tail shaped like a fish'). Most substantially, the filmmakers sharpened and personalised the character of Sergeant Wang, the internal narrator for the Tai'erzhuang episode. In the first Nichols version, he had been merely 'one of the ten thousand who marched on Tai'erzhuang', but in the final version, he not only has a name, but has become a southerner who comments on the different landscape and agriculture of the northern battle region and inflects the script with his point of view. 'Our flag was on the wall again – Tai'erzhuang was ours', became 'I saw the flag on the walls – we had taken back Tai'erzhuang'.

Nevertheless, these additions could not compensate for the loss of the quality of personal eyewitness testimony Hemingway had achieved in the previous film. Ivens himself might have injected that quality into the film; but, if this occurred to him, he did not depart from his habitual avoidance of appearing in his own work despite the numerous precedents for this in the documentary movement as a whole.²⁷ As for the narrator's voice, March's conscientious delivery, praised dutifully by every reviewer, perhaps made up in star quality for the lack of personal elements. In short, Nichols and March may have understood the importance Ivens was attaching to the subjectivity of the commentary when he provided a note explaining his conception, but they were powerless to comply: 'You must trust him from the first word he says. You like him. He is asking Goya questions' (Ivens, pencil note on 'Sound picture outline', 20 December 1938, JIA).

An experiment in *Spanish Earth* expanded in *400 Million* was that film's multiplicity of voices within the text. Sergeant Wang, though still somewhat wooden in his final effect as a character, represents an important stage in a gradual proliferation of internal narrators in comparable experiments in documentary films. He and *Spanish Earth*'s Julian were ancestors of a tribe that would become quite visible in the forties, a period in which such challenges to conventional narrators were frequent and imaginative even in mainstream documentary. In *400 Million*, in addition to the Sergeant Wang narrative, there are a number of shorter scenes where the commentator likewise assumes dramatic voices, a dialogue between artillery soldiers finding their range, for example, or the instructions of a guerrilla officer. On another occasion, more obtrusively, actors' voices create a soundtrack dramatisation of an enemy general and a radio announcer, soon a racist cliché of wartime filmmaking: over images of Japanese coastal shelling, the general's voice enunciates the enemy strategy, 'If the Chinese cowards resist, we will bomb their cities', and the oily-voiced announcer replies in his broadly caricatured accent ('very sweet', Ivens

recommended in a note on the *découpage*), ‘Good evening friends in America. Today in Nanjing, the Chinese women welcomed our Japanese army with flowers’.

The effect is heavy irony, for the ‘flowers’ in question are visualised as artillery explosions. The virtue of discretion was perhaps another lesson of *Spanish Earth* that would be reconsidered the following year, but it was not entirely forgotten. An additional such sequence, even more rhetorical, cut from the original Nichols version, called for a Japanese general’s gold-braided sleeve jabbing at a map of Tai’erzhuang, and a voice, intercut with the drone of bombers, hysterically demanding vengeance for the Japanese setback in such terms as

More terror! (drone, full volume)
Kill a thousand at a time! (drone)
What did we learn from Spain?
From Italy!
From Germany!
Destroy Democracy! (drone)

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Such devices may have been developed in response to the perception after a preliminary projection for Hellman and Shumlin that the producers, though ‘warm and polite’, had been expecting ‘more excitement and plot action’ (Ivens, letter to Nichols, 27 February 1939, JIA).

Less dramatised voices in greater numbers appear less jarringly within several ‘newsreel’ sequences as vocal coefficient for silently filmed public oratory. The long central sequence about united resistance in modern China has as many as eighteen individual dubbed voices accompanying figures as they appear on the screen, including those of the Jiangs and the anonymous Zhou Enlai. Several are paraphrased in English by the commentator, most memorably the celebrated poet-scholar Guo Moruo at the ceremony in honour of the unknown soldier whose remark is relayed: ‘In the old days people said, “Do not use good iron for nails or good sons for soldiers”. In these times the best sons become soldiers’.

The multiple textures of the voice-tracks may have contributed to the widespread reaction that the film was sketchy or episodic. Lorentz ([1939] 1975, 165), for one, laid the blame squarely on the commentary. In the eyes of this authority on documentary coherence, the commentary was ‘confusing’, and ‘meander[ed]’ from ‘newsreel interpretation to symbolism to first person narration’, and thus ‘did not have a concise and straight design’. A more accurate and supportive assessment would be that the voice-tracks did not solve the film’s basic structural problem, but did constitute nonetheless a valiant

and partly successful endeavour to heighten visually weak portions of the film and to enrich in general its sound-image relationships.

For the score, Ivens turned to his old friend and collaborator, Hanns Eisler, then a political refugee in the US and an ideal candidate to write an anti-fascist score. Ivens was not alone in his high regard for his friend's work. Eisler would soon be immersed in Rockefeller-funded 'theoretical and practical investigations' in the field of film music.²⁸ However, Eisler's research and his composing practice did not, brilliant as they were, represent future trends at least as far as documentary was concerned. The era when independent musicians were commissioned to compose scores for documentary films and were engaged in theoretical debates about the relationship of music and image were numbered, at least in the US.²⁹ Musical strategies using concrete sound and the collage of reworked popular sources, pioneered by *Plow*, or scores based on folk themes, would gain the upper hand among more creative documentaries during the 20 years before the arrival of direct cinema – and would even buoy up several of Ivens's lyrical essay films thereafter. The prestige non-objective scores approved of by Eisler's co-author and fellow refugee Theodor Adorno³⁰ would cede to a progressive minority of films during this period building on the example of *Plow*, of which the Jennings's sound-collages are the most famous. The non-objective score simply did not correspond to the other formal and cultural goals of the Popular Front period.

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Ivens and Eisler agreed that the function of music should be 'strengthened' (*verstärken*), and that the combination of Western and Chinese musical elements seemed an intriguing possibility for *400 Million* (Wegner, 1965, 89).³¹ As Eisler put it, Ivens had a 'progressive and cooperative attitude' and their working relationship was indeed so close that several sequences were cut to Eisler's music, for example the first bombardment sequence and the dust-storm sequence; on the other hand, the sequence with the children required that the music be cut to fit it. Eisler employed a method in his composition that he claimed he had used only once before:

After a careful analysis of picture details, a musical form was suggested which gave me the opportunity to change the character of the music without interrupting its flow and logic: the 'theme and variation' form, a method similar in principle to that used by Thomson and Aaron Copland in their scores of the same period. (Eisler, 1947, 8)

For Eisler this method was diametrically opposed to the predominant Hollywood method, the 'leitmotif' method (which he professed to 'detest'), and by which he meant the system that assigns individual characters or themes a distinctive musical 'motif' layered mechanically over their appearances (Eisler,

1947, 10, 18). In documentary, this method became extremely popular during the war; in the Capra series, for example, scenes dealing with religion would be accompanied by 'religious music', whereas references to France would usually get an echo of 'The Marseillaise' (Bohn, 1968, 180).³² For *400 Million*, Eisler's 'theme and variations' method meant that a single theme and its variations would 'bring together' sequences dispersed throughout the film with different subjects but with comparable tonal qualities (Ivens, 'List of Sequences for Music', typescript, 8 January 1939, JIA);³³ Eisler (1947, 35) describes this method, also pejoratively, wherein 'waterfalls rustle and sheep bleat' in *Composing for the Films*. There are blunt programmatic tendencies in the scores for both *Man of Aran* and *Triumph of the Will*. For *400 Million*, Ivens suggested that the dust-storm music be thin, shrill, without nuances and rendered with the Chinese instrument, the pipa; 'reconstruction' music was to be energetic, not so shrill, and lyrical in the middle; 'refugee' music was to be driving and sad, 'thin at the end', yet 'warm'. Eisler followed the suggestions more or less closely, though many passages, due to their very 'non-objectivity' in interaction with the commentary, are open to a 'programmatic' reading, particularly some of the battle music and the 'dust-storm' theme. In the editing of the music, several of the tactics anticipated in *Spanish Earth* were applied even more systematically, for example the isolation of a single instrument, violin at one point, to make it stand out as an exceptional element,³⁴ the play with silence and the withholding or anticipation of the music, modulations of tempo (Ivens, handwritten note, 20 December 1938, JIA), and the 'dovetailing' of music and concrete sound similar to that attempted in the previous film, in this case the dissolve of sound effects into music.

The problem of potential 'misreading' of non-objective elements of the score is symptomatic of Eisler's and other 'intellectual' approaches to film music of the period. The mainstream audiences aimed at, in keeping with Popular Front policy, would seldom have the training to listen to such elements according to conventional musical codes, that is, either as unobtrusive 'background' (in fact this means 'not hearing') or programmatically. Eventually such music, atonal, 'cold', and 'intellectual' acquired codes of its own for the mainstream audience, not unrelated to the stigma of 'serious' or 'educational' documentary already acquired by this time; postwar generations of schoolchildren would learn to associate such music with this stigma.³⁵ It is undoubtedly for this reason that alternative approaches, such as Jennings', began to seem fresher and more promising during the forties – those that extended, reworked, or 'alienated'³⁶ already accessible musical codes. Lorentz's use of jazz in *Fight for Life* fits into the first or second of these categories, Thomson's devastating use of the hymn tune over *The River's* (Lorentz, 1938, USA, 31) sharecropping scene into the last – as did,

32. *The 400 Million* (1939): Dubbed or paraphrased voices heighten the personal drama, e.g. poet-scholar Guo Moruo declaiming 'In the old days people said, "Do not use good iron for nails or good sons for soldiers". In these times the best sons become soldiers'. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



of course, Vertov's pioneering 'alienation' of liturgical and Czarist patriotic music in *Enthusiasm*.

The greater success of the Chinese-inspired elements in the score for *400 Million* must also be seen in this light. These elements, a plaintive, unadorned vocal piece over the episode of the refugee's grenade wound, and the pipa solo over the dust-storm sequence, were particularly striking because they appealed to and extended already accessible codes, particularly the code of the 'exotic'. Admittedly, the musical codes denoting the mysterious (and treacherous) Orient were among most ignominious in American film culture: Capra's composers, for example, predictably attached the same menacing 'Oriental' music to virtually every reference to Japan in the *Why We Fight* series. In *400 Million*, however, the Chinese musical elements derive also from 'travelogue' codes, wherein authentic indigenous music functions as part of the documentary text, as it does in *The Song of Ceylon* (Wright, 1935, UK, 38) and most of the films on the Spanish Civil War. These elements are introduced with discretion and restraint (no gongs!), held for appropriate durations, and juxtaposed with other audio-visual elements in non-clichéd relationships. Therefore, they ultimately subvert and dignify the 'exotic' codes that they initially propose. Eisler's score, in sum, though it was considered worthy of a separate rave review in *The New Masses* by the music critic (Sebastian, 1939), was an achievement whose success was as mixed as that of the film as a whole.

As for the sound-effects track, the configuration is even more elaborate than in *Spanish Earth*, with the tendency throughout towards heightened naturalism. Careful studio synthesis and the additional track unobtrusively support the codes of illusion with planes that drone, crowds that cheer, and shells that explode. The classical repertory of synthetic sounds pioneered by Ivens and Van Dongen in the early thirties and as late as *Spanish Earth* is now fully established (Rotha, 1952, 167).

The late release of *400 Million* in March 1939, a point when the basic con-

tours of the war less than six months away were clear enough, permitted the filmmakers an explicitness in their geopolitical analysis that the earlier Popular Front films had not ventured. Compared to the evasiveness of the earlier films, Nichols's preface does indeed seem bold – it is the first major film to use the vocabulary and themes of the next six years, the terms of 'democracy' vs. fascism and the Axis:

The war in the Far East is no isolated conflict between China and Japan. [...] On one side, the Japanese military machine, ally of the Rome-Berlin axis, brutal and merciless. On the other side, just as in Europe, the peaceful masses of humanity – victims of fascist attack.

Europe and Asia have become the western and eastern front of the same assault on democracy.

246 | Ivens's editorial juxtaposition of Nazi planes and Italian dead in *Spanish Earth* had been one of the first cinematic denunciations of the Rome-Berlin axis: his condemnation of a Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis the following year was even more prophetic and clear.

All the same, the film is characterised by many of the same elisions, tensions, and ambiguities as in earlier films, primarily concerning the internal political situation in China and the American stakes in the war. Much of this can be traced to the filmmakers' initial conception of their audience as mainstream uncommitted Americans who might be persuaded to support an anti-Japanese embargo and contribute to the Chinese defence. However, by the spring of 1939 these specific goals were less urgent, having already been largely achieved: by June 1938, 84% of the American public were now opposed to continued export of military materials to Japan; that December saw the finalisation of a major US loan to China; by the time of the film's release, the movement for sanctions was overwhelming, with Roosevelt endeavouring to do away with legislative hindrances to direct support for the Allies and moving towards the abrogation of the US commercial treaty with Japan in July (Dallek, 1979, 194). The filmmakers even decided that it was no longer necessary to retain the word 'quarantine' in the commentary, with its implicit invocation of Roosevelt to legitimise the sanctions campaign.

However, the original 1937 Popular Front orientation can be seen in many other emphases of the film. One such emphasis is the theme of China's cultural heritage, first mentioned in the preface: 'On one side – China – which has enriched the world for 4000 years with its treasures of art and wisdom. [...] China was forced into this war to protect its national independence, its freedom and its precious culture'. A theme that does not have an equivalent in *Spanish Earth* except for one perfunctory scene, the idea of cultural preservation

becomes prominent in *400 Million*. This was perhaps felt to be a safe emphasis for liberal American audiences, nervous about the Communists and embarrassed by the Guomindang – or in case the plight of ‘one-fifth of the world’s population’ in itself was not enough to justify intervention! The last version of the commentary even adds to the accent on China’s philosophical and artistic legacy in Nichols’s original text, inserting, for example, a reference to ancient ‘artists who could paint the wind’.³⁷ This emphasis was undoubtedly due in part to the censors’ greater willingness to let the filmmakers shoot innocuous cultural monuments than any other subject, the cultural theme thus serving to mask the film’s significant lacunae for both filmmakers and censors. Yet, despite these considerations, the ‘cultural’ theme does function structurally in relation to the other important theme of modernisation. The images often stress the adaptation of ancient traditions to the challenges of contemporary society and the war, for example, in the *mise-en-scène* sequence where ancient Taiji Movements become a military drill.

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The ‘cultural theme’ must also be seen as part of a system of appeals to the preconceptions of the American public, a system that underlines the image of China as the exotic, unknowable ‘Other’, but at the same time interprets China in American terms, to imply that American values and way of life are threatened by the Japanese aggression. The appeals to American terms are explicit. Sun becomes ‘the Washington of their republic’; women college students become ‘co-eds just like in America’; soldiers even look like ‘football players’. To implicate the American spectator even more in the war, a graphic scene shows scrap metal being loaded for Japan in San Francisco (though the suggestion that it may include ‘the Ford you sold last year’ was dropped from the final version), and a brief ‘newsreel’ scene depicts a fundraising parade in New York, where contributions to the Chinese defence are gathered in a huge Chinese flag. Above all, the US media image of the Jiangs is perpetuated in the film, with their westernised aura and their individual charisma accented at close but respectful range.³⁸ A final appeal, added at the last minute over the penultimate sequence, the second bombardment scene, makes a direct appeal to Americans to abandon their neutrality: ‘These are not easy things to look at. But as Americans, we had to see them’.

The spotlight on the Jiangs and the Guomindang in *400 Million* is a chief difference between this film and its influential predecessor *China Strikes Back*. This difference was of course largely a matter of circumstances rather than choice; indeed it is easy to understand the filmmakers’ great disappointment at having to replace their intended images of a people’s war and a social revolution by images of ministerial and military councils, political hierarchy, and shot/countershot sequences of platform orators addressing uniform masses. As if the images were not enough, the commentary repeatedly reminds the

spectator that the country is united under the Generalissimo, or that all military responsibility rests on him. The Guomintang propaganda rally in Xi'an, stiffly organised by the project's censors and reluctantly filmed by Ivens, must have seemed a painfully symbolic contrast to the dynamic aura of the group meetings recorded by Dunham in Yanan and included in the earlier film.³⁹

Likewise, instead of the people's guerilla army that Dunham had featured and that Ivens had wanted to capture even more thoroughly, *400 Million* concentrated on the Guomintang's conventional army and conventional warfare. Instead of Dunham's images of soldiers interacting with the peasants, the beneficiaries of their campaign, the soldiers of the second film operate more or less in a political void, with their columns of new armored vehicles and tanks that are not seen in battle and their uniforms that are curiously tidy. The commentary's assertion that the soldiers know what they are fighting for is nowhere confirmed in visual terms as similar assertions were in *Spanish Earth* and *China Strikes Back*. To replace the guerilla units that Ivens was prevented from reaching, *mise-en-scène* was used with regular units to evoke a guerilla crossing of the Yellow River and militia fighters being summoned from their plowing; but such scenes, as effective as they are on their own terms, do not have the thoroughness, the concrete sense of actuality, nor the ideological aptness that Ivens had at one time hoped for. Only Ivens's presence at Tai'erzhuang, the sole Chinese victory in 1938, permitted him to salvage his military theme with its images of Chinese confidence and effectiveness, and of Japanese defeat. The only actual combat seen is the successful light arms ambush of a distant Japanese patrol during the build-up to Tai'erzhuang; the patrol is seen scattering from the extreme high-angle vantage-point of the Chinese column that Ivens was accompanying along a mountain trail (shots recycled 50 years later in *Histoire*). The actual battle itself had to be merely implied in the images and narrated on the soundtrack. There is undoubtedly an implied comment on the waging of the war under Jiang's united command in the manner of the film's presentation of Zhu De (Chu Teh), the commander of the Eighth Route Army: a brief subtitled stock shot provides a glimpse of the man and the commentator describes him as 'a general whose headquarters are on the field of battle', before going on to the continued treatment of the generals whose headquarters are in Hankou boardrooms.

The overwhelming control of the shooting of the film by the Guomintang and the obstruction of Ivens's plans for Shanxi shooting obviously dictated a downplaying of the role of the Communists in the United Front, but the extent of the invisibility of the Communist partners goes even beyond what can be accounted for by this. The film demonstrates the same systematic 'self-censorship' as was evidenced in *Spanish Earth* and the Frontier films. The filmmakers permitted a single explicit reference to the Communists, a mention of the

‘former Red Army’ in the ‘Military Council’ sequence (in which it would also be possible for a sharp-sighted spectator to pick out a hammer and sickle banner in the background alongside the Guomindang flag). Otherwise, allusions are vague and oblique. In the same sequence, a pensive Zhou Enlai is shown in close-up discussing military strategy, but not identified. At a sequence devoted to the National People’s Council, the Communist representatives are shown arriving but they are identified only as ‘delegates from the northwest’, and guerilla warfare is described as being used especially in the northwest without further details. Another significant omission is the issue of Soviet aid – the 2000-mile road to the northwest is described as the ‘lifeline’ of China, but the destination of the lifeline is elided. Finally, the text also elides the political affiliation of Soong Ching-ling, whose relationship to the Communists was warm (though ultimately ambiguous), but whom *Camera* describes as believing in a ‘socialist future for her country’: she is described simply as a brave woman typifying the spirit of the nation, a description that, along with the intercutting of her portrait into the lifeless Xi’an political rally, must surely be read as a vengeful veiled taunt at her archrival younger sister Soong Meiling (Madame Jiang).

33. *The 400 Million* (1939): strategic elisions around the political affiliation of communist ally Soong Ching-ling (left), described simply as a brave woman typifying the spirit of the nation. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



All of these discreet references constitute a subtext for the specialists in the audience, the informed spectators who would be able to identify Zhou and would know Zhu’s and Soong’s reputations. Ordinary American spectators however, would not recognise these figures or realise that the ‘Special Administrative District’ and ‘the northwest’ were code words for what had been Soviet China until the formation of the United Front. And it was even less likely that they would recognise the ‘March of the Volunteers’ heard in the film, a film song well known in China for its leftish aura and defiance of Japanese occupation (and eventually as the National Anthem of the People’s Repub-

lic) (Stufkens, personal communication, 2014). For initiated spectators, the intended message of a united China was overridingly, even simplistically clear. The need for political analysis of the basis of that unity was felt to be secondary. Ivens's filmic practice at this point of his career is still definitely shaped by his fear of red-baiting and its possible consequences for theatrical distribution, and by the Popular Front strategy of consolidating a mainstream base through appeals to the non-partisan ideals of 'democracy', 'Americanism', and 'anti-fascism'. It is not surprising that his confident prophecy of an early draft was omitted from the film's final version despite its seemingly innocuous vagueness: 'A democratic republic is coming after the war' (Ivens, *400 Million* commentary, early draft, JIA).

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The image of Chinese unity as presented in *400 Million* is much more monolithic than that in *China Strikes Back*, where Communist-Guomintang tensions had been elided only at the last minute in support of the newly established United Front, and where the tension is still legible in the structure of the film and the dichotomy in visual quality between the sections dealing with the two factions. Ivens, on the other hand, presents the United Front as based on a popular consensus and a commonality of interest among all Chinese, minimising regional differences and completely passing over ideological ones. It is an image of an entire society united under the banner portraits of Sun and Jiang, a strong visual motif throughout the film. An earlier inclination at least to acknowledge the tensions within China had been abandoned by the final version. Ivens's early suggestion to Nichols that the commentator 'must mention much interior troubles – not yet united' (Ivens, pencil note on undated final découpage, 'Tabulation of Shots and Footage', 6, JIA) was not pursued nor was the even more specific early idea to admit 'difficulties: inertia of gov't apparatus and pro-Jap elements and Trotskyites' (Ivens, handwritten note, 26 November 1938, JIA). Other references to the varying political elements that had recently formed the anti-Japanese alliance were retained right until the next-to-last version of the commentary and were likely even recorded by March before being dropped: a reference to Guo Moruo's political past as a dissident in exile, a general comment that 'The idea of resistance has united all provinces, all the different parties of China', and a significant detail added to the presentation of the Guomintang general Chen Cheng – 'side by side with his former opponent'. The only hint of previous disunity is an oblique statement that the founder Sun knew that before his ideas would be accepted among the people, there would be 'years of quarreling and even civil war'.

This deceptive impression of monolithic unity is bolstered by the film's structure and geographic reference. Whereas *China Strikes Back* had clearly set Shanxi, the Communist province, apart from the rest of China, Ivens elides for the most part any sense of regional and political-cultural disparity, other than

a few commentary references to the wheat-growing north and the rice-growing south. He effects this elision by moving back and forth between the areas within or adjacent to Shanxi and the rest of China, not only without acknowledgment but as if to imply full geographic integration. For example, the military council involving the Eighth Route Army is shown and their guerilla tactics are described: what follows is by implication a dramatisation of these tactics (which of course Ivens was not permitted to film), the *mise-en-scène* sequence depicting farmers leaving fields for militia duty. The fields, however, are rice fields and the material was apparently filmed near Hankou on the Yangzi (Yangtze) in central China. The volunteers are shown assembling, and once again there is a sudden, unacknowledged geographical leap with the recruits suddenly appearing in similar formation in Xi'an on the edge of Shanxi, then at drill in the vicinity, and then at manoeuvres back down near Hankou. This blurring of geographical and consequently political distinctions is typical of the film as a whole.

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The effect is reinforced by the editing between sequences through which the filmmakers were clearly intent on unifying a film that was scattered and episodic. The directional and kinetic bonds between sequences are often at the expense of expository clarity. The most striking example is the already mentioned subversive intercutting of the Xi'an demonstration and the encounter with Soong, in virtual political exile in Hong Kong, an elision of about 1,000 geographical miles and an even greater political distance.

One reviewer's reaction to the film is symptomatic of a further possible ideological problem with the film: the final victory procession reminded Herman G. Weinberg (1939) of images from Frank Capra's *Lost Horizon* (1937, USA, 97), presumably the prologue scenes of frenzied Asiatic mobs from which Ronald Colman and his little band of whites barely escape. Indeed it is certainly questionable whether Ivens's images of Guomindang modernisation and self-reliance are sufficient to offset others of the film's images that reinforce western visual stereotypes of China, namely the newsreel-based civilian bombardment sequences at the start and the conclusion of the film. Weinberg's reaction and the impression of yet another reviewer (Barnes, 1939b) that it was a film of throngs instead of individuals suggest that spectators tended to view such images as an extension of the newsreel conventions of China: suffering hordes and patient starving millions, victimised by warlords, bandits, famines, floods, and earthquakes, sorely in need of Western colonial intervention, missionaries, and relief. Western spectators had surely been immunised against the newsreel overkill use of such images and *Spanish Earth* had recognised this immunisation in avoiding conventional atrocity images. The throngs of traumatised refugees simply fit too easily into the established patterns of perceiving China in the West:

there was far more pathos in the Li Bo episode with its two solitary figures searching the ruins and its slow understated pans over other isolated victims of the battle – a donkey, two ducks, and a small boy, watched over, through the intervention of the editor, by an angry demon statue. The title of the film itself, and the expression spoken in the commentary ‘one-fifth of humanity’, were also common phrases, if not clichés, in the popular journalism of the day and had lost their power to impress.

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In the balance, despite the overwhelming obstacles that prevented the realisation of the intended film, despite the filmmakers’ perceived need to Americanise, simplify, and sanitise the Chinese political situation, and despite the film’s ultimately ambiguous stance regarding western preconceptions of China, *400 Million* does succeed in taking certain significant steps forward in terms of the complex political-cultural conjuncture in which it intervened. Throughout the film, there are sequences, such as the Li Bo episode, that mediate and interrupt the dominant exposition, sequences showing resistance in individual and authentic terms to counter ‘throng’ clichés, or providing a material analysis of Chinese society to counter past travelogue and newsreel views. One example is the sequence where shoe manufacture in the interior cottage industries is shown in close-up detail and linked in visual terms to the construction of new roads and the war effort.⁴⁰ In addition, an anti-colonial text is present in the film, which, while discreet, is legible all the same. En route to China, Ivens’s ([1939] 1969, 145–149) impressions of Hawaii and Hong Kong heightened his sensitivity to the colonialist overtones of the Chinese war. Though the articulation of these overtones in the commentary appears mild (‘She is robbed by Japan and by the western powers without resistance’ – the word ‘colonial’ is deleted from an earlier version), this must be seen as forthright in its context, considering the fact that the ‘democracies’ whose intervention was being solicited were all major colonialist powers whose concessions in Shanghai had as yet been unaffected by the Japanese occupation. The appeals for Western support of the united Chinese defence, visualised in terms of its own self-reliance and its capacity for victory over the invader through its own power rather than a Western rescue, must also be seen in this light. All the same, Ivens’s symbolic gesture of passing his camera onto the Red Army so that cinematic self-reliance would also become a part of the defence against Japan, must ultimately be seen as the most significant anti-colonial statement within, or rather beyond, the text of *400 Million*.

Ivens’s evaluation of this film in his letter to Shumlin stressed his work’s continuing ultimate relevance, despite the insurmountable problems he had encountered. *400 Million* seems consistent with this stress only in terms of its submission to the Popular Front strategy of ‘self-censorship’ within

mainstream anti-fascist alliances. At the same time, *400 Million* through its elisions, structural flaws, subtexts, and overstatements, foregrounds the contradictions of this strategy more than any other Popular Front film. The following August, only five months after the film's release, the Nazi-Soviet pact was to bring those contradictions into even sharper focus.

Meanwhile, the commercial career of the film was a disappointment to Ivens and the History Today group, though their hopes had not been as high as with *Spanish Earth*, almost two years earlier. The overshadowing of the release by the events taking place in Europe was reflected in the distribution arrangements. Herbert Kline's *Crisis*, a well-timed chronicle of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia following Munich, not only appeared the same week, but secured the prestigious art house where *Spanish Earth* had premiered, the Fifty-fifth Street Playhouse, leaving the Ivens film to share the double bill at the Cameo, the customary ghetto showcase for Soviet and left films, with an obscure Soviet feature, *Bogataya Nevesta* (*The Country Bride*, Ivan Pyryev, 1937, 98).⁴¹ *Crisis* also got the better of the comparisons that the reviewers were inevitably prompted to make – even the *New Masses* reviewer (R.T. 1932) found *400 Million* 'not half so brilliant as *Crisis*', in its content-oriented coverage.

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Despite a top-price Hollywood premiere the same month, followed by a party at Miriam Hopkins's,⁴² Ivens seemed further than ever from his goal of mass distribution. *Variety* reported that the audience was composed primarily of Chinese and sympathisers. The New York showplace soon shifted downtown to be closer to this audience (to the small rooftop Roosevelt at Second Avenue and Houston). At the Los Angeles press conference, Ivens bravely repeated his conviction that the documentary should be a part of regular theatre fare (*Motion Picture Herald* 1939), and right after the outbreak of war in Europe he optimistically wrote that he had reached two million spectators (Stufkens, 2008, 250). But by this time, it was already clear that the film's most important distribution was on the non-theatrical circuit, as had usually been the case with *Frontier* and other political films for the previous decade. Marginal theatrical distribution prevailed in Europe also, because of censor problems that had been surprisingly absent in the US. In France, G.L. George prepared a French version for an encouraging July premiere through *Ciné-Liberté*, but censors delayed the release there as well as in London until after the outbreak of war, at which point the Pacific arena held little interest for audiences faced with more pressing preoccupations closer to home.⁴³

Though it had been the extraordinary topicality of *Spanish Earth* and *China Strikes Back* that had apparently guaranteed their theatrical splash, this logic now appeared vulnerable; it now seemed that semi-journalistic topicality was an inadequate means of securing reliable commercial distribution for

independent filmmakers, simply because the world situation was capable of changing so rapidly that even newsreels could scarcely keep apace, not to mention documentaries. It was a lesson that few political filmmakers realised or could afford to realise throughout the ensuing war when the principle of topicality would continuously guarantee a prominent place for documentaries on Allied theatre screens.



34. *Our Russian Front* (1941): first-run lobby card of smiling partisans, playing up Oscar-winning narrator rather than the co-directors. Original in colour.

Projects of the Forties

Good art needs time but also haste.

– *Joris Ivens, 1942*

All of Ivens's compromises on *The 400 Million* (1939, USA, 53) had been unavailing – he had not made the film he had wanted to make on the subject he wished to address and the film he had made had failed to reach the right audience at the right moment. His despair is masked by the cheerful tone describing the ending of the film in *Camera* (Ivens, 1969, 180-183). Next time, he wrote his producer, he would work under conditions that must have seemed ideal: the 'money sure', 'preparation on the spot', a collective including a writer and a producer with a stepped-up function, in a 'non-war country', the opportunity all the while to uphold 'discipline and serving of Cause No. 1', and, perhaps most importantly, the opportunity to prove his still untested conviction that the 'story' form was the future of the documentary (Ivens, draft letter to Shumlin, n.d. [c. winter 1938-1939], JIA).

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Joris Ivens's next film, *Power and the Land* (1940, USA, 33), miraculously, would fulfil all of these conditions, and one more, no less significant in his opinion – *Power* would provide him with an opportunity to reach one of the widest audiences of his entire career, finally 'to break into commercial distribution'. The film itself, an anomalous island of peaceful Ohio sunshine in the American decade of Ivens's career devoted almost entirely to war, attracted less critical attention than other Ivens's films at the moment of its release, and since then it has attracted only sporadic attention from film historians. Nevertheless, Jean Benoît-Lévy (1946, 92), the French documentarist who saw the film only after the War, called it 'one of Ivens's finest works', and R.M. Barsam (1973, 88, 99), an American historian of documentary, has called it '[Ivens] at his best', a combination of 'poetry, politics and photography into a statement of uncommon beauty and strength', 'a wonderfully evocative piece of Americana', 'a classic film document that is too often overlooked'.

Power was also a project that would bring Ivens's career into contact for the



35. *Action Stations* (1942): Ivens on board the Port Arthur off Halifax. Cinematographer Osmond Borradaile lower left, corvette captain/interior decorator/Nazi-chaser in sunglasses in background. Production still, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © EFJI, Nijmegen.

first and only time with his eminent American contemporary, Pare Lorentz, who was to function – creatively and supportively – along with his Washington official sponsors, in the producer role that Ivens felt Shumlin had mishandled. Unburdened with fundraising and distribution, free to pursue the unrealised ambitions of half a decade, Ivens's *Power* must be seen as a laboratory in which his ideas could be tested as the Spanish and Chinese theatres of war had not permitted. Yet as a commissioned film, *Power* would involve Ivens in ideological contradictions of the sort that he had not faced since *Philips-Radio* (1931, Netherlands, 36) – despite the fact that New Deal propaganda was much more consistent with the current vision of 'Cause No. 1' than industrial publicity had been almost ten years earlier.

Two factors dominated the context of the American left documentary movement as it moved into the new decade. One was overtly political. The Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939 instigated a turnabout in the Communist Party line on the European war, and this led in turn to considerable disarray in the American left milieu. A virtual blackout by American left filmmakers on the

international situation resulted immediately and lasted right up until the invasion of the USSR in the summer of 1941. The CPUSA came out in opposition to conscription, and to any participation in the war, including the Lend-Lease agreements and all aid to Britain. Roosevelt, the erstwhile honorary member of the American Writers' Congress of 1937, where Ivens and Hemingway had first presented *The Spanish Earth* (1937, USA, 53), was now vilified for attempting to enmesh the US in an 'imperialist' war. When *Lights Out in Europe* (USA, 66), a documentary on the early phases of the war by Kline and Hammid, finally appeared in April 1940, it received confused and hostile notices in the leftist press (*New Masses* 1940). Ivens, of course, did not join the stream of intellectuals defecting from the left, among them some of his former co-workers such as Archibald MacLeish,¹ and if he experienced any discomfiture as a result of the policy reversal, he never expressed it, even during the occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940. This moment of abrupt turnabout, of renunciation even, was becoming a pattern that would span Ivens's entire career, and the artist-activist who had thrived through the radical shift from the avant-garde to militant internationalism and then to the Popular Front liberal mainstream, must have taken the shift to pacifist neutrality, bolstered by party unanimity, in stride. Although *Power* was initiated just before the Pact, Ivens's projects during the two years between the Hitler-Stalin agreement and its inevitable *blitzkrieg* repudiation by Hitler must nonetheless be seen in the light of this extraordinary meander of political history.

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The other determining factor was primarily economic. The abrupt abolition of US national public sponsorship for documentary soon after the *Power* wrap in the late spring of 1940 did not sound the death knell of the American social documentary, but rather it left the field to the foundation and corporate sponsors. The Rockefeller Foundation's early involvement in the documentary movement has already been noted. Its lead was followed by the Carnegie Corporation, which provided a grant for *The City* (Willard Van Dyke and Ralph Steiner, 1939, 43), the essay on urban planning by ex-WFPL members that had been the hit of the World's Fair. But before we attend to Ivens's misadventure with foundation funding for his documentary work, we must follow him along the road to Ohio and examine *Power*.

The formidable commercial and critical success of *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (Lorentz, 1936, 25) and *The River* (Lorentz, 1938, 31) had led to the creation of the US Film Service in September 1938 with the newly famous Lorentz enshrined as its director. The Film Service was mandated to

coordinate the activities of the several departments and agencies which relate to the production or distribution of motion picture films, and to produce films in conjunction with other Federal agencies at the direction

and with the approval of the Executive Director of the National Emergency Council. (Roosevelt, letter to Agriculture Secretary Wallace, quoted in Snyder, 1968, 205)

Two agencies within the Department of Agriculture were the first to contract Lorentz and the Service for specific film enterprises: the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), which proposed *Power* in early 1939, and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which proposed later that same spring a three-reeler dramatising their agricultural conservation programme, a project that became Flaherty's *The Land* (1942, 43) and was undertaken that autumn at the same time as *Power*.

The REA project was initiated by Arch Mersey and Marion Ramsey in the following terms:

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Problem: Our problem can be posed in the following manner: The REA program delivers a supply of cheap and abundant energy to the farm that the farmer is technically, physically, and psychologically unable to utilize in a manner that will greatly improve his standard of living.

We believe an imaginatively produced, emotionally affecting film portrayal of the possibilities that are even now coming true is, if widely distributed, ideally suited to the job of making Americans conscious of the challenge and opportunity. *The River* and *Face of Britain* do the job as we want to see it done again – in terms of the electrification of agriculture, a bulwark of democracy. (letter fragment, quoted in Snyder, 1968, 121)

The parallels to Ivens's own conception of documentary during this period are striking: 'emotionally affecting', 'widely distributed', and even the concluding invocation of 'democracy', a key word of the Popular Front as well as of the domestic and foreign policy of the New Deal. The eagerness with which Ivens became involved is not surprising.

The sponsoring agencies both expected that Lorentz himself would be directing the two films, delivering, they undoubtedly hoped, prestigious sequels to the previous films. Lorentz had no such intention, fully immersed simultaneously in two ongoing projects, *Ecce Homo* (1939), and *Fight for Life* (1940, 39). Instead, Lorentz used his new authority as Film Service director to hire the two most prestigious documentarists in the US (aside from himself) to direct two quintessentially American projects under his supervision, one, an expatriate Dutchman, and the other an American who had worked only in exile (Flaherty).

Ivens received Lorentz's invitation shortly after the premiere of *400 Million* while he was preparing to leave for a July visit to Europe to supervise the

French release of the film. Despite the mixed success of the Chinese film, he was at the peak of his prestige in the US. Reviewers who had formerly referred to him as a Dutch filmmaker now assumed readers' familiarity with his name and with *Spanish Earth*. In June he had been elected president of the Association of American Documentary Film Producers, a body that included virtually every documentarist working in the US (including and even dominated by those on the left, of course).² The Association's chief function, other than general promotion and information, was the coordination of the hugely successful fall offensive in documentary at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Ivens accepted Lorentz's offer and in June undertook preliminary work on the film treatment while still in Hollywood. Ivens's collaborators at this point were Edwin Locke, a veteran of Roy Stryker's famous documentary photography unit of the Farm Services Administration, hired by Lorentz as a writer, and Charles Walker, a researcher who had already begun the script outline in May prior to Ivens's involvement, based on REA pamphlets, documentation, stills, and Lorentz's original idea-outline. This idea, worked out with and approved by the REA, called for a chronology of two days on a typical farm, one without electricity, which would show the farm family members hard at work with old-fashioned tools, and the second day with electricity, showing how power and new appliances make farm work feasible. This chronological framework was reportedly based on an old silent film *Dusk to Dawn* (Vidor, 1922, USA, 60) (Snyder, 1968, 123). Ivens did not hesitate to accept enthusiastically this schema, which bore resemblance in any case to his own ideas and to the socialist realist pattern he had used in *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, USSR, 50). Upon his return from Europe, he spent the summer refining the idea and participating with Locke and Walker in the choice of the farm. One refinement of the basic conception that came from Ivens was the expansion of an interlude between the two days that would show the farmers deciding together and effecting the change themselves.

Ivens (1969, 187) viewed the project as an opportunity for a 'mental rest after two strenuous assignments in Spain and China'. It allowed him the relative luxury of a well-equipped project to be undertaken at a leisurely pace. It was also an opportunity to participate in a general trend in the US radical film community toward domestic subjects and away from the anti-fascist subjects of 1937 and 1938. Except for the continuing work of Kline and Julien Bryan in the European hot spots, the US left film community in 1939 was preoccupied with work on the home front: Frontier Films' *People of the Cumberland* (Kazan, Meyers, Leyda, and Watts, 1937, 18), *Native Land* (Hurwitz and Strand, 1942, 80), *White Flood* (Meyers and Maddow, 1940, 15), their first scientific film, and *The History and Romance of Transportation* (Maddow, 1939, 6), a commission for the World's Fair; Van Dyke's *City*, another World's Fair project; and the US

Film Service's other work, which was to provide employment for an assortment of WFPL veterans including Irving Lerner. *The March of Time's The Ramparts We Watch* (de Rochemont, 1940, 99) was the mainstream equivalent of the renewed interest in domestic subjects. The trend was confirmed by the 23 August announcement of the Nazi-Soviet pact, an event that jolted the left in the US as elsewhere. Ivens has never spoken of his personal response to the abrupt reversal of Communist policy that suddenly transformed the valiant anti-fascist struggle into yet another war among imperialist powers, and replaced the campaign for US intervention by one for continued isolation, nor of the traumatic and long-lasting, even lethal, effect this had on the US left and its Popular Front base. It was a fortuitous accident that he was engaged in a domestic project at the time that would not be affected by the policy shift.

262 | Meanwhile, Ivens personally engaged the project's camera operator, Arthur Ornitz, a 20-year old offspring of the Los Angeles radical film community, whom he had met during his Hollywood visits. Ornitz had worked on various 16mm and underground projects on the West Coast, had organised sharecroppers on an unfinished film project for the Steinbeck committee in the South, and had contributed some agricultural shots to *Ecce Homo*.³

Ivens's working relationship with Ferno had by this time ended, perhaps because of ideological differences and because of Ferno's wish to branch out into directing on his own, also in North America, but their separation appears to have been amicable.⁴ Lorentz himself would have had no objection to Ornitz, nor to Ivens for that matter, on ideological grounds since he had frequently worked closely and successfully with WFPL veterans on his earlier projects: his openness to collaboration with leftists does not indicate any ideological kinship on his part, rather the openness and non-sectarian atmosphere within the documentary movement as a whole during the late thirties.⁵ The final crucial collaborator on the project was Van Dongen, who joined only during the editing phase because of her own active career as independent filmmaker and educational film consultant.

Ivens (1969, 187-189) provides a valuable description of the long process by which he, Locke, and Ornitz finally chose the Parkinson farm near St. Clairsville, Ohio, in midsummer after an arduous search for the right location and subjects. They looked for a farm with just the right combination of typicality, and a 'real but interesting' family who were willing to undergo the changeover to electricity. The aesthetic and ideological principles that shaped the narrative elements of previous Ivens films, including those planned but never realised, are immediately recognisable. The fact that these principles were shared by the sponsors is an indication of how much Ivens's socialist realist aesthetic of personalised didacticism had filtered into the US mainstream by 1939. Neither of Lorentz's two previous films had participated in this model, but the

two projects that occupied him during the shooting of *Power* both drew heavily from it: *Ecce Homo*, never finished, was to dramatise the life and itinerary of an unemployed family man, and *Fight for Life* depicted a doctor involved in maternal health care in the Chicago slums. The only divergence of the Lorentz projects from the Ivens model, a divergence typical of many liberal documentary books and articles, was their emphasis on the direness of the problem without bringing in the positive element of a solution, of the subjects engaged in change. *Power*, as conceived by Lorentz and the REA, had no such liability, since the intention was to show the public an affirmative model to be imitated, a typical family making use of the government program to bring in the wires, rather than just to decry the deprivation of the majority of US farms. Thus the family sought by the filmmakers would have more in common with the robust and rosy families of socialist realism than with the gaunt, impassive agrarian heroes of the FSA and other US documentary currents. The emaciated sharecroppers were already becoming clichés (when they appear in Flaherty's *Land*, they seem outdated and derivative) and were already prompting reactive currents.⁶ Ivens's portrait of the Parkinsons would exude confidence and affection, rather than the denunciation and pity of his American predecessors.⁷ The filmmakers' search was for a farm

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[without] a definite atmosphere like a southern farm, [...] an ordinary farm with no particular aspect. I didn't want a farm that would be typically north, or California, or New England. But I did want a sort of rolling country. [...] I was looking for a farm not too poor and not too rich, preferably one worked by the family living on it. (Ivens, 1969, 187-188)

This latter detail presumably satisfied the New Deal vision of small individual farmers working cooperatively. To show tenant farmers, as most earlier documentary works had done, would not provide an exemplary model in the same way, though the trend of the period might have been more accurately reflected by such a choice – the growing presence of tenant farmers who had lost their holdings to big agri-landlords was a phenomenon that Flaherty emphasised strongly in *Land*. The filmmakers found, however, that model families on rolling farms are much rarer than they had anticipated. After encountering farm after farm that was 'too big or too broken down, or else with a hopelessly disagreeable old couple in charge' (Locke, quoted in MacCann, 1973, 103), the team actually set in motion the backup solution of manufacturing a synthetic family, a possibility not unheard of in either Ivens's work nor in socialist realism. This also ran into a snag, so the crew returned to the Parkinsons who had earlier appeared promising except for the fact that their farm was already electrified.⁸

The Parkinson situation had to undergo some cosmetic changes. The crew removed 'one or two items of equipment', buried certain cables, and had to 'shoot around' other evidence of electrification for the 'before' part of the film. Parkinson's mules were considered unsuitable, despite the Democratic affiliation of the project, so a team of horses was hired for the shoot. The Parkinsons agreed to submit to several months of inconvenience in exchange for improvements to their electrical installations, including better barn lighting, and modern plumbing in their house and barn. The electric range that stars in the second part of the film and the electric milking machine that was cut in the editing were not, however, part of the deal. The family later estimated that they had gained \$900 worth of equipment (Snyder, 1968, 124).

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A preliminary script was settled in July. The shooting began immediately after the Parkinson deal was finalised, even before the shooting script was ready one week later, since haying could not wait. By 30 August, a 'final', detailed 'picture script' was ready, based on some shooting that had already taken place and including various modifications of the original script to accommodate aspects of the farm (*Power and the Land*, 'R.E.A. Picture Script', typescript, 30 August 1939, JIA). These accommodations varied from increased emphasis on the barn and milk-cooling technology – since the farm was primarily a dairy operation, to a heightening of the lyrical elements inspired inevitably by Ivens's and Ornitz's confrontation with the actual landscape, with the result that the hardship of non-electrified work would not appear quite so gruelling as the REA had wanted to imply. Ornitz (personal communication, 1980) remembers that some misty early morning images of horses at pasture required three successive dawn excursions to the fields.

Ivens's experiences with the writer in adapting the script on location proved to be as stimulating and useful as he had expected. In fact, in his manual of documentary technique written shortly after the shooting of *Power* (Ivens, 1940), he declared that it was now a necessity for a writer to be present during the shoot. The writer, he stated, had an important role in the 'first clash of fact with the concept written into the script'. 'The writer's work', he added, 'is not done until the film is done'. It consists of

shaping the constant change of reality into the dramatic structure of the growing work, and becoming interested and involved in social, political, and even seasonal changes in the environment. [...] With the director and cameraman usually dog-tired at the end of the day, prevented from thinking creatively, the writer is depended upon to be their spur, to broaden the film's subject, in drama and detail, while they are all away from the specificity of the camera. (Ivens, 1940, 33-34, 36)⁹

The evolution of the script clearly testifies to a close collaboration of this nature between Ivens and Locke, particularly in the formulation of long semi-fictional sequences relating to the Parkinson's eight-year-old son, a natural 'ham' who became one centre of interest in the film. Several long semi-fictional sequences called for Bip to drive into town with the dairy driver where he would see a model creamery, tease a cow being mechanically milked, pick up groceries for his mother, and encounter a barn fire on the way home. The latter incident was to have a whole sequence built around it, showing neighbours coming to the rescue and thus highlighting the cooperative nature of farming as well as the high risk on non-electrified farms. The sequence also included a traditional Ivensian bucket brigade and an assortment of minor details concerning Bip such as his getting too close to the flames. It was linked precisely to the subsequent sequence wherein the owner of the destroyed barn is seen as one of the instigators of the actions the farmers take collectively to set up the electrification cooperative. Of these sequences, outlined in detail in the 30 August script, the barn fire was actually shot, as well as at least part of the first sequence. Though the two scenes were temporarily shelved (the material would end up in two spinoff shorts, as we shall see), they represent the kind of creative teamwork that Ivens had considered necessary for heightening the film's personalisation in the field.

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Many other smaller-scale touches along the same lines, however, were retained, for example their rewriting of the Bip character to accommodate the dreamy poetic personality that stubbornly refused to show the interest in mechanical things that the earlier versions had called for. The team improvised a sequence in which Bip teases his father with a sunflower while he is cutting corn, one of the more spontaneous and behaviourally naturalistic scenes in the film. Correspondingly, when the two elder sons turned out to be less interesting than had been anticipated, they were reduced to virtual background figures: the filmmakers jettisoned an earlier conception for a scene dramatising rural emigration, calling for a discontented older son being rough with the livestock or gate, and being discovered by his father pouring over a map to the East. Similarly, when the filmmakers noticed the paterfamilias's strong pride in the sharpness of his tools, they added short 'before' and 'after' sequences showing tool-grinding with and without electricity; comparable narrative details reflect the mother's origins as a schoolteacher and greatly enrich the portrayal of women's work as it was conceived in the preliminary version. On the other hand, the filmmakers decided not to use an earlier version's sequence showing the family and neighbours ceremoniously burying their obsolete kerosene lamps at the end of the film; they apparently concluded that a single shot showing Hazel Parkinson putting a kerosene lamp away in a cupboard rang truer to traditional farm frugality than a night-time

lamp-burying ceremony comparable to the conclusions of *Komsomol* and *400 Million*. A meal scene also was expanded from the first script's conception, the filmmakers apparently recognising the simple power of a silent meal dominated by mechanical gestures and unselfconscious fatigue.

A further prescription of Ivens in his manual, that the writer avoid the temptation on location 'to cast aside his literary qualities relying entirely on the strong visuals around him', is apparently a warning about the necessity of preserving a certain thematic and conceptual coherence in the narrative elements of a documentary (Ivens, 1940, 34). This prescription was clearly applied to *Power* whose simple narrative flow is in abrupt contrast to the episodic disunity for which *400 Million* had been criticised.

The shooting lasted most of the autumn and was not yet finished by the REA deadline of 14 November. Although the shoot was pursued at a much more leisurely pace than Ivens was used to, allowing for the luxury of seeing rushes on an ongoing basis for the first time since leaving Holland, the production was no freer of complications than any other documentary, despite the absence of fascist bombers and Guomindang censors.

One complication involved Ornitz's contribution as operator. Lorentz and the REA were unhappy with some of the first rushes when they arrived, as was Ivens himself reportedly, and the blame was attributed to Ornitz (Snyder, 1968, 126).¹⁰ However, since Ornitz's work is among the most impressive of the film, including the playful 'sunflower' episode between father and son in the cornfield and the lyrical early morning pasture material, it seems likely that Lorentz's displeasure also stemmed from evidence that the filmmakers were adding to the original outline. Perhaps the barn-fire sequence was at the root of the problem – it had been shot at great expense, and was a near disaster (Snyder, 1968, 125).¹¹ The REA reportedly were 'shocked' by the scene,¹² and the only reference to the fire hazard in the final film is a shot in one of the barn sequences of a lantern swinging menacingly. In any case, Lorentz immediately dispatched Floyd Crosby to take over as cameraman, to 'reshoot the unsatisfactory footage and to confine shooting to the original outline' (Snyder, 1968, 126). Crosby, also a member of the Los Angeles political film community and former president of the anti-fascist Motion Picture Guild, had better professional credentials than Ornitz; he had previously shot with Flaherty and Murnau on Tahiti, and had since worked for Lorentz as contributing cinematographer for three projects. It was he who had originally recommended Ivens to Lorentz (Lorentz, personal communication, 14 November 1980), and would photograph *Land* for Flaherty. At the moment of his arrival, Crosby was the most experienced American cinematographer in the kind of documentary *mise-en-scène* that the project entailed. After some initial snags, including the near loss of Crosby's first batch of rushes, the prospects for the film imme-

diately improved. Crosby got the credit for getting the film back on the right track, though his work, primarily the final interiors that required complex artificial lighting, may have amounted to only about 15% of the total material according to Ornitz's reckoning (personal communication, 1980).¹³

By October, Lorentz was confident enough in the film's progress and still busy with *Fight for Life*, so that he transferred the supervision of *Power* to Tommy Atkins, a Washington staff member of the Film Service. Atkins wrote Ivens on location praising the team for the work finished up to that point and 'asked him now to concentrate on shooting material that would be in direct contrast to the electrification of the farm' (Snyder, 1968, 126). This latter specification apparently entailed exact correlations between details in both parts of the film, and this parallelism is indeed evident in the finished film. In November, however, as the deadline passed, Washington got nervous again, especially as the film threatened to go over-budget. The REA officials had been anxious all along after it became apparent that Lorentz was not directing the project – Lorentz had forestalled this inevitability as long as possible by discreetly suggesting that Ivens stay away from Washington. In any case, part of the delay was clearly caused by the REA slowness in installing the necessary equipment for the 'after' section of the film (Snyder, 1968, 127-128).

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At this point, there was also concern over who would be writing the commentary. Lorentz made an unsuccessful overture to John Steinbeck, who had helped with *Fight for Life* (Snyder, 1968, 104). Lorentz then resolved to write the commentary himself, by which means he would also be able to ensure that the film was finished according to its original conception. He communicated this decision in a letter to Ivens on 20 November, which also contained a politely veiled threat to stick to the outline:

It is obligatory for me to translate the wishes of these government departments who wish films made [...] but one point we must be clear on; while I am perfectly willing to agree that you might make a very exciting documentary film from the material you have, unless that film is specifically enough like the original outline approved by the men who gave me the money and who trust me to see that such a picture is made, I feel it would be an unfortunate thing for both of us. (Lorentz, letter to Ivens, 20 November 1939, JIA)¹⁴

Lorentz also insisted that the film would be more easily distributed if kept to its original three-reel length, instead of the larger, more personalised version of five reels that it was shaping up to be. Not surprisingly, Lorentz and the sponsors had their way after the late-November wrap-up. The major scenes departing from the original outline were set aside for the moment, and, throughout

the film, individual shots and shot-series were dropped to compress the film even further.¹⁵ The casualties included the tracking shots of the rolling countryside that Ivens had envisaged from the very beginning.

The painful necessity of the cuts forcefully reminded Ivens that the filmmaker's relationship with the producer was as important in its way as the creative on-location relationship with the writer that Ivens had put so much store in. Accordingly, this and other lessons about sponsorship found their way into Ivens's manual. There he insisted that the sponsor should have complete confidence in the director, to obviate the misunderstandings that physical distance can induce. He added that full discussions between filmmaker and sponsor are necessary before the acceptance of the commission, so that the filmmaker can understand the sponsor's own 'needs and aims'. He stressed that sponsors' 'secrets about the subject' can have a destructive effect, if they arise mid-project (Ivens, 1940). Though these references are probably most directly provoked by *New Frontiers* (1940), the ultimate negative example of sponsor-director relations as we shall see, there may also be implications here about his relationship with Lorentz. It seems unlikely that Ivens would have counted on almost doubling the length of *Power* if he had not been encouraged to believe that this might be possible. In any case the discussion also implies a certain nostalgia for what then seemed the ideal filmmaker-sponsor relations of *400 Million*, where 'there is no fundamental disagreement with the sponsor [since] the filmmaker is part of the sponsoring body', and of *Borinage*, where, instead of restraining the film's political theme, 'the real sponsor, the Belgian Mine Workers Union, was constantly pushing Storck and myself deeper into the material, asking us to give more reality since the aim of the film was to better bad conditions' (Ivens, 1969, 215).

That Ivens's memory would tend to romanticise slightly the actual conditions of these two earlier projects, especially *400 Million*, in the heat of his disappointments of the forties is understandable. In any case, the Ivens-Lorentz tension had never come to a head. Lorentz remained a warm supporter of Ivens and recommended him in April to direct a film for the Federal Theatre Project. But the FTP was a New Deal agency that was soon to become a scapegoat for the Congressional axe as surely as the US Film Service itself (Snyder, 1968, 127).

The editing and recording of the commentary and music and the re-recording phases were all supervised by Van Dongen during the spring and summer of 1940. Ivens had by this time left for work on his next project. This was a common arrangement during this the final period of their collaboration, their joint system and division of responsibilities having been refined to a routine, and concern over proper credits not being a feature of their relationship at the time.¹⁶ Bureaucratic details delayed the premiere until October in Ohio and December elsewhere.

It is perhaps no accident that *Power*, the most successful of Ivens's three major American films in reaching a mass audience, also has the simplest structure. Rotha (1952, 318) does not hesitate to make this connection: '[Ivens] recognized that a dialectical and controversial onslaught could not possibly convince the audience for which it was intended'.

The final version of *Power* is a significant restructuring of the basic idyll-resistance propaganda formula of the two anti-fascist films. *Power*'s opening 'before' movement in effect combines idyll and threat in being both pastoral and severe, informed by struggle, as the commentary more often than the images reminds the spectator. The solution appears halfway through the film, initiated by the discussion and then the founding meeting of the farmers' cooperative; it is then pursued in scenes showing the electrical installations, and in conclusion the 'after' movement that shows the new life on the electrified farm. The 'resistance' movement is thus much more substantial than the 'solutions' in the other New Deal films such as *Plow, River, City*, and *Land*, in which the solutions were hastily envisaged or proposed in utopian terms rather than actually realised in terms of ongoing everyday living as in *Cumberland* and *Spanish Earth*. The New Deal films 'are more imaginative in the problem sections than in the solution sections', as one assessment of Lorentz's work puts it, the solutions often seeming an afterthought (Snyder, 1968, 191). In *Spanish Earth*, *Cumberland*, and *Power*, the solution sections receive the major structural weight, in the first two, interwoven with the entire continuity of the film, in the last one, occupying at least the last half of the film. Some critics did, however, notice utopian overtones in *Power*, wondering for example how the family was ever going to pay for all those new appliances (Winsten, 1940),¹⁷ but this rather literal reservation hardly takes into consideration the substantial weight the film places on the farmers' discussions, initiatives, and decisive struggle for change. This adapted socialist realist model accents the process of change rather than the gleaming appliance awaiting the participants in the last shots. The impression of struggle in *Power* is reinforced by Ivens's habitual fascination with the actual process and mechanics of work. Like *Spanish Earth*, *Nieuwe Gronden* (*New Earth*, 1933, Netherlands, 30), and *Komsomol*, it is a film filled literally with images of sweat, of strenuous work rather than of passive waiting for the imposition of a TVA dam or a model greenbelt city.

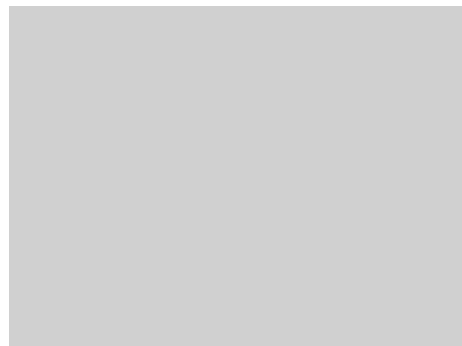
Another structuring principle of the film is chronology, not only the diachronic logic of the 'before-after' pattern, but also the 'dawn to dusk' logic of both 'before' and 'after' sections (followed most precisely in the former one). This approach to structuring expository material in documentary was not new. It is traceable in the central structure of most of the city films of the late silent period and would reemerge as the structuring framework of a num-

ber of World War II propaganda films also, especially British, including *London Can Take It!* (Humphrey Jennings and Harry Watt, 1940, 9) and certain of Jennings's other works. The day presented by Ivens is a highly synthetic one, crammed with all of the farm activities between a single morning and night, even incorporating several seasonal changes within the day.

The 'dawn to dusk' format allowed Ivens to incorporate his lyrical appreciations of the landscape into the narrative continuity. The landscape interludes function at each different time of the day as devices to establish atmosphere and location for the work at hand. The various visual motifs, which otherwise endow the film with an elegant image symmetry, function in the same way. Light, both natural and artificial, is one of these. Ivens was undoubtedly celebrating his release from the pervading grayness of *400 Million*. Each modulation of light in the course of the day functions denotatively in terms of the action it frames and is captured sensuously by the camera at the same time, from the dawn mistiness, to the noon blaze, to the evening blackness that sets off the bobbing spots of the men's lanterns as they walk to the barn for the evening chores. This sensitivity to the gradations of light recalls *Regen* (*Rain*, 1929, Netherlands, 16) more than any other of Ivens's previous films. Artificial light also provides a recurring visual motif quite obviously related to the exposition of the film. The lanterns of the barn and the kerosene lamps of the household are quite literally foregrounded throughout the 'before' movement, often used as framing devices for the characters and most explicitly whenever they are gathered around the dining table. The lamps frequently gave Ivens the pretext for decorative interior lighting effects. They are integral to several key scenes of the exposition as well: a scene showing daughter Ruth cleaning all of the lamps as part of her daily routine, and the shot of Hazel putting away her lamp now that she has turned on the bright ceiling fixture. A less important but related visual motif is built around the opening and closing of doors and gates in the barn and house, which often alter the lighting quality of a shot,

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36. *Power and the Land* (1940): the Parkinsons mother and sons, laundress and harvesters, complained about the takes required to dramatise with perfect synchronisation their respective farm chores. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



sometimes quite radically, transforming the darkness of the barn interior to a brilliant rectangle of day. Such motifs give the film a flawless visual coherence.

The parallelism implied by the 'before-after' pattern and suggested in the Film Service correspondence is the other dominant structural principle of the film. It too is basic to the film's expository argument, a narrative pattern that is explicitly didactic. Each farm task is shown before and after electrification, from milk-cooling to plumbing, the latter shown with a discretion only slightly less euphemistic than the Production Code would have allowed. The network of parallel images gives the film a mirror-like symmetry and a more leisurely, decorative rhythm than the climactic crescendos of the earlier films.

The result of Ivens's long-awaited chance to experiment fully with a narrative personalised form of documentary, *Power* relies almost exclusively on the *mise-en-scène* mode, for the first time since *Branding* (*Breakers*, 1929, Netherlands, 42). The elements of the 'spontaneous' mode that dominated *Spanish Earth* and the 'newsreel' mode that was unusually prominent in *400 Million* have both disappeared almost entirely from *Power*. It is true that there are undeniable elements of improvisation in three of the better sequences of the film: the 'sour milk' sequence, where the father shows some unrehearsed reactions to the dairy's rejection of his improperly cooled milk; the 'sunflower' sequence and the 'shower' sequence, where the father and Bip appear in a playful mood once again, this time in connection with the delights of running water. However, the improvisation occurs within the framework of a strictly controlled *mise-en-scène*, the last even requiring artificial lighting.

Within the *mise-en-scène* mode, the degrees of fictionalisation and camera-subject interaction vary widely. The bulk of the film is committed to the collaborative re-enactment by the family of their habitual daily activities for the benefit of the camera. One member recalled having been asked to milk a cow five times (Snyder, 1968, 125); Ivens (1969, 191) as a result of this not completely successful tactic recommended afterwards in his manual that documentary directors should never ask their subjects to do anything so unnatural as to milk an already milked cow. Ivens gives elaborate advice along the same lines on how to adapt studio-style *mise-en-scène* to the special needs of the inherently impatient, inexperienced actor:

I came to believe it is best to have as few retakes as possible. Repetition seems to have a deadening effect on the non-actor. If rehearsals are necessary, time must be allowed between rehearsals and shooting. Use yourself or anybody as stand-ins during the setting up of the camera and lights to keep the non-actor from exhaustion or self-consciousness. On the other hand, if the period of filming a re-enactment is short or very rushed, there can be less care in humouring him, and a greater depend-

ence on the camera's ability to break up the action into useful close-ups. [...]

The director and the cameraman must sometimes invent dramas or interludes ('What good is all this fooling with the lights?') to render the length of time needed for light and camera adjustments tolerable to the non-actor. I don't believe in long conferences before takes, while the non-actor waits. (Ivens, 1969, 218-219)

Furthermore, as already cited in Chapter 3, there is the customary emphasis on close observation of the action to be filmed, to permit establishing, insert, and covering shots and to avoid retakes (Ivens, 1969, 219). Occasionally, the directorial intervention was as basic as the simple relocation of an action: for example, Ruth's lamp-trimming sequence takes place on a sunny verandah, perhaps at Ivens's request. As already intimated, some of the more extreme uses of *mise-en-scène* involving detailed scripting of the sequence were ultimately cut, with the 'Sour Milk' sequence being the notable exception.

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The shooting technique for much of the *mise-en-scène* material in *Power*, then, differed little from that used by studio filmmakers on location except for the absence of dialogue and direct sound recording. Each scene was planned shot-by-shot beforehand on paper, with camera positions, sometimes illustrated by sketches, lighting instructions, and descriptions of the actions of the subjects all mapped out in detail – even whether a particular character is wearing a hat. One sequence even indicated a dolly movement, planned perhaps in a moment of technological euphoria akin to that felt in the Philips factory, but this does not appear in the final film and was probably never shot; the only tracking shots are the more readily improvised ones from the top of farm vehicles. Most setups were uncomplicated ones suitable for the light Bell and Howell used for the project, a camera particularly common in location shooting.

The shooting scripts also included instructions for transitional shots of the sort that are common in *Spanish Earth* but notably absent from *400 Million*: 'I always note at the beginning of a sequence and at the end of its last shot the sequence to follow. This ensures the fluid continuity which a documentary film must have' (Ivens, 1969, 201). Accordingly, bridging shots in which a background figure becomes the foreground figure of the following sequence are common. Similarly, many of the pan shots involve intricate reframing, for example a shot in which Hazel pumps water in one room and carries the water into another room where she pours it into a tub, framed by the doorway. Also present are compositions in depth in which foreground and background actions simultaneously depict different stages and materials of the same process, as in the 'milk-cooling' sequence. *Mise-en-scène* setups also permitted

the studied aestheticism of several artificially lit shots, for example, a medium close-up of Hazel sewing, sharing the frame with an ornate kerosene lamp, a shot full of painterly overtones. The many parallel relationships between shots would also have relied on carefully deliberate setups, as would a number of points of view that become familiar through their repetition – for example, one that presents a figure moving across the yard from house to barn toward or away from the camera on a diagonal grid.

The shooting script also contained some interesting instructions for shooting characters in a less rigidly controlled setting. For the ‘cooperative meeting’ sequence, the shooting script provides for the continuing lamp motif, for a transitional link to the previous shot, and for foci of attention for the operator, with emphasis on the static portrait shots that are especially available from a captive audience:

To meeting in schoolhouse. Twenty to thirty farmers, four or five women, Bill Parkinson and Bip, owner of barn we saw burning serving as transition. Shot at dusk, lighted by oil lamps spotting a few faces here and there. Chairman at teacher’s desk; oil lamp on face. After establishing size and nature of meeting, work is mainly in close-ups. Expressions which lend themselves to dialogue device. Those who are enthusiastically for the cooperative; those who are stubbornly but not violently, against; those who ask questions, want to understand, and are forming their judgments. A dry humorous remark comes in twice during the meeting. (Ivens, ‘R.E.A. Picture Script’, 30 August 1939, JIA)

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For the most part, scenes are constructed as they were in the Fuentidueña line of *Spanish Earth*. Long-shot establishing material locates the setting for a scene, and the characters appear, usually in long shot, before the action begins. The action itself is broken up, usually into a medium view and then close-ups of the details of the action, frequently inflected by a pan to the face of the subject at work. Attention is given to the materials and chronology of the work, with a didactic emphasis on its end product and functionality. Characters interacting with each other are habitually dealt with in medium two-shot arrangements. Very often the closing of a sequence is symmetrical, a summation evoking the original establishing shot, or else a transitional shot. The pace is deliberate and, even, like the rhythm of farm work itself, always obedient to the principles of space-time continuity. Once, during the corn-cutting sequence, the camera’s agitated apprehensions of the work contribute to the building up of a stylised rhythmic effect, in this case one that imitates the rhythm of this fast heavy work, imitated itself by the ‘sing-song’ effect of the commentary. Even in sequences of the film that are purely expository in their motivation, such as an

explanation of the sources of the electrical power in urban generators, the filmic structure is still simple classical narrative continuity.

What is remarkable about *Power* in relation to the previous works by Ivens and to other contemporary works, is not the extent to which its *mise-en-scène* approximates that of the classical narrative cinema – Lorentz's *Fight for Life* went even further in this direction, employing Hollywood sets and professional actors, and *Cumberland* even included a gangland murder visualised in 'noir' style and narrated by a posthumous narrator, both films remaining fully within the perceived bounds of documentary! Rather, *Power* is remarkable for the unity and simplicity with which it fulfils its narrative project. The hybrid form pioneered by Ivens and Lorentz and their British contemporaries dominated most documentaries at the time of the outbreak of war: *Cumberland*, for example, alongside its 'film noir' sequence, included compilation sequences, spontaneous material, scripted dialogue using direct sound, and several scenes intercutting *mise-en-scène* with 'spontaneous' footage, a mix very similar to *Spanish Earth*. Ivens's instinct was suddenly to draw back from the eclecticism that he himself had legitimised: *Power* interrupts its narrative continuum on one occasion only, when at the end of the 'before' movement, a voice-over exposition with diagrams and an animated map provides the history and rationale of the REA electrification program.¹⁸ Otherwise movements that might be considered digressions, such as a landscape trope, or the series of close-up portraits in the farmers' meeting, all blend smoothly into the narrative flow, perhaps in deliberate contrast to the much criticised episodic quality of *400 Million*.

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As we have seen, the *Power* production served as a kind of laboratory to test Ivens's conviction that personalisation was the logical development of the documentary, a conviction that had been evolving over the previous decade but which war, poverty, and haste had always prevented from being fully applied in the realm of practice. During the classical period, Ivens's conception of personalisation was expressed most systematically, and most comprehensively, in *Power*. The conception embraced all three levels of cinematic practice, production, text, and consumption: it involved, on the level of production, close work with non-professional actors whose lives and struggles would be expressed in the film; on the level of text, it implied the articulation of those lives and struggles in terms of continuous characters developed in a narrative framework; on the level of consumption, it implied that spectators would become involved in a process of identification with the characters and would be solicited to apply the insight gained thereby to their own lives and social situation.¹⁹ *Power* is a virtual manifesto of the possibilities of personalisation within the classical, non-synchronous sound documentary tradition and a far-reaching encounter with the technical, aesthetic, ethical, and politi-

cal problems entailed by these possibilities, the apex and synthesis of a tradition that had been gradually accumulating over the decade.²⁰

Ivens's insistence after the Chinese film on having an adequately sized crew on location was largely in order to free himself as director to work personally with the non-professional actors who were to dominate his future work. It was not accidental that *Komsomol, Misère au Borinage* (*Borinage*, 1934, Belgium, 34), and *Spanish Earth* had all had writers and/or cinematographers and/or co-directors as part of the crew and that these films had been his most highly personalised up to this point. In China, he himself had often served as assistant operator or focus-puller. In Ohio, aided not only by operator and writer, but also by an assistant, production manager, and photographer, Ivens was free to concentrate on building the relationship of intimate observation, trust, and cooperation between artists and subjects that he saw as being necessary for the personalised documentary. He brought the same spirit of intense study that he had formerly applied to bridge spans, and later to the materials and processes of work, to the behavioural patterns of these characters living their daily lives. There is a new emphasis on a director's psychological knowledge of his or her subjects (Ivens, 1969, 191).

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Often, Ivens's approach to his subjects did not involve the full complicity on their part that was otherwise fundamental to their working relationship and to methodologies of later direct cineastes. For example, Ivens describes manipulations useful in getting 'fresh' and spontaneous 'performances' from his characters. One of these was to explain a scene beforehand individually to each participant so that there should be an element of surprise in the final rendition (Ivens, 1969, 191). He borrowed other tactics from Pudovkin such as the trick used in the 'sour milk' scene where the Parkinsons' milk is returned from the dairy with a rejection slip.²¹ The Parkinsons had already rehearsed the scene, but Ivens introduced an element of surprise by means of an authentic letter from the dairy instead of the blank prop as planned. The strategy worked: the father is clearly caught off guard and, captured by a long-focus lens that allowed him to forget the fiction, his reaction is spontaneous as he reads the note, impassively puts it into his overall pocket, and grimly walks away.²²

Ivens's prescription that instructions to non-professional actors be not too specific appears borne out by the film itself: occasionally a scene appears to suffer for not following this prescription. For example, Hazel appears sewing in a scene showing the harmful effect of kerosene light when used for homework and sewing; she moves the lamp closer and, as if to relieve the soreness, touches her eyes, a gesture that appears too self-conscious to ring true. It seems that Bip works best of the three major characters simply because his extrovert-ish personality required less coaching on the part of the director. Yet, even this character has a trace of a literary overlay, suggesting the patron-

isation of children found in most adult artists, or perhaps the inspiration of that other populist iconographer of Depression and wartime American childhood, Norman Rockwell. But the overlay is situated primarily on the level of the commentary.

Ivens did make some attempts to create an understanding of the film-making process with his subjects in order to maximise their cooperation. He describes taking the father to a James Cagney gangster film in the St. Clairsville theatre to show him the principle of varying shot-range (Ivens, 1969, 192). Ivens's attempts in this direction however did not take him so far as the Flahertian principle of showing the characters the rushes during the shoot. Ivens was convinced that this would inhibit their spontaneity and encourage them to 'act'. Kline ([1942] 1979, 151) shared Ivens's viewpoint. He spoke of 'preventing real-life characters from acting falsely by imitating their favourite actors', but saw that rehearsing could be effective. By and large, the portraits of the three Parkinsons are warm, detailed, and authentic, particularly in those foregrounded scenes where the characters are shown at their familiar daily work. Ivens had indeed succeeded in 'employ[ing] his imagination to manipulate the real, personal characteristics of the new actors', and had proven that 'a real person, acting to play himself, will be more expressive if his actions are based on his real characteristics' (Ivens, 1969, 191). Still the Parkinsons had no formal input into the conception or development of the film. *Power*, obviously, was a commission where the filmmakers and the sponsors were still in full creative control of the project. Ivens would not move closer to the more contemporary democratic ideal of subjects-centred documentary, so prophetically suggested by *Borinage*, until *Indonesia Calling* (1946, Australia, 22).

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It is difficult to evaluate whether *Power* justified the ambitious hopes that Ivens had nourished for the role of personalisation in documentary. Certainly the film's popular success would tend to confirm that Ivens was correct in linking personalisation with the goal of commercial distribution. The range of the reactions in the daily press suggests that audiences did strongly identify with the Parkinson family as he conceived them. No doubt, his decision to concentrate on three characters only in such a short film, leaving the older brothers and sister as one-dimensional background figures, was partly responsible for this success, ensuring as it did maximum 'colour' for the three main characters.

It must also be acknowledged, however, that there is not unlimited potential for personalisation in a publicity film commissioned to show Americans the positive role model of a family successfully electrifying their farm. The length of the film – the sponsors insisted on limiting it to 33 minutes – makes this especially true. Henri Storck was able to provide a much richer texture to his characterisations in a film on a similar topic, *Boerensymfonie (La Symphonie paysanne)*, 1944, Belgium, 115), due to a non-didactic orientation and above

all its two-hour length (though one could not argue that Storck's portraits are any less idealised because of their greater density). The vicious circle thus engaged did not then seem so obvious as it does in retrospect: personalisation was a means of consolidating mass distribution but the short-film format that seemed a prerequisite for mass distribution did not permit the full exploration of the possibilities of personalisation. Some of the feature-length World War II documentaries, chiefly British, would succeed in breaking out of this circle (*Camera*, written during the War, is full of admiring if not envious references to the British wartime features), but with *Power* and with Ivens's later *Action Stations* (1943, Canada, 50) the contradiction seemed insurmountable.

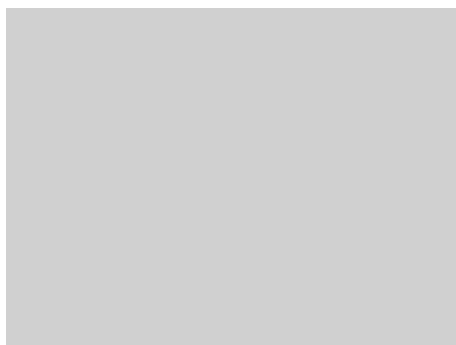
Ivens's proposed additions, detailed above, would have fleshed out the characterisations and relationships considerably. Furthermore, certain of the proposed scenes, such as the barn-burning, Bip's adventures with the dairy truck driver and model creamery, and a neighbourhood meal, would have deepened the family's rapport with the social environment beyond the family context. The fact that virtually the whole film is limited to this context, except for the collective corn harvest and the community meeting, meant that the characters were portrayed in terms of family structures that Ivens knew better. He had thought since *Komsomol* that psychological portraits had been beyond the domain of the documentary, requiring professional actors, and had aimed at social portraits instead (Ivens, 1969, 158). His portraits in *Power* succeed most where they are a function of the family's existence as a working economic unit; where they touch upon relationships that are purely interpersonal and familial they are less sure. This latter vulnerability was likely compounded by the expatriate director's lack of exposure to American domestic life. Can we hypothesise that most expatriate filmmakers in any culture have been more perceptive at social and public themes than at domestic and private ones?

Hazel's portrait is a case in point. Of the three major characters of the film, she seems to be the stiffest, and it is probable that a reviewer's complaint of 'camera consciousness' referred to her (Meltzer, 1940). It may be that her relative awkwardness in comparison to her husband and son may be due solely to the selective editorial compression of her appearances. Several details of the women's work – Hazel and Ruth in the vegetable garden, grocery shopping, etc., were omitted or never realised. For all of the film's careful observation of women's work, a preponderance of Hazel's reaction shots were retained in the final trimming, for example at the cooperative meeting or during the meals, and a disproportionate number of action shots cut. Ivens's relative lack of experience in directing women characters and in dealing with the domestic sphere is also a factor. His only previous foray into male-female relations in *Branding* had been uneven to say the least; and otherwise, his images of marriage had not gone much beyond the family scenes of *Borinage* where family

relations were considerably in the background. Ivens's best images of women up to this point had not been in relation to men or family structures but within collective working units in the public sphere, as with the Fuentidueña women during their laundry by the village pump. It is not surprising that Hazel seems most alive at her own heavy work – and Ivens does not spare us the impression of its heaviness – than in relation to her husband and son. Her Rockwellian reaction-shot appeal for her husband's approval in the penultimate shot of the film, as he inspects the roast magically prepared in her new range, undercuts the conclusion to a film that had until that moment resisted the most blatant resources of sentimentality. The implication that connubial bliss inevitably follows electrification is one that neither the REA nor Ivens intended.

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37. *Power and the Land* (1940): *Mise-en-scène* of laundry and lamp-cleaning, artificially lit: women's labour was another Ivens signature trope. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Ivens's conception of personalisation, in summary, is quite similar to the notion of the 'social type' advanced by Richard Dyer (1979, 54), which he defines as a 'collective representation',²³ a mode of representation that does not dissolve concrete social distinctions into psychologistic ones (whether these be individualised or social/stereotypical), but 'emphasizes such distinctions as the basis of collective identity and the heart of the historical struggle' (Dyer, 1977, 39) and as 'a collective norm of role behaviour formed and used by the group'. All of the emphases that Ivens placed upon his characters correspond to elements of Dyer's category: economic and class (or collective) identification, typicality, social relations, the dynamic of action, struggle or change – all elements that, significantly, correspond to the basic tenets of socialist realism that had inspired Ivens' initial moves in this direction. Like Ivens, Dyer sees the social type as a basic raw material for the socio-political praxis of the cinema, rather than the archetype or mythic type drawn by Flaherty or by Storck in his *Symphonie paysanne*, in which characters' static relations with natural elements and cycles are foregrounded, or the stereotype, a shorthand

staple of the imminent flood of wartime propaganda from both sides (Storck's choice of type was admittedly prudent during the Occupation).

At least three critics ascribed the missing elements in the portrait of the Parkinsons, not to an inadequate running time nor the constricting familial setting, but to the absence of direct sound. Rotha (1952, 319) complained that the film lacked the direct recorded sound and speech of *Fight for Life* and Milton Meltzer (1940) knew the specific reason for the film's shortcomings:

The farm family has a name all right but no personality. [...] The Stephen Vincent Benét commentary sounds like fake farmers' talk that would embarrass the family if they should hear it. [...] If the farmers' own talk could have been recorded together with the natural sounds in the barns and fields it would have been more effective.

The New Masses' Daniel Todd (1941) echoed these sentiments, correctly prophesying that 'the next step in the development of documentaries will be to permit the soundtrack to pick up what people actually say'. These three provocative suggestions must now be expanded into a systematic analysis of the element of sound in *Power*.

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Rotha's (1952, 319) estimation of *Power* as the culmination of the silent observational style of documentary might have been amplified by the parallel judgment that its soundtrack represents the culmination of the tradition of the 'creative commentary' style of the classical sound documentary. It has been noted that the two anti-fascist films moved beyond the standard commentary soundtrack towards a more complex use of sound, incorporating dramatic voices, musical narrative, simulated direct sound, internal narration, and multi-track sound effects; and that this expansion of the possibilities of non-synchronous sound seemed almost in compensation for moments lacking in visual intensity. Because of its forced reliance on the 'newsreel' mode, *400 Million* in particular had strained towards future trends in the most innovative sound films of the forties. In contrast, *Power* picked its sound form from the poetic commentary of the decade that had just finished, summing up the aesthetic possibilities of a form that most creative documentarists were leaving behind. Lorentz had used the form with finesse in his two early films, for example, but had abandoned it in favour of naturalistic dialogue and an internal narrator in *Fight for Life*. Most British directors also, spurred by the task of war propaganda and morale almost three years before their American counterparts, led brilliantly by Jennings, were soon experimenting confidently with multiple voices and narrative concrete sound, even occasionally with improvised synchronous dialogue on location, ingeniously circumventing the still critical inadequacy of non-studio sound technology.

No doubt the essential conservativeness of *Power's* commentary cannot be attributed to Ivens directly, but rather to the taste of the REA and the still formidable reputation of Lorentz's earlier work. Another factor must be Benét's literary formation (Lorentz had predictably engaged a Pulitzer laureate!). His prominence and his anti-fascist convictions presumably made him acceptable to Ivens, and his interest in American folklore, history, and national idioms made him a natural inheritor of the Whitmanesque aspirations of Lorentz's two earlier commentaries. However, Benét did not have even the benefit of Dudley Nichols's exposure to, and basic understanding of, the visual nature of the film medium. The commentary turned out to be talkative, overwritten, and literary. Benét's background as a librettist furthermore disposed him to continue the experimentation with choral or poetic speech that had characterised not only Lorentz's work, and *City*, but many European films as well, including Storck's *Les Maisons de la misère* (*The Houses of Misery*, 1937, Belgium, 30), with its choral recitative by Maurice Jaubert, and the GPO's *Night Mail* (Harry Watt and Basil Wright, 1936, UK, 25), with its poem by Auden, major films all following Cavalcanti's prescriptions in experimenting with non-synchronous speech.

By 1940 however, the style had changed, and Benét's folksy recitative inspired by Ivens's dynamic corn-cutting sequence caused 'consternation' among its audiences, according to one critic (Todd, 1941), and struck many reviewers as a false note, a 'not so successful' imitation of Lorentz (Winsten, 1940), and 'studied lyricism [that was] out of key' (Rotha, 1952, 318):

The knives are cutting
 The load piles high
 The sun beats down
 From the August sky
 We built our freedom and
 Strength this way
 From Mississippi to Ioway [sic].

Elsewhere the stylisation is not so exaggerated, but the self-consciousness of the 'folk idiom' still grates somewhat: 'Seven people make a big wash, but it's got to be done every week. You can't leave your men folk dirty... they might get used to it'.

Benét reluctantly agreed to an overhaul of his text and to its drastic compression: he dropped obvious redundancies ('the family sits at the table'); unnecessary information ('205 acres'); literary flourishes; and some of the more excessive lapses into folk opera (including a bizarre conversation between Hazel and her obsolescent icebox – 'It's all right, Auntie. We'll keep you too. We're grateful. Once you were just as new'.).

Other folksy Rockwellian touches were kept with a certain degree of discrimination, including a much needed note of humour in an anecdote about a Missourian who taught her electric wringer-washer to shell peas, and a prayer-like meditation on the family meal whose populist pieties its intended audience apparently found 'effective' (Snyder, 1968, 130):

Bless this food to this family. They have earned it, not by easy tasks, but with their strength and their toil. They are wise in the ways of the earth. They are a united family. Now they are tired at the end of the day, but they are friendly with each other, glad to see each others' faces. They may not say very much but they have the word 'Home' in their hearts. The things we cherish most in America are here at this table. While we foster and maintain them it shall be well with us all.

For all the abridgments and undeniable fine touches, the film consolidated the trend, suggested by *400 Million*, for Ivens's commentaries to expand their relative length and their diegetic role in the films. The commentary for *Power* was 43% of the running time, a proportion identical to that for *400 Million* but double that for *Spanish Earth*, as we have seen.

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All the same, the relation of commentary and image is still relatively complex, aiming for a personal casual style, its self-conscious stylisation notwithstanding. It employs some of the tactics of the earlier commentaries: direct address, soliciting participation of the viewer; implied dramatic dialogue and monologues (the chicks under the new incubator: 'Come on fellows, we've got an electric momma now!'); succinct resums of the film's themes; background information not visualised; off-screen verbal images complementing in a contrapuntal way what is onscreen (over a chilly, dark early morning kitchen scene: 'they know on an August morning how hot the stove is going to be by noon'). In many instances, the relation of the narration to the images is quite oblique, allowing the *mise-en-scène* to provide the dominant diegesis, never overlaying a literal description of what is occurring on the screen and seldom fulfilling a purely expository function. In fact, the filmmakers' careful excisions left some short scenes completely without commentary, for example, scenes showing the men sawing firewood. This is of course further evidence that too reductive a model of soundtrack diegesis for the classical sound documentary is insufficient (Nichols, 1976).

For the recording of the commentary, the filmmakers wanted a voice corresponding to their 'easy going, deliberately casual' conception of the commentary, a 'voice which sounded like someone from the country [...] not too intellectual [...] more or less unrehearsed' (Ivens, 1969, 196), in other words, profiting from the success of Hemingway's voice in *Spanish Earth* and avoid-

ing March's earnest professionalism in *400 Million*. Yet because of the stylisation and deceptively complex metrical quality of Benét's text, Ivens listened to 45 radio actors before deciding on William P. Adams, a veteran theatre and radio player. The score was commissioned from Douglas Moore, Benét's collaborator on his two highly successful folk operas of the late thirties, known chiefly for his programme music on national themes and his background in characteristic American idioms.²⁴ According to Snyder, the film was cut before being shown to Benét and Moore, a practice contrary to Ivens's prescription in *Camera*, written shortly after the completion of the film, that composers should be shown unedited rushes. The collaboration between Moore and Benét was less well coordinated than usual and did not partake of the same 'dovetailing' or 'contrapuntal' inspirations that were the ideals of the period. Moore recalled that both writer and composer were attracted to the same high points in the script with the result that the voice and music sometimes reached a climax at the same time, at which point, the music was 'discreetly turned down'. Moore (quoted in Snyder, 1968, 130) claimed that this was the fate of part of the music he liked best, during the mealtime invocation. For other scenes, the pair worked better together, as in the corn-cutting sequence, where Moore's dynamic music inspired Benét's recitative. Moore's music was scored by Henry Brant, another Lorentz veteran and folk idiom devotee who performed Moore's flute theme for the 'sunflower' sequence on a ten-cent toy flute (Ivens, interview with author, February 1976).

Ivens's and Lorentz's tactic of choosing a composer known for his folk interests paid off. The music was considerably more accessible than Eisler's intellectual score for *400 Million* had been, and this time it was *Variety* (1940) rather than *The New Masses* that praised it. Moore was less interested in creating structural relations with his music than Eisler; frequently, his themes are frankly synchronous and programmatic. Ivens (1969, 222-223) remembered,

The music did not have any complicated function. [...] In the music for *Power and the Land* when the boy is happy, the theme is happy. We have a nice flute. When the sun comes up in the picture we have the traditional sunrise music. I wanted it that way. It was also the best way for Moore to compose. He is not an experimental composer.

Ivens (1969, 222) also contrasted the role of the score to that of Eisler's score in *400 Million*, which has a 'broadening' function. This new musical directness and simplicity – occasionally unobtrusiveness – corresponds to Ivens's use of a more unified narrative structure and emotional appeal than previously, his interest in reaching a mass audience, and, in general terms, the distance he had come since his avant-garde period. It no doubt also signifies Lorentz's

influence, and Ivens's willingness to learn from the success of Lorentz's folk-based scores in *Plow* and *River*, which made a genuine impression on the thirties critical and lay public rather than inspiring brief statements of respect as had Eisler's. Though Moore's accomplishment does not stand up in retrospect to Thomson's music for Lorentz, it is still a creditable accomplishment, and was creatively used in the editing (in contrast to the indiscriminate wall-to-wall scoring for *Power*'s companion film, Flaherty's *Land*). Quite simply, the score was a discreet contribution to the integrated aesthetic effect that sparked tributes such as Rotha (1952, 318-319), who considered the film Ivens's best next to *Nieuwe Gronden*, 'unique in American documentary', and 'intimate': '[Ivens's] affectionate approach to people made the picture intensely human. It was undoubtedly for this reason that *Power* became one of the few American documentaries to achieve wide theatrical distribution'.

Rotha notwithstanding, there is seldom any direct correlation between a film's intense humanity and its chances of wide theatrical distribution. The correlation between a film's form and its audience was perhaps clearer. It was reported, for example, that Lorentz's *River* was 'over the heads' of rural audiences in the South, the people the film was about (Stoney, quoted in MacCann, 1973, 84). There seemed little doubt that the simple narrative form of *Power* was largely responsible for the film's success in reaching a mass audience. Upon the film's premiere in St. Clairsville in October 1940, *Variety*'s (1940) benediction may have been faintly begrudging, but it was respectful: 'it is interestingly done and will never have a need in the world for the REA'. By that point, however, the mass market distribution deal had already been finalised. RKO, the distributor for the film, saw considerable promise in this follow-up to the success of the other Lorentz films. The momentum set off by *Plow* was still picking up – Paramount had distributed *River; City*, the hit of the World's Fair, was being distributed as part of commercial double features; and Columbia had picked up *Fight for Life*. Furthermore, the Department of Agriculture was to provide the prints free to interested exhibitors. A report by Mary Losey ([1940] 1979, 191) mentioned 100 prints of the film being shipped by RKO for first commercial showings in as many as 5000 theatres, and the momentum was to continue. The Department of Agriculture would claim that six million viewers in the non-commercial circuit alone saw the film and as late as 1961 the film was shown to 25,532 spectators.²⁵ The pattern of mixed theatrical and non-theatrical distribution was probably more significant than Ivens realised in the flush of the excitement of the RKO deal.

38. *Bip Goes to Town* (1941): out takes from *Power and the Land* recycled in a follow-up short about a farmboy's wonder, here before an electric industrial cream separator. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

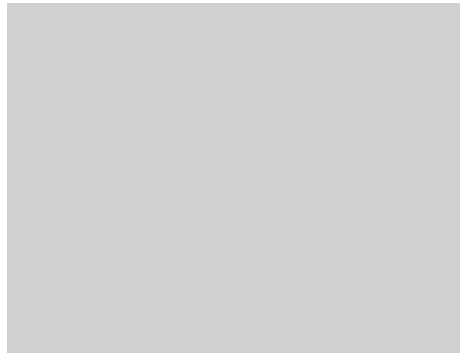


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The non-theatrical circuit was the distribution site for *Power's* two short spinoff films, assembled by original assistant editor Lora Hays with Ivens's long-distance supervision in 1941 after he had moved on to his next project, and passionately rediscovered and re-circulated in the 21st century by California scholar Ephraim Smith. Both *Bip Goes to Town* (9) and *Worst of Farm Disasters* (6) include the stunning footage that had become the unseen stuff of legend in Ivens scholarship for sixty years, footage that clearly connotes the inspiration that comes from unscripted documentary challenges. *Bip's* excursion along with the friendly milk truck driver to a modern electrified creamery and dairy farm as well as the neighbouring town, presumably shot in its polished *mise-en-scène* by Crosby, corroborates the boy's cinematic 'naturalness.' The film's wide-eyed wonder at the advanced technology at the plant and the factory farm with their telekinetic milk cans on conveyor belts and four-nozzled electric milking machines echoes both *Philips-Radio* and *Komsomol* in its whimsy and lyrical adulation of technology (not to mention Marfa in Eisenstein's *Staroye i novoye* [*The General Line*, 1929, USSR, 121], though *Bip* does not match the Soviet peasant woman's total baptism in cream spurting from the cream separator, merely tasting some on his finger). *Bip* becomes a reincarnation of Afanaseyev, a hitherto missing link in Ivens's chain of child and childlike mediators between audience and advanced technology that would be extended with *Pierwsze lata* (*The First Years*, 1949, Bulgaria/Czechoslovakia/Poland, 99) and *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (*Italy Is Not a Poor Country*, 1960, Italy, 112) and recycled as well in their own way in the final China films. *Bip* also include sensuous point-of-view tracking shots of the Ohio rural landscape, probably those that Ivens had regretted being cut from *Power*. 'Disaster' refers to barn fires, and the one that the filmmakers had orchestrated to show the dangers of non-electrified farms as well as the cooperative energies of farm communities is a dramatic night-time spectacle indeed. The scene

was presumably shot by Ornitz with obvious spontaneity and inspiration, and its intensity helps explain why the Washington producers were getting nervous about scenes not provided in the script. *Bip* has the better sound track, complete with more childlike flute by Moore and a dramatised voice-over by Bip (though unaccountably spoken by an actor with a changed teenaged voice that doesn't match Bip's prepubescent innocence), whereas *Worst* is content with a routine and unmodulated newsreel voice-over for its propaganda message about electrification. Given the two short films' invisibility in the historical account for so long it is unlikely that they received much theatrical or even parallel exposure in the 1940s.

39. *Worst of Farm Disasters* (1941): Ivens's dramatic fire footage veered too far from the script to be included in *Power*. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Back in 1940, it was a moot question whether Ivens's sudden commercial success with *Power* as a propagandist for the very government whose neutrality he had challenged in his two previous films had entailed any sacrifice of personal interests or ideological convictions. With the regard to the former, *Power* is ideally amenable to auteurist reading, and has been described as “an impression of actuality” which the author has drawn from his subconscious and filtered across his temperament’ (Benoît-Lévy, 1946, 92). Whether or not an analysis need be pursued as far as Ivens's subconscious,²⁶ it is undeniable that there is a very clear thematic continuity between this film and the two anti-fascist films, particularly *Spanish Earth*, and the films of the earlier periods as well. *Power* continues Ivens's idealised portrait of an agricultural population whose struggle on the land is the crucial stake for society as a whole. And this down-to-earth populism does not preclude the poetry of the natural elements: electricity is articulated visually in the film as a means for this population to harness the natural forces of earth, water, and fire, just as the peasants of *Spanish Earth* and the construction workers of *Nieuwe Gronden* did in their own context. Ivens treats the natural backdrop to the Parkinsons' labour

with the same lyrical intensity as the backdrop of the earlier films – the landscape sensibility of this film is, if anything, even more luxuriously inscribed in the leisure of peacetime and financial security than in the anti-fascist films. Even the electrical wiring skims the rolling landscape in harmony with the natural order.

As for the ideological price entailed by government sponsorship and commercial distribution, this seems no more evident in *Power* than in the independent and marginally distributed films by Ivens and Frontier Films of the same period. The film displays the same recourse to patriotic imagery and rhetoric that most Popular Front domestic films like *Native Land* rely on: the new electrical poles are called ‘liberty trees’ and links are made to ‘revolutionary days’ (which does not mean 1917 as it did in *Borinage!*). Also visible is the pro-government sentiment that is present in *Cumberland* and *Native Land*, though this is less explicit, paradoxically, than in the two independent films. Perhaps in deference to the ongoing Congressional debate over the US Film Service’s involvement in Democratic propaganda, the farmers’ discussion of the government’s role, moving from suspicion to acceptance, was dropped at the last minute:

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- Oh, one of those government things [the REA], Well...
- Now, Fred, I’m as independent as you are. But who’s the government? It’s you and me and the rest of us, working together. That’s what we’ve got it for.

Furthermore, like the other Ivens and Frontier films, the film includes a thin network of allusions and code words, more discreet this time, that would have provided enough ideological inferences for initiated viewers. An early undated statement of possible themes for the REA film, apparently drawn up with Ivens’s participation, placed gentle emphasis on the need for change and on the tradition of cooperation expressed in the rhetoric of Americanism:

We failed [to keep pace in rural electrification] because our free institutions were of such nature that they would not and could not without change permit the continued development of talent and a will for making things that are unquestionably an American heritage. Our free institutions were not always of this nature. They became such. Change was necessary. More was needed. More is now needed fast. Blame, if any, is not ours alone. (Ivens n.d., unattributed typescript, JIA)

The document goes on to allude to the traditional farm spirit of cooperation and the gap between rural and urban standards. In the film itself, the talk of

changing institutions has disappeared, but the emphasis on cooperatives is still present. Rotha (1952, 318) picked out the code word immediately: 'Ivens inserted a corn-cutting sequence [...] which hymned neighbourly cooperation (read cooperative)'. Another suggestive remark to ensure that spectators would not lose the point is that 'One man can't change that alone'.²⁷ Ivens's originally intended theme of criticism of the private utilities companies also surfaces in a few oblique references: over a scene featuring Hazel's knuckles vigorously scrubbing a garment on a washboard, the spectator is told that 'here on the farm, where it is needed most, electricity is hard to get. Power companies want a profit... seems wrong somehow'. Similar allusions remained in the 'meeting' scene after several more explicit ones had already been cut: 'But the power company says... You can see their lines go cross-country. See 'em in the sky. But they don't bring the power down to the farm. Says it costs too much – Say a lot of things... Power company won't do it. But I hear there's a new kind of power. Government'. Ironically, it was this cooperation theme that Ivens recalls one REA official wanting to emphasise more, but the restrictions on length prevented Ivens from including the additional material he had filmed that already provided this emphasis, namely the collective fire-fighting sequence (Ivens, 1969, 195).

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In summary, though an implied text of social criticism was present for those disposed to excavate it, the overall tone of the film is positive and conciliatory, differing from other Popular Front films only in its almost total absence of ambiguous forces of villainy: even the image of pigs consuming milk, an image of criminal waste that inspired angry denunciation in *Nieuwe Gronden*, becomes in *Power* only faintly tragic and even mildly comic. Ultimately, *Power* seemed to imply that mass distribution and state sponsorship were no more a factor than Popular Front policies in restricting the bounds of substantive comment and radical discourse (Ornitz, personal communication, November 1980).

The mass access that greeted *Power* in late 1940 hid the fact that history had once again bypassed Ivens. As Jacobs (1979, 183) remarks, the late New Deal films as they were released in the forties seemed more like reminders of the themes of the thirties than works of current relevance. This remark applies to not only *Land*, never released upon its completion for this very reason, and *Native Land*, which even the CPUSA declined to help distribute in 1942, because the theme of domestic struggle was not appropriate during a time of united war effort (Hurwitz, quoted in Campbell 1978, 366), but also most other films on domestic subjects that appeared during the months of 1940 and 1941 prior to the US entry into the war. Though *Power* received Honourable Mention in the annual National Board of Review ranking in 1940, there were surprising demurrers among critics, of whom several found the film inferior

to Ivens's earlier work (Todd, 1941; Meltzer, 1940). The left, having abandoned their honeymoon with the New Deal after the strategic about-face of August 1939, was uncharacteristically cold, with *The New Masses* reminding readers that the REA had been completely forgotten in the military build-up that was pushing the US unwillingly towards war.

A more serious omen for the future of the mass-distributed documentary, however, was the fatal challenge to the whole concept of public film sponsorship posed by the Republican-dominated Congress in July 1940 when it abolished the US Film Service, less than two years after its inauguration, and three months before *Power's* premiere. The release arrangements were carried out by the REA itself after Lorentz's resignation, so that this film itself was not directly affected. There may be some truth to Snyder's (1968, 169) implication that a more speedy completion of *Power* might have forestalled this political coup by anti-New Deal politicians, but the abolition of public film sponsorship was actually in line with the ideological tide of the post-war era that was in sight even in the months before Pearl Harbour. A similar fate would befall state-sponsored filmmaking in England in the early fifties, leaving Canada as the only major non-socialist country engaged in what had seemed, a decade earlier, the wave of the future.

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The abolition of the Film Service not only weakened the production base for documentaries on domestic themes, and suddenly demonstrated the general precariousness of commercial distribution as an outlet for documentary, it also left the field of sponsorship to the private foundations, corporations, and the military. The new patrons, as Ivens was to find out shortly, were considerably more temperamental as sponsors than distant government bureaucrats, and more ideologically sensitive than the idealists of the New Deal still enthroned in Washington. Ivens's subsequent enterprise with a foundation sponsor was to prove abortive, so that only one of his projects over the next five years, the National Film Board's *Action Stations*, achieved the commercial distribution that *Power* had appeared to confirm as a coming trend. It was no accident that that one project was a state-sponsored film oriented towards the war effort. Throughout the rest of the war, only the war propaganda films received mainstream distribution, so that when the war ended, documentary once again would be forced to revert to its earlier marginal status of political and art house distribution, independent financing, and sporadic critical prestige.

Ivens's next sponsor, the Sloan Foundation, had been a relative latecomer to the documentary film business towards the beginning of the War. This body was a foundation for economic research set up by the General Motors tycoon Alfred P. Sloan under the directorship of his brother Harold. For the

purpose of film production, the Foundation affiliated with New York University's Educational Film Institute, with which Van Dongen was involved. The first Sloan project was a film about automation entitled *The Machine: Master or Slave?* (Walter Niebuhr, 1941, 14), which was, according to Willard Van Dyke (interview with author, 1975), a 'dreadful didactic lecture accompanied by photographs'.²⁸ The Foundation then hired a Harvard economist, Spencer Pollard, to oversee a proposed series of films dramatising economic subjects and principles. Three such films were undertaken early in 1940 and completed quickly, and a fourth, *New Frontiers*, of which Ivens was designated director, was launched shortly thereafter.

The first of the new films was *Valley Town: A Study of Machines and Men* (1940, 28), by Nykino co-founder Van Dyke, a new treatment of the automation theme that had been unsuccessfully handled in the first Sloan effort. The subject was approached through focusing on the human consequences of automation in a Pennsylvania steel town. The other two films in the first group continued the Depression interest in Appalachia but reflected a new emphasis on child education as a solution to that area's pressing problems: *And So They Live* (1940, 24), an indictment of an outdated school in a backward mountain community (Barsam, 1973, 113), co-directed by Julian Roffman, an WFPL veteran, and Ferno, making his independent entry into the US documentary movements; and *The Children Must Learn* (1940, 13), also by Van Dyke, an account of an experiment in education in the Kentucky mountains. All three films involved important contributions by veterans of Frontier Films and other radical groups, including Irving Lerner, editor of *Valley Town*, Ben Maddow, its co-writer (along with Van Dyke and Pollard), and Marc Blitzstein, its composer.

Valley Town turned out to attract the most attention of the three films, not only from critics and public, but from the sponsor as well. If Harold Sloan had any suspicions about having hired a hotbed of radicals, these suspicions did not come to the surface until he saw *Valley Town* in the spring of 1940 when Ivens had already begun filming for *New Frontiers*. According to Van Dyke's recollection, Sloan centred his distrust on a folk singer who appears in the film, whose voice he considered untrained, and who, in his opinion, made a veiled reference to the USSR in her song: 'far away from here there's a place'. At this point, he fired Pollard, forced Van Dyke to change the ending of the film, and cancelled Ivens's project. Using the war as an excuse, he maintained that the new international situation was now a more urgent topic.

New Frontiers was based on a conception of US history as a continuous conquest of new frontiers, geographical, technical, and social, an idea coming from Sloan himself. If geographical frontiers no longer existed, the social ones had come to the fore. Ivens accepted the commission not only because of the

generosity of the contract and its relative freedom to develop his conception of the personalised documentary, but also because of a thematic continuity with his most recent work. The emphasis in *Power* had also, at least in theory, been on the necessity for change in American society and institutions in order to adapt to the contemporary age. It was also, of course, a domestic subject, much in demand among communists after August 1939!

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Ivens embarked on his research for *New Frontiers*, with university assistants compiling charts and files on the evolution of American frontiers and social problems. Ivens chose the Denver area for the setting, undoubtedly for the quality of its landscape, and hired Floyd Crosby as camera operator – their second project together. The outline proposed a semi-documentary narrative idea much more complex than *Power* and involving two main characters. One of the characters was left over from *Power*, the idea of having one of the elder Parkinson sons preparing in disillusionment to leave the farm for the city seeking work and a future. The other character would be a young New York intellectual who has abandoned his fiancée and his technical institute also to look for work and new horizons. This concept had the same didactic symmetry and symbolic signification as the stories of Julian and of the Parkinson family, but interwove two narrative lines both based on *mise-en-scène*. A crucial difference was that these characters were to be more properly fictional, not based on ‘found’ subjects who corresponded to the needs of the film.

The story was to make concrete use of the region chosen, emphasising its past history as a mining region through the exploration of ghost towns and contrasting this with images of renovation focused in a new uranium mine. The opening images were to stress the desolation of the landscape, the desert and rock and wind. In one of the two sequences actually shot, the two men met, one on a hill and the other in a valley, and discussed their respective hopes for happiness, extending their voices through cupped hands. This stylised non-naturalistic touch in the narrative seems to represent what might have become a surreal or fantastic orientation to the story. However, this new direction in Ivens’s career would be pursued only intermittently over the next half-century.²⁹

The project was abruptly cancelled by telegram after the shooting of two sequences. It seems, however, that even before Pollard’s dismissal, there was a disagreement between the filmmakers and the sponsors. A letter from Pollard complained that Ivens’s conception was much broader than the one proposed by the institute:

All of our pictures except the Frontier picture must say that the specific remedies they suggest depend for their effectiveness upon the return of a fairly well-maintained prosperity. They do not say how this prosperity can

come about nor on what it could be based. I had thought of the Frontier picture as filling this gap for all our films completed before it appears. [...] This means that the film would pose *the problem of unemployment as the location of the country's frontier....*

It seems to me that the outline which you and Mr. Rosenfelt worked out constitutes a different picture from the one I have been thinking of. Your outline speaks about a better life for Americans and how new social services can help bring it about. It looks to the longer run and to the higher goal but is somewhat vaguer and less urgent than a film about the frontier of unemployment would be. (Pollard, letter to Ivens, 24 March 1940, quoted in Ivens, 235, emphasis Ivens)³⁰

The intended subject of the project was economic symptoms, but Ivens had wanted to explore causes and solutions in a profound and comprehensive way. Ideological tensions had clearly been beneath the surface from the start.

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In any case, Ivens extricated himself from the project with a minimum of financial loss. In a lawsuit, he recovered his own expenses and 90% of the proposed salaries for himself and his crew, bitterly reminded that work with private sponsors has its own particular problems. He touched upon these in the informal manual he was shortly to write (Ivens, 1969, 216), where he focused on the sanitising impact that the gas company sponsorship had had on the British GPO Unit's films like *Housing Problems* (Arthur Elton and E.H. Anstey, 1935, 13).

The Sloan fiasco was also a reminder of more general ideological currents in the wind. The balance that allowed the open presence of leftists in cultural fields throughout the thirties was becoming increasingly delicate. As early as 1938 the first of many House Un-American Activities Committees (HUAC) under Representative Martin Dies began harassing communists and sympathisers, and ferreting out leftist influence in unions and the arts. By 1939, a deathblow had been dealt to the Federal Theater Project and the whole WPA program was endangered.³¹ Joined by grand juries in 1940, the anti-communist initiatives continued; Dies arrived in Hollywood that year and subpoenaed Fredric March and his wife, as well as other Hollywood progressives, and came close to destroying their careers (Caute, 1978, 617). The US entry into the war would temporarily restrain the HUAC momentum. But the Dies harassment turned out to be only mild hints of what lay in store for virtually every American whose name ever appeared in the credits of an Ivens film.³² Even during the war years, Ivens's career ran into snags for which concrete ideological motivation cannot be discounted, from the refusal by the Netherlands government-in-exile of his proffered services in 1941³³ to his dismissal from the US Army Signal Corps in 1944.

Ivens soon got involved in another project after the *New Frontiers* cancellation. This was to be about Bolivia and was drawn up with a Hollywood colleague, the Communist scriptwriter Donald Ogden Stewart, later one of HUAC's favourite targets, whose credits included three George Cukor films, *Philadelphia Story* (1940, 112), *A Woman's Face* (1941, 106), and *Keeper of the Flame* (1942, 100), an anti-fascist political melodrama. Stewart was president of Hollywood's Anti-Nazi League that had suddenly become the League for Democratic Action the previous year. The intended producer was the Rockefeller Committee on Latin American Affairs in collaboration with the Bolivian government:

The purpose of the film was to show the people of Bolivia to the United States in such a way as to promote better economic and cultural relations and to counteract the popular misconceptions which the United States may have about the people of your country. (Ivens, letter to the Bolivian Minister, 19 January 1941, quoted in Ivens, 1969, 236)

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In taking up this project, Ivens and Stewart were very much in step with the currents of the period between the outbreak of war and Pearl Harbour. In addition to the embargo on pro-war sentiment among the left, which encouraged interest in the Western Hemisphere, there were larger factors at play. With links to Europe cut off, both Hollywood and the State Department were becoming interested in Latin America. The former, in order to replace lost European markets, imported Carmen Miranda and stepped up productions in Latin America; the latter appointed Nelson Rockefeller in August 1940 as Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs with the idea of countering Nazi propaganda and to promote the idea of joint defence plans. The State Department was particularly worried about pro-Nazi sentiment in Argentina and Bolivia and was startled at a narrowly thwarted Nazi coup in Uruguay in June 1940 (Guerrant, 1950, 149).

The Rockefeller Committee was greatly interested in film. In addition to its sponsorship of a Disney goodwill tour in 1941 (which led to the 1943 mixed animation-actuality features *Saludos Amigos* (Wilfred Jackson et al., 1942, 42) and *The Three Caballeros* (Norman Ferguson et al., 1945, 71), the Committee also supported several documentary projects. Of these, Van Dyke's *The Bridge* (1942, 30), a study of South American economic and communications relations with the US, was the most notable one brought to completion; produced by the Foreign Policy Association, the film was also supported by the ever-present Sloan Foundation. The left was somewhat skeptical about the sudden interest in Latin America. *The New Masses* intoned that 'if the Good Neighbour Policy didn't exist, Hollywood would have to invent it [...] it's only logical that

the Americas be given a good going over' (Ryan, 1941, 28). All the same, leftists joined the trend. The left press drew attention to the rivalry of foreign powers for Bolivia's mineral resources and of miners' strikes the previous fall (Baker, 1941). One prestigious project on the left concerned Mexico: Kline's and Hammid's *The Forgotten Village* (1941, 67), a semi-fictional documentary scripted by John Steinbeck about medical care in a remote Mexican village. Ivens's Bolivian initiative then was a reasonable one, a relatively safe enterprise for a filmmaker whose ideological credentials had just cost him several months of wasted energy and whose expertise in anti-fascist warfare was for the moment unmarketable.

The project was to be filmed on location, the letter continued, and based, not surprisingly, on Ivens's concept of personalized documentary:

The film could narrow down to a few people, for instance, I could show a young Bolivian engineer who studied and received his degree in the United States.

Coming back to his native country he works in the mines. Through his studies he is of course well aware of the inadequacy of the technique and he tries to apply the new methods he has learned and he develops new technological improvements for the exploitation of the mine. We can show him during this work and with his family, interweaving the dramatic development of the story during his working hours as well as at home. Parallel to this part of the story will be developed the necessity of hemispheric collaboration between the American republics.

The focusing down on one individual and his family offers opportunities to portray the life of the Bolivian family in a sympathetic and personal way. I have used this method in my work and find that it carries more conviction and makes the story richer than the exclusive use of the kaleidoscopic and generalized method. (Ivens, letter to the Bolivian minister, 19 January 1941, quoted in Ivens, 1969, 236-237)

The film was also to make extensive use of the Bolivian setting, including Lake Titicaca (which was also visited by Donald Duck in *Saludos*) and of the Bolivian cultural heritage: the Tiahuanaco ruins were to be featured and the opening of the film was to be based on 'an old Inca legend to show Bolivia as the cradle of the Inca civilization and its historic background' (Ivens, letter to the Bolivian minister, 19 January 1941, quoted in Ivens, 1969, 236-237). The angle that Ivens hoped would work with the State Department was the stress on the importance of Latin American resources for 'hemispheric defence'. Ivens also emphasised to the Bolivian embassy that his method involved adjusting his film outline in keeping with the location and people of the proposed setting.

However both proposed sponsors wanted to see a more detailed outline and the correspondence continued into 1941 to no avail. The Ivens project may simply have lost out in competitive bidding: Julien Bryan, the author of the anti-fascist *Siege* (1940, 10) just after the outbreak of war, succeeded in getting a commission from the Rockefeller Office that same year to produce a series of 20 documentary shorts to acquaint US audiences with South America. This included a comprehensive film on the entire region and films on specific countries including Bolivia, and a later Bolivian project on the Aymara Indians, *The High Plain, Bolivia* (1943, 20), co-directed with Jules Bucher (Rotha, 1952, 326). Would the Office have commissioned an additional, possibly redundant project with such an ambitious series already under way? However, it is not possible to discount ideological factors either in the failure of the project. Bryan's left-liberalism and American citizenship would have been considerably more palatable to the State Department than Ivens's and Stewart's well known political affiliation and Ivens's expatriate status.

These two demoralising and wasteful brushes with official and corporate sponsorship did not deter Ivens from continuing to work with such sponsors throughout the rest of the war – with very low returns: the opportunities for independent documentary production had all but dried up during those years. Ivens's remaining efforts would be devoted to working with government agencies, and, towards the end of the war, with the Hollywood studios – with even less success.

In 1942, during a period of desperation and indebtedness, he made one further attempt at a private commission, a publicity film for the J. Walter Thompson agency on behalf of their client, Shell Oil. The commission, accepted following three months of unemployment, was undertaken and completed quickly during six weeks in Shell's San Francisco labs, according to a strictly controlled, pre-written scenario. Ivens (interview with author, 1978) would disavow the film, *Oil for Aladdin's Lamp* (1941, USA, 21), inasmuch as he contributed neither to the script nor the editing. Nevertheless the film does bear evidence of his personal visual style, all the more so since he was able to hire Floyd Crosby as camera operator for their third and final collaboration. A publicity document promoting the company's petroleum derivatives, mostly the plastics and substitutes of various kinds that had suddenly taken on strategic wartime importance, the film is strangely reminiscent of *Philips-Radio* with its fields of whirling machinery and its scenes of technicians and chemists posing over their tubes and vats in respectful low-angle medium-shot. The visual energy of the film testifies that Ivens did not approach even this project half-heartedly and perhaps even enjoyed the immersion in the machine-film aesthetics rekindled by the script.³⁴ A 1940 update of *Aladdin* with such war-time references as the military application of petroleum by-products excised

would circulate as an orphan film on the internet in the 21st century, but Ivens's and Crosby's flair is still unmistakable (notwithstanding sexist silliness around Shell materials in a cone-shaped bra clinging to a glamorous and magically stripped housewife).

40. *Oil for Aladdin's Lamp* (1941): A wartime commission from Shell included echoes of *Philips-Radio* machine aesthetics as well as a dramatic discovery of petroleum byproducts in brassieres. Youtube frame capture. © Shell/CAPi Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Meanwhile, Los Angeles had gradually become Ivens's home base and he became integrated into the Hollywood left community, which was absorbing increasing numbers of East Coast radicals, and the overlapping community of European expatriates that included past and future co-workers Eisler, Brecht, Renoir, Pozner, and Salka Viertel.³⁵

Soon after Pearl Harbour, Ivens had the opportunity to engage formally in an activity that he had always pursued informally, teaching, frequently taken up by independent filmmakers, then as now, when their projects were in the wings. The University of Southern California hired him as an instructor in the Cinema Section of its Faculty of Arts and Science. Ivens thus systematised the apprentice relationship of his earlier work with Van Dongen and Ferno. His biweekly lectures were on the principles of documentary film and the relations between film and the other arts. His lecture notes include references to his compatriot, the landscapist and satirist, Bruegel, as well as to Holbein, Dürer, and the frequently invoked Goya. He also taught a practical course in 16mm production.

It may have been this opportunity for self-evaluation as well as the forced idleness of part-time employment that triggered the undertaking of his autobiography at this time, written together with Leyda, his old friend from the USSR and New York. Parts of this work were later published in *Theater Arts* in 1946 at the point when it became clear that the intended publisher, Harcourt, was no longer interested, probably because of the ideological fallout of the Indonesian episode (Leyda, interview with author, December 1975). The full

publication of the work was delayed until Leyda resurrected it in East Berlin in 1969 under the title of *The Camera and I*.

Ivens would return later in the war to USC as his career continued to move through stops and starts. His later teaching focused on the history of the documentary in England, USSR, Canada, and the US, the only societies, according to his notes, that understood the role of documentary in the anti-fascist struggle. He passed on his convictions to his students about the new personalised documentary style, based on work with non-professional actors, but also emphasised the need not to be bound by traditional techniques and the need for new styles and possibilities. In the Soviet part of the survey, given special emphasis, he evoked the work of Vertov, Shub, Eisenstein, and Pudovkin, and blamed the relative underdevelopment of the American documentary on the Hollywood monopoly – his comparison was perhaps justified by the evidence of renewed Soviet vigour in the stream of newsreel features about the Russian defence arriving on American screens throughout the war. Another theme was derived from his convictions about the role of artists in the ongoing struggle, the importance of the ‘clarity’ and ‘personal quality’ they could add to the public perception of the war effort. Such ideas were continuously being discussed and refined by radical artists engaged in the united war effort. As the war progressed, among the practical exercises tackled in Ivens’s courses was the making of air-raid shelter films.³⁶ In the meantime, the dark summer of 1941 had brought him into direct contact with the vigour of Soviet documentary.

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OUR RUSSIAN FRONT

The German invasion of the USSR in June 1941 was the event that finally drew Ivens and his fellow communists back into the centre of the international combat. Once again, for the third time in five years, Ivens initiated a film to urge the US out of its isolation, entitled *Our Russian Front* (1941, 38).

Roosevelt’s initial reaction to the invasion had been guarded, but as the early part of the summer progressed, US support for the Soviets became increasingly clear and Roosevelt began moving towards expanding Lend-Lease eligibility to include the Soviets. Public opinion, however, was not strongly in support of US aid, particularly among Catholics, and pro-isolationist sentiment was still strong.³⁷ Nevertheless, short Soviet newsreels began appearing in August to reinforce growing American interest in the eastern front. As the Soviets suffered serious reverses in late August and September, and as Leningrad appeared on the verge of surrender, the idea of a feature or medium-length film to bolster American public support for aid to the USSR became increasingly urgent.

Together with Artkino, the official US distributor of Soviet films, Ivens set up the project, gathering together a large supply of Soviet newsreels and recruiting three influential Hollywood directors for consultation: Lewis Milestone, a stalwart of the Hollywood liberal left who later became one of the 'Unfriendly Nineteen' in 1947; and Anatole Litvak and William Wyler, both liberals who would soon become involved in the Hollywood war effort as directors of *The Battle of Russia* (1944, 83) and *Memphis Belle* (1944, 45), respectively. Ivens and Milestone then went ahead with the project in Hollywood, officially designated as co-directors. Milestone's co-billing seems to have been for the usual tactical reasons rather than in recognition of a principal role, since he was primarily involved in consultation in the conception phase and in the verification of the finished product (Ivens, interview with author, February 1976). This tactic was to work: the film was commonly considered a Milestone work and even *The New Masses* would refer to the film as a Hollywood product (Davidson, 1942, 29).³⁸

The film was to be entirely compilation: the Soviet material proved to be astonishingly rich in view of the State Department's original expectation of a Soviet defeat within three months (Dallek, 1979, 278). The material had been taken at the front and behind the lines, and emphasised military preparedness, civilian support, and industrial production. It had been shot by Soviet directors who had all been mobilised in the earliest days of the war, including Roman Karmen who had once helped fix Ivens's camera on the Spanish front (Ivens, quoted in Aranda 1975, 119).

Around the Soviet material, the plan was to add an American framework introducing the film and promoting US aid. Originally this was to have included footage of the visit of the Secretary of Commerce, Harry Hopkins, to Moscow in July to assure Stalin of US sympathy. As events overtook the progress on the film, the introduction was updated to depict the September visit of Roosevelt's deputy, Averell Harriman, and the British Minister of Supply, Lord Beaverbrook, when the schedule for one billion dollars worth of Lend-Lease aid to the Soviets had been worked out (Dallek, 1979, 295). The prologue of the film was finalised to include Harriman's speech reporting his visit and his estimate of the Soviet effort, together with a voice-only recording of Roosevelt's speech on the same occasion: 'We have in amazement witnessed the Russian oppose the Nazi war, oppose that war machine for four long months and more. The epic stand of Britain, of China, of Russia receive the full support of the free peoples of the Americas'.

As the situation continued to change, an early plan to include a dramatisation of the actual invasion and the insertion of Molotov's famous speech informing Soviets of the invasion was abandoned since it was no longer current.

As the film neared readiness, events overtook it in a far more drastic manner with the US entry into the War in December. The filmmakers went back to the Moviola and added some more last-minute revisions to the prologue as well as a montage peroration evoking the three Allies, the three flags superimposed, and describing the War, accurately now, as 'the United States' war' and 'the world's fight against Hitler'. The film was ready for release on 11 February, with the premiere under the auspices of the Russian War Relief. It thus became the first American film of the war effort, only two months after Pearl Harbour, and a general model for many of the series to follow.

For the soundtrack for *Front*, the filmmakers were joined by other Hollywood liberals recruited by Ivens for the purpose. The commentary was written by Elliot Paul, a novelist responsible for the Mickey Finn series, a book on the Spanish Civil War, several screenplays (including one co-authored with Stewart), and a later co-writing credit for the English version of a subsequent Russian film on the Soviet war effort, *Razgrom nemetskikh voysk pod Moskvoy* (*Moscow Strikes Back*, Ilya Kopalina and Leonid Varlamov, 1942, 55). The text was recorded by Walter Huston, who was evidently intended to bring prestige to the film but who also brought considerable talent: Huston went on to become a major figure in the Second Front movement, narrating most of the Capra films for the US Army, and starring in Hollywood's two major pro-Soviet films of the war period, *Mission to Moscow* (Michael Curtiz, 1943, 124) and Milestone's film of a Lillian Hellman script, *The North Star* (1943, 108).

The compilation form had been chosen for *Front* primarily because of the extreme urgency of the project, as with *Spain in Flames* five years earlier. The difference was that the footage available was of high quality and obviously sympathetic, and, what is more, taken largely in a style familiar to Ivens, and thus easily edited. Not only did the footage pursue the same theme that Ivens had pioneered in Spain, the essential link between the civilian front and the military front, but it employed the same personalised dramatic approach for all but the most inaccessible combat images. The common parentage of the two approaches was vividly apparent. The Soviet newsreel material was full of short narrative vignettes, shot for the most part with documentary *mise-en-scène*, showing Soviet citizens and soldiers at close quarters doing their part for the national defence. The narrative sequences varied in length from a few shots to an episode of several minutes complete with synchronised sound. Ivens incorporated these sequences whole into the film, retaining for the most part their original narrative shape.

Only one of the longer sequences with direct sound was retained, a scene showing a decorated pilot, Lieutenant Taleikin, telling his 'old-fashioned Russian mother' and his 'girlfriend' about an exploit in which he rammed an enemy bomber. The sequence is marred not so much by the 'newsreel' stiff-

ness of the set-up and the delivery of the dialogue, but by the intrusive overstated commentary, which is not content to paraphrase the Russian speech of the pilot and his mother but insists as well on redundant descriptions of the scene. All the same the palpable vitality of the characters, deepened by direct sound despite their stiffness, makes this a highlight of the film. Another such sequence, not used, depicted the reading of an unfinished letter of a soldier as he is buried in his native village with his family and fiancée present. Only the funeral sequence was retained, probably for reasons of length, and the soldier is not given the concrete identity present in the original material.

41. *Our Russian Front* (1941): a rare synchronised 'personalised' sequence showing pilot Lieutenant Taleikin telling his 'old-fashioned Russian mother' and 'girlfriend' about his exploits. DVD frame capture.
© Fastforward Music/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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Some of the more successful of the non-synchronous narrative episodes centre on civil defence in the villages. The rural exteriors give the *mise-en-scène* a characteristic vividness. One such sequence shows boys patrolling a wheat field on the lookout for enemy planes and paratroopers, walking through a field as if engaged in games, and then mounting a lookout platform. Another shows a whole village's reaction to an air raid, followed by a successful anti-aircraft skirmish, all shown in terms of conventional principles of spatial-temporal continuity. This and a number of other extended episodes appear to have been synthesised by the American editors beyond the basic small-unit editing that was already present in the footage. It is unlikely that the civil defence drill and the air battle were intended as contiguous events. But they function effectively in that order nonetheless: the alarm is sounded by means of a bell; boys ride off the workhorses to the woods and others drive off the dairy cows; peasants mount and receive rifles before galloping off in pursuit of possible enemy paratroopers; others are shown on the lookout for planes that inevitably arrive, intercut synthetically with the other images; an anti-aircraft battery emerges lyrically from its sunflower camouflage and joins in shot/countershot combat with its prey; the plane falls and its wreck-

age is surrounded by curious but impassive villagers. Another narrative episode based on intricate parallel cutting depicts a blood bank operation in somewhat more personalised terms, linking women behind the lines with soldiers on the front. However, the compilers were not completely successful in giving the Soviet material a personalised dimension. An early draft of the script called for the soundtrack identification of each of the figures in individual terms, but this strategy was dropped. In the final version, only Lieutenant Taleikin remains identified, probably on the assumption that a stream of Slavic names would not clarify the dramatic thrust of the film for American spectators. Much of the footage dealing with the industrial contribution to the war effort is less personal than the rural material and undoubtedly required more intervention on the part of Ivens and his editor, Marcel Cravenne (another European exile in Hollywood). Much of the industrial material is connected on thematic and purely kinetic principles rather than strictly in terms of narrative or identifiable characters.

In summary, the basic principle that informs the editing of *Front*, Ivens's first full compilation film (if one doesn't count the VVVC exercises of more than a decade earlier), is one that sounds less novel in the age of post-direct cinema than it was at the time: the structuring of compilation filmmaking around available resources. In other words, the film is shaped by what is visible in the raw materials rather than an independently conceived scenario to be illustrated. Leyda (1964, 63-64) traces this principle to Shub's pioneering films and credits Van Dongen with developing it in much of Ivens's work, despite the fact that she was not formally involved with *Front*. We have already seen that this principle dominated the approach for editing Ivens's two anti-fascist films, both shot without any filmmaker consultation of the rushes during the shoot, and that Van Dongen had strong opinions on the 'illustrated scenario' approach. In any case, the editor of *Front* was more fortunate than others because the bulk of the narrative material was pre-edited in a form more or less suitable for the present version, and the rest of the material was richly amenable to compilation treatment. When the Capra-Litvak compilation *The Battle of Russia* (1943, USA, 83) was later criticised for the poverty of its images, it is likely that the 'illustrated scenario' method was at fault as much as the scarcity of raw material (Bohn, 1968, 105).

Soviet newsreels and frontline feature coverage were plentiful in North America and justly famous for their visual quality and for the daring of their operators. In the National Film Board's *Women are Warriors* (Jane Marsh, 1942, Canada, 14), where British, Soviet, and Canadian actuality footage is arranged in three distinct units, it is the Soviet images that stand out for their dynamic quality (as well as for the active non-auxiliary role of women in the war effort). Most of the Soviet material had been conceived for domestic civil-

ian morale purposes first and for military training second, if at all; the reverse, significantly, was true of the later Capra films. But this civilian morale goal was perfectly compatible with Ivens's purpose of encouraging US public support of the besieged ally, since the same personal, populist-oriented, images of the courage of ordinary individuals, would serve either function.

The US public image of the Soviets was not, however, after two decades of anti-Bolshevik propaganda, automatically disposed to Ivens's message, and a special delicacy of approach was necessary. This can be seen, for example, in a scene showing Stalin's celebrated 'scorched earth' speech to the Soviet people. The address is shown being appreciated by a large, synthetic audience, listening attentively; the ensemble is depicted in impressive pans, and then broken up into medium and close-up views of small groups in profile that catch stern expressions and hardened faces. As the speech progresses, Stalin's directives are vividly illustrated on the screen, as if the listeners are responding even as he speaks, the voice continuing off-screen:

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Show no fear in the fight. In case of forced retreat of the army units, all rolling stock must be evacuated; the enemy must not be left with a single railway car, not a pound of grain nor a gallon of fuel. What cannot be withdrawn must be destroyed. Guerilla units must be formed. Blow up roads and bridges. Cut the telephone and telegraph wires. Set fire to forests, stores and transports. Leave nothing but scorched earth. In occupied regions, the enemy and his accomplices must be hounded at every step. This war is not an ordinary war. It is a war of the entire Russian people. Not only to eliminate the danger hanging over our heads, but to aid all European peoples groaning under the yoke of fascism. In this war of liberation, we shall not be alone.

As the speech concludes thus, the images of flames and resistance recede and the image-track returns to the view of the crowd of listeners. The weight given here as elsewhere in the film is not on the monolithic Soviet leadership, but on a spontaneous upsurge of popular patriotism and sacrifice. Other images of the Soviet brass were in fact deleted from earlier versions. This de-emphasis of the Soviet leadership, in sharp contrast to US treatment of, say, Churchill, is undoubtedly in deference to the US public's distrust of Stalin; it was well-considered in view of the later controversy provoked by Warner Brothers' unquestioning hagiography of Stalin in *Mission to Moscow*.

Other gestures to placate American skepticism are more explicit. The choice of Huston, with his all-American Lincolnesque aura is one. The spotlights on Roosevelt and Harriman are others, with the latter's credentials and credibility underlined: 'not a foreign dreamer with his head in the clouds, he is

W.A. Harriman, American executive and business man, chairman of the board of directors of the Union Pacific railroad’.

302 | Though it is questionable whether such credentials would actually inspire trust in the core of Ivens's traditional audience, they presumably spoke to the mainstream constituency addressed in the first winter of the US involvement of the war. Furthermore, the excerpts of Harriman's speech accent visual evidence, what he himself witnessed in Moscow of Russian preparedness and determination. The commentary adds to the assurances by underlining the film's own veracity on several occasions. The civilian corpses shown briefly in the prologue were not 'prearranged', and the record is admittedly 'incomplete' because of the impossibility of 'peacetime photography'. The film's repetition of the customary Soviet 'nationalities' theme can also be seen in this light. The Ukrainian nationality of one village defender is accented, perhaps as an appeal to US minorities. By the same token, a vignette involving an Estonian captain was dropped from an earlier version, wisely so, since the memory of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States was still fresh. This latter omission is actually part of a larger pattern of ideological discretion in the film, with which the reader is already familiar in other forms. The old Popular Front policy of 'self-censorship' becomes translated in *Front* into an avoidance of any discussion of socialism or any reference to the ideological principles at stake in the invasion of the USSR. The villages depicted may or may not be collective farms – the question is avoided. Furthermore, not surprisingly, the question of religion (one of Capra's favourite themes was to depict the war as a defence of freedom of religion) is not raised. Undoubtedly the filmmakers wanted to avoid the trouble that Roosevelt had got into on this issue when he had attempted to justify the Lend-Lease program to his Catholic constituents in terms of Soviet freedom of worship (Dallek, 1979, 297).

In the depiction of the enemy, the filmmakers show the same ideological finesse, profiting from the earlier lessons of *Spanish Earth* and *400 Million*. The parade of Axis leaders that would soon be familiar in the Capra series ('if you ever meet them, don't hesitate') is totally missing in *Front* (Bohn, 1968, 145). Aside from a few references to Hitler on the soundtrack, Ivens does not dwell on the diabolical treachery of the enemy (as Capra would do), but instead treats the invaders in a manner reminiscent of *Spanish Earth* with its begrudging respect for the Moroccan mercenaries and its pity for the Italian dead. *Front* shows a group of pathetic German prisoners, described in classic internationalist terms as 'pawns on one side of the chess game', as 'men and boys who will have time to think it over, think of the words their Führer said, the promises he made, the homes they have burnt, the wheat they have trampled, and the hunger and grief they have sown'.

The Nazi dead are also shown, but without comment and with consider-

able restraint. One short personal vignette is shown of a Nazi deserter coming over to the Red Army lines with the aid of a 'passport' dropped from the air – abridged from the much longer, more dramatised version available from Artkino. And, as in *Spanish Earth*, when an enemy pilot is shot down, the rhetorical point is made with equal restraint: as a crowd of villagers stand numbly around their wrecked trophy, the commentator states 'They don't cheer. They don't sing. There's a man in that junk heap somewhere'. The overall discretion of the film is partly due to the intended civilian status of its audience (Capra may have been right in assuming that his military audience should not be encouraged to feel sorry for their enemies). But it is also characteristic of Ivens's distinctive conception of war propaganda as a medium primarily for paying tribute to the positive social dimensions of civilian war effort, a conception that would be extended through *Action Stations* and *Know Your Enemy: Japan*.

42. *Our Russian Front* (1941): short personal vignette using compiled Soviet footage of Nazi deserters passing over to the Russian side. DVD frame capture. © Fastforward Music/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The earlier discussions of the speeches by Stalin, Roosevelt, and Harriman, as well as the Taleikin synchronous episode, will already have suggested to the reader that the *Front* soundtrack continues the movement away from one-dimensional commentary form and towards complex sound-image relations begun in *Spanish Earth*. This continuation does not match the dramatic advance of Ivens's more leisurely Canadian project the following year, but neither is it a retrenchment, despite the fact that both the compilation mode and the haste of the project must have discouraged experimentation. In addition to the insertion of 'quoted' speeches, which function partly as internal narration, especially with Stalin, and Ivens's first use of synchronous dialogue since *Komsomol*, the commentary itself stands up as a creative use of the form that was already declaiming oppressively over American movie screens. Paul was clearly influenced by *Spanish Earth* in his tendency towards intimacy, personal

touches, and understatement. The Capra series, on the other hand, would display more the influence of the stentorian narrators of *The March of Time* and the newsreels, persuading more by authority than by suggestion. Paul's text shows an unusual lyrical strain that is not often encountered in wartime rhetoric. It is notable also for its folksy colloquial affectations, including a reference to 'women drivers' during a scene where women are instructed to replace their husbands on tractors, and frequent address to the characters on the screen: 'Hurry, hurry with the harvest. The Nazis are coming. This land will be lost for a while. Scorched earth. One day, two days in which to show the wife the ropes'.

Paul was of course anticipating an even greater use of informal language, soon grossly exaggerated, by commentators as the war progressed (Griffith, 1952b, 353-354). There are also moments of unfettered sentimentality, such as this somewhat rhetorical lullaby version of the traditional 'child-as-victim' formula:

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The girl scouts too young to fight in the women's battalions take care of the kids, the sons of the soldiers. They try to make up for them somehow what the Nazis take away. Eat kid, tuck it in while you can. You've got friends, kid, all the way across the ocean. Sleep kid, you don't know what war is. Sleep. The girls spend the evening making toys to make the kids laugh, to give the kids a chance to be kids while they can. Sleep kid. People over here will help you.

This kind of rhetoric, not ineffective here, is common in Capra, but is more typical of contemporary British films with their comparable stress on civilian morale (though the British writers were more skilful at understatement) and of the later American films addressed primarily at the civilian audience, such as John Ford's *Battle of Midway* (1942, 18) – where Jane Darwell's best Ma Joad voice entreats the onscreen figures to 'Get that boy to a hospital!' Along similar lines, the device in *Spanish Earth*, by which the spectator is encouraged to identify with an onscreen figure only to be informed that the figure is now dead, is used twice in Paul's commentary. It must be noted that similar sentimental stresses are also common in the most sophisticated dramatic films dealing with the war effort as well, such as MGM's *Mrs. Miniver* (William Wyler, 1942, 134), with interesting exceptions coming from those films made by European refugees like Brecht and Renoir. Seldom, however, are the 'women-and-children-as-victims' tropes so directly connected with civilian war effort as in *Front*; not even Ivens's girl scouts and farm boys are exempt from their active roles in defending the homeland.

Admittedly, Paul's commentary contributes to the contemporary tendency towards what T.W. Bohn (1968, 161) politely calls 'narrative oversaturation'.

It amounts to 65% of the running time, an arguably unnecessary proportion in view of the eloquence of the images, but one that is recommended as an acceptable maximum for documentary as late as 1963 by Baddeley (1963, 158). (It was also the average proportion for the Capra series [Bohn, 1968, 159]). One can imagine Ivens exhaustedly yielding to the fashion of the period after years of resistance and restraint.³⁹ Perhaps one contributing factor to the escalation of the commentary was its informational role, which, while secondary to its rhetorical role, was still judged vital because of American ignorance of the USSR, as opposed to its relative familiarity with the British ally. Accordingly, the voice-over transmits a considerable amount of factual material, germane both to the film's cross-section of the war effort and to an overview of Soviet society as a whole.

Related to the proportional expansion of the commentary is perhaps yet another artistic compromise on the soundtrack: the first use of almost continuous music in Ivens's career. It may have been a stronger fear of silence in Hollywood than in intellectual New York, or simply the haste in which the film was executed, that led Ivens to permit Dimitri Tiomkin to score the film from beginning to end. It may be to Ivens's credit, however, that he did apparently prevent Tiomkin from using the leitmotif method that inspired Eisler's rage and was enthroned in Tiomkin's scores for the Capra series; it is more likely also to the credit of the fine raw materials that Tiomkin had at his disposal as arranger, symphonic themes by Dmitri Shostakovich. The score also includes frequent passages by male chorus and other Russian choral folk material whose successful appeal to the 'exotic' code was reasonably fresh in 1942 but would become a cliché before war's end.

It is sometimes stated that *Front*, the first American compilation film of the war, was the specific pattern for the more famous Capra series that followed (Wegner, 1965, 104). This is somewhat misleading, since Ivens's personalised, morale-oriented approach has little in common with Capra's films other than their common use of compilation. It has already been suggested that Capra's directors used a different method of construction to Ivens's, the 'illustrated scenario' approach, in which the editor's task is to search for images to demonstrate a certain expository point. The heavy reliance on animation in the Capra films to fill in the lacunae in the exposition is a possible ramification of this approach. Beyond this basic methodological difference, it is clear that Capra had goals for his military audience that were different from Ivens's goals of civilian persuasion and morale. Capra films are either detailed military and political analyses of individual battles or campaigns, or general historical surveys tracing the roots of the world conflict, focusing on diachronic geopolitical patterns and individual leaders. Ivens does neither, preferring instead to build up a more intimate rapport with the spectator and to reveal

the personal everyday struggle behind the lines, offering didactic models for the spectator's own conduct. Bohn (1968, 239) indicates that Capra turned rather to Lorentz and *The March of Time* for his models. But since neither of these sources are exclusively or primarily of the compilation mode, the two Canadian series, *Canada Carries On* and *The World in Action*, must be added to the list of probable inspirations. Both had already been in commercial distribution in the US at the point of Capra's debut with the Signal Corps, since April 1940 and January 1942 respectively. Ivens's compilation approach relies much more on his own individual priority of personalisation than any of the contemporary compilation projects. To compare the use of identical Soviet shots in *Our Russian Front* and Jane Marsh's *Women are Warriors* of the *Canada Carries On* series is telling: Marsh uses the shots as part of a mosaic-style collage; Ivens retains the narrative shape of the vignettes as received from the Soviet filmmakers. In this respect, he is perhaps more akin to the British contemporaries than to Capra. The British, although they placed less emphasis on compilation than *Front*, were very close to Ivens and the Soviets in their use of re-enactment, *mise-en-scène*, and personalisation. No doubt their emphasis on civilian morale in the face of imminent invasion and massive civilian bombardment led them to use methods chosen by the Soviets and Ivens for similar reasons.

Ivens would resume his individual approach to compilation under Capra's supervision in the US Army Signal Corps later in the war, but the possibilities of personalised compilation must remain a subject of speculation since *Know Your Enemy: Japan* was to be another of the growing number of unfinished projects.

The *Front* premiere in February occasioned reviews that varied from unqualified raves (Barnes, 1942; Davidson, 1942) to mixed accounts criticising the film's crowded canvas and uninspired commentary, but recommending it for its 'heartening account of what the Russian people, all of them, are doing right now to win the war and for its capturing the urgency of this urgent moment' (T.S., 1942).

The images of civilian contributions to the war effort seemed to make the most impact. The film failed to make as large a public impression as the Capra films when they were belatedly released, or acquire the prestige of the British films that had already been appearing and receiving American awards. All the same, *Front* lasted a modest commercial run of about six weeks at the Rialto on Times Square before moving to second-run houses. Appearing so early after Pearl Harbour, it gave a significant boost to the Second Front movement, whose aim was to cement the US-Soviet 'marriage of convenience' into a closer bond and to promote the opening of a western front to ease pressure on Russia. An important focus of left organising during the war, the Second

Front movement gathered steam throughout the rest of 1942 and 1943 with Ivens one of its visible spearheads. In October of that year he was the featured first speaker at a Second Front rally at Carnegie Hall – Chaplin was the last. He repeated in his speech the basic theme of the film, the popular dimension of the war, added some remarks on an increasingly important topic for him, the role of artists in such a struggle, and referred to the desolation wreaked upon Rotterdam and his homeland (his address included an account of his recent film project on the Canadian Navy and one of his more intriguing dictums, that good art needs time but also haste [Ivens, notes for Second Front Artists Rally, October 1942, JIA]).

At its height, the pro-Soviet current thus initiated had considerable breadth and energy. A large and lively constituency was attracted to Soviet feature films, both new and revived, and to American productions of Soviet plays, such as Konstantin Simonov's *The Russian People*.⁴⁰ Soviet-made feature-length compilations on the war also played regularly throughout this period. One of these on the Stalingrad turning point, *Gorod, kotoryy ostanovil Gitlera: Geroicheskiy Stalingrad (The City That Stopped Hitler: The Heroic Stalingrad*, Leonid Varlamov, 1943, 78), received a major release through Paramount in the fall of 1943. Americans also were not long in producing their own views of the eastern front. The American leftist photographer-journalist team, Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, visited the USSR together in 1942 and brought out their joint books on what they had seen that same year, *All Out on the Road to Smolensk* and *Moscow under Fire*. *Life* magazine followed with its special Russia issue in 1943. The Office of War Information and the Capra Unit both contributed important compilation documentaries, respectively *Russians at War*, Van Dongen's film that was notable for its continuation of the personalised approach and for the first views of villages liberated from the Nazis, and Litvak's *The Battle of Russia*, distributed by Fox later the same year with a large commercial impact.

Hollywood followed suit with several dramatic films offering a sympathetic treatment of the new ally: *Mission to Moscow*, *Song of Russia* (Gregory Ratoff and Laslo Benedek, 1943, 107), *North Star*, and *Days of Glory* (Jacques Tourneur, 1944, 86), all of which included contributions from leftist sympathisers or liberals (who were later to face the consequences before HUAC). *Mission* provoked a controversy over its credulous handling of Stalin's purge trials and the Soviet-Nazi Pact, and revealed the continuing ideological divisions unhealed by the pro-Soviet current: 66 prominent Americans denounced the film and 266 others rushed to its defence in angry, well-publicised statements (Jacobs, quoted in Manvell, 1976, 199).⁴¹ In November 1943, Ivens participated in another rally, this time a Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, in which he contributed to a panel discussion on the role of the arts in the US and the

USSR in wartime. However, by the time the Italian campaign and the Normandy invasion brought an end to the Second Front movement and the post-war Big Three conferences began to gather momentum, American uneasiness about Soviet aims in Eastern Europe was already visible enough that for all intents and purposes the Cold War had begun.

ACTION STATIONS

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In December 1941, shortly after the US entry into the war, with the *Front* premiere still two months away, Ivens correctly foresaw the expanded government involvement in film propaganda and information and attempted to sign on. A letter to his old collaborator Archibald MacLeish outlines a proposal for a series of films on a theme that he had already developed three times: popular involvement in the war effort (Ivens, memorandum to Archibald MacLeish, n.d. [c. December 1941], quoted in Ivens, 1969, 238). MacLeish was coordinator of the Office of Facts and Figures that had been set up in October to inform the public about the defence organisation (MacCann, 1973, 126). Ivens was evidently assuming that the united war effort would heal any antagonisms lingering as a result of MacLeish's break with the left following the Pact, as indeed it would in general. But Ivens's gesture was futile for other reasons: the Office of Facts and Figures was soon merged with the Office of War Information (OWI), Domestic Branch, and the proposal apparently became lost in the chaos of competing government film agencies that characterised the first year after Pearl Harbour, and possibly in the Congressional wrangling over the agencies and their personnel.⁴² As all the competing non-military agencies for domestic information gradually concentrated by 1943 in the Bureau of Motion Pictures of the Domestic Branch of the OWI, centred in New York, it became clear that the opportunity for Ivens, now California-based, had passed. In any case, he had already associated himself with the Hollywood-based US Army Signal Corps under Capra. Van Dongen, however, was to direct two films for the OWI and many other veterans of the New York radical film milieu of the thirties were employed there as well.⁴³

Ivens's unrealised proposal to MacLeish is relevant to this study since it testifies to Ivens's evolving conception of the needs of domestic morale documentary along the lines he had already sketched in the three previous 'people's war' films. The difference was, of course, that the three earlier films were designed to solicit public involvement in a war situation: subsequent films would have to assume that involvement as a departure point. Ivens offered MacLeish three suggestions. One was entitled 'Film Reports'. A second entitled 'A Day in the United States', was patently inspired by a Soviet documen-

tary, *Den novogo mira* (*A Day in Soviet Russia*, Roman Karmen and Mikhail Slutsky, 1941, 56), made during the Pact years employing 97 operators stationed all around the USSR on a single day, 24 August 1940. (Based on an idea by Gorky, the film was released in October 1941 in an American version narrated by Quentin Reynolds.) Ivens's third idea was an alternative means of showing civilian contributions to the war effort along the role-model lines of *Front*, an idea more in keeping with his own evolution and preoccupation with the personalisation of the documentary form. Entitled 'Letters to the President', the third proposal outlined twelve short films of one or two reels, each concentrating on an individual and his/her role in the war effort. Each vignette would be in the form of a letter to the President: 'These people will send their film letter to the White House introducing themselves on the film and telling their story, how their life is integrated with and affected by the war efforts' (Ivens, 1969, 238). The twelve figures were carefully selected to represent different geographical regions and economic strata. Some reflected Ivens's previous work and exposure to American society: a refugee from Holland, a farmer in Ohio, a housewife and her family, a secretary in the Department of Agriculture, a composer, a roving cinematographer. Others catered to a less populist vision of the war effort, particularly an admiral, and a famous poet, Carl Sandburg, subjects analogous to the Guomindang figureheads he had featured in *400 Million*. Military figures filling out the list reflected Ivens's longstanding and frustrated efforts to portray an ordinary soldier since *Spanish Earth*. One of these figures, a sailor on convoy duty to England, was to emerge in composite form, as Leyda points out, in his imminent project for the National Film Board of Canada, as would the endeavours to achieve a form that is 'human and subjective, away from the impersonal third-person commentator' (Ivens, 1969, 238).

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Ivens's disappointment at the failure of his proposal was short-lived. After the premiere of *Front* and the hasty completion of the Shell Oil commission, Ivens's luck began to change and he was courted by both John Grierson, Commissioner of the NFB, and Capra, then embarking on the *Why We Fight* series. Grierson's offer came first and Ivens accepted immediately. But, before leaving for Ottawa, he made arrangements with Capra to join his unit upon his return.

Action Stations unexpectedly turned out to be Ivens's best opportunity to develop a wartime morale-film version of his personalised documentary model. *Front*, a low-budget compilation film, conceived and delivered in haste, and dominated by the shape of the preexisting materials and the original pre-Pearl Harbour intentions, had obviously not given him this opportunity. Although *Action Stations* was to reflect the restraint of public sponsorship just as *Power* had done, as well as the specificities of the Canadian context, it deserves

re-evaluation as a fresh and original accomplishment with a clear place in Ivens' *oeuvre* and in the chronology of wartime filmmaking.

During the months after Pearl Harbour, the NFB was at the peak of its institutional energy and international prestige. A new series of monthly films for international commercial distribution, *The World in Action*, bowed in January 1942, building on the impetus of the NFB's first series *Canada Carries On*, which had been appearing in theatres and the non-theatrical circuits throughout Canada and the US for almost two years, achieving recognition in the first Academy Award for a documentary short at the end of 1941 (*Churchill's Island*, Stuart Legg, 1941, 21). It was during Grierson's trip to Hollywood to receive the award that he probably began his overtures to Ivens. His policy of inviting foreign filmmakers to join the Board, particularly British, had been continuing uninterrupted since the formation of the Board at the outbreak of war. From the US he had recruited Roger Barlow (Van Dyke's operator), Ferno, Irving Jacoby, and the expatriate Roffman. Ivens was the most prestigious guest filmmaker lured to Ottawa. His role would be not only to make an instalment in the *Canada Carries On* series but also to function within the informal apprenticeship program whereby foreign expertise was passed on to Canadians, to improve the quality of the product, and to maintain morale and inspiration. This function was increasingly important at this point since the Board's early emphasis on compilation was gradually yielding to a commitment to actuality filmmaking.

Ivens's topic was to be the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), a service that had grown dramatically in the two and a half years of war prior to the US entry and which had a crucial role in convoying supply and troop ships across the Atlantic – the film's commentary proudly charts the Navy's expansion in the previous three years and the number of submarines sunk each year, boasting that nearly one-half of the Atlantic convoys were escorted by the Canadian navy. The specific focus of the film idea was a typical vessel, one of the new Corvettes, the fast light escort and anti-submarine ships being built for convoy duty. The working title was the name of the representative ship to be used in the film, *Corvette Port Arthur*. Though the topic was officially designated by the Board, it undoubtedly originated in Ivens's proposal to MacLeish, perhaps during Grierson's visit in California.

The NFB functioned in those years as a tightly knit studio system, with little room for individualistic prestige directors. The fact that *Action Stations* listed credits was highly unusual at the time. It was also unusual for Grierson to give his directors, even his guest directors, as much leeway, resources, and independence as Ivens enjoyed. Ivens was largely responsible for the conception of the film and its development in response to the specific local situation and in consultation with the eminent novelist, Morley Callaghan (possibly

hired because the NFB assumed that an Ivens collaboration with the Canadian Hemingway, as he was known, would produce another *Spanish Earth*). The conception differed strikingly from the average film of the *Canada Carries On* series, and in general from the NFB product as a whole. Grierson's support of this unusual latitude, which Ivens, it seems, may not have been aware of, was a tribute to an artist whom Grierson himself had greatly admired at the outset of his career and whose influence during that time he had acknowledged. However, this special relationship – or rather non-relationship, since Grierson did not supervise the project in any direct way and their communications were for the most part telegrams between Ottawa and the Halifax location – may not have had the morale-building and tutorial effect that was intended. Working almost exclusively with immigrant filmmakers like himself – as operator, Osmond Borradaile, a Briton who had shot Flaherty's *Elephant Boy* (1937, UK, 80) and Powell and Pressburger's *Forty-Ninth Parallel* (1941, UK, 104),⁴⁴ and, as assistants, the French exile François Villiers and Ivens's USC student John Norwood – Ivens certainly did not make a major contribution to training Canadian cinematographers. It has also been suggested that Ivens's individualist experience did not predispose him to the anonymous collective style of Canadian filmmaking then evolving at the NFB (Evans, 1984). Grierson, himself, for all his solicitude, appears to have considered him somewhat a romantic, and probably was suspicious of his orientation towards personalised *mise-en-scène*. Grierson may also have had reservations about his political beliefs, though he would certainly have cleared Ivens with Ottawa before finalising the contract.⁴⁵ Ivens was not the only filmmaker taken on by the NFB in those years whose politics were somewhat to the left of Grierson's pragmatic social democratic idealism, but he was the best known.⁴⁶

From the outset, Ivens's conception of the film was very clear. Using the method of *Power*, living at close quarters with their subjects, the Corvette crew, the filmmakers would produce a dramatic account of their lives and duties, concentrating on a small number of individualised sailors and on a few narrative engagements with enemy submarine. The primary goal was not to convince the public of the justness of the fight, as with *Front* and the two earlier anti-fascist films, but to show Canadians how their offspring were contributing to the global war effort and thus to build civilian morale and bolster the war effort. As informal notes early in the project indicate, the reaction of the 'people at home' was to be 'That is my boy', and of other servicemen 'I could be that sailor' (Ivens, notes for *Action Stations*, JIA). More general aims were to contribute to the NFB's general mandate of 'interpreting Canada to Canadians',⁴⁷ of promoting 'unity of Canada', as another note spells it out. This was an important task in a period of serious internal divisions along linguistic lines over the issue of conscription, lingering British colonialism

(the commodore depicted in the film wears a monocle and speaks impeccable Oxbridge), and growing American hegemony (ironically, the film would be distributed domestically through American-owned distribution monopolies). A further secondary aim would be to promote enlistment: though the commentary claims that the Navy had a long waiting list, the romantic, exciting view of navy life in the film must certainly be seen in this light, especially as concerns the French version. The only reference to the grave split between Quebec and the rest of the country over conscription and the war, very much on the minds of the NFB, is extremely discreet: as the camera scans the faces of new recruits, the commentator detects the descendants of men who sailed with both Frobisher and Cartier (another instalment of *Canada Carries On* made the same year, *Quebec, Path of Conquest* [F.R. Crawley, 11], appeals to French-Canadians on the basis of Nazi designs on the St. Lawrence and to the plight of the country ‘whose mother tongue is their own’). The two characters that Ivens planned to fulfil these goals were not much different from those realised in *Power* or those projected for *400 Million* and *New Frontiers*, except for greater complexity. They were to be emblematically different in origins and experience, one a young recruit from the prairies and the other an older more seasoned sailor (a ‘peppery type’). They were to be exemplary and didactic but defined in enough detail to solicit a strong audience identification. The young Manitoban was to be shown in his home town, in love, relating to his parents, later in a training sequence, and then arriving in Halifax where he would see the sea for the first time. The film would then follow his career as a sailor on the Corvette: on his first voyage he sees submarine action and takes a prisoner; he then goes home on a nine-month agricultural leave to help with the harvest (an important detail in terms of the film’s recruitment orientation); finally he embarks on the Corvette run that was to dominate the climactic second half of the film. The older sailor would be there as balance and would provide orientation to the recruit that would fulfil an informative function within the film.

Notes made shortly after Ivens’ arrival in Ottawa for the narrative line sketch the following elements:

- catch submarine
- relation to prairie family parents
- agricultural leave (request granted)
- Possibly (second) corvette sacrifice act
- shipbuilding
- tattooing – crowded living quarters – intimacy, discomfort
- barracks Winnipeg land training. (Ivens, handwritten notes for *Action Stations*, n.d., Ottawa, JIA)

Notes for Callaghan made about the same time include prescriptions based on Ivens' long experience of working with writers with little film experience. Taken together they seem like a summarisation of his personalisation approach:

- short story technique
- identification
- no symbols, human beings, typical
- characteristic
- not peacetime story in wartime
- in each sequence things must happen
- things that happen make a good sequence
- visual detail repetition

Another list of visual details, more precise now, drawn up during and after the early stages of discussion in Ottawa, the trip down-river, and the first period of immersion in the on-deck atmosphere in Halifax, are presumably those that, according to his suggestions to Callaghan, might be repeated:

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- hand reading
- St. Lawrence River
- Tattooing-emblem on gun shield
- play with three nutshells
- Fog
- Running, fast movements
- signaling, arms flags light
- homesickness
- types of ratings Unity of Canada
- Baby
- nice girls
- Bar
- 2 sailors and 1 girl in middle
- John from New Yorker
- Stills of family
- boats in battle
- stills in chimney
- toys
- children books
- log book
- signals
- charts
- pictures of girls on wall dancing
- sailor throwing depth charges himself
- tender love scene

- reception of mother wife children on shore
- control room map-pins
- smoke
- water ship faster, more movement, also ship zigzagging
- swimming raft

The list continues for seventeen handwritten pages of similar miscellaneous images, a vivid demonstration of how the filmmaker, now an experienced artist whose last half-dozen works had parachuted him into unfamiliar situations, assimilates immediately the visual, dramatic, and political qualities of a new environment. Remarkably, of the list of visual details, almost all would appear in the final 43-minute version of the film, except for those pertaining to the ‘nice girls’ and the ‘homesickness/family on shore’ subplots.

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Ivens apparently intended these two sentimental subplots to act in some kind of dialectical relation to the ‘action-on-deck’ elements of the narrative. In fact the early treatments suggest that Ivens’s model was the kind of complex feature-length semi-documentary narrative, at which the British had been excelling almost since the beginning of the war. The Oscar-winning *Target for Tonight* (1941, 48), Harry Watt’s narrative of a routine raid over Germany, had been the most recent and best known. Ivens soon discovered that the NFB had neither the facilities nor the distribution guarantees for films of this comprehensiveness. Accordingly, a later semi-final typed version, drawn up apparently with Callaghan’s participation, has completely downscaled the ‘back-home’ subplot and has reduced the ‘love-interest’ to the presence of women in a cafe who listen to the two sailors’ stories of their voyages. The sailors’ stories were to become a flashback framework for the whole film, with the young Manitoban and his elder alternating as internal narrators, the young man showing childish pride in ‘his’ new ship, the *Port Arthur*, and the older one being more worldly-wise. The flashback framework would apparently allow Ivens to keep a strong but simpler narrative shape, with fewer characters and settings but the same opportunities for personalisation.

Although at least some of the flashback framework and the scenes concentrating on the two exemplary sailors were apparently shot, since camera notes exist for the cafe scene, the final version otherwise reveals little of these two basic elements of the original versions. Ivens simply had to concede that resources did not exist on location in Halifax for even this reduced degree of *mise-en-scène* personalisation – yet another ‘clash between concept and reality’ that Ivens (1969, 213) now came to expect routinely.

However, large enough narrative elements of the Corvette’s voyages appear in the final version, as well as fragments of the characterisations that Ivens must not have felt completely downcast. In fact, with these elements in

a continuity comprised also of compilation material, 'spontaneous' currents, several direct-sound sequences, even a fully fictional scripted submarine capture, plus the obligatory expository interludes, *Action Stations* became a rendition of the hybrid form that *Spanish Earth* and *400 Million* had pioneered.

The final 43-minute version of the film retained the simplified triptych shape that some of the earlier treatments had hinted at. However each movement has its own thematic and stylistic particularity rather than constituting a phase in a continuous narrative as originally plotted. The first movement provides the basic military and political background to the subject of the convoys. It includes a summation of the geopolitical importance of the RCN's role in the war effort through compilation sequences linking the Corvettes to Soviet, Chinese, and North African fronts. A history of the RCN conveyed through superimposed charts is also part of this movement. A second longer movement depicts everyday aspects of the voyage of the *Port Arthur* amid a gigantic convoy to Britain. This includes lengthy direct-sound sequences of departure ceremonies and 'spontaneous' passages dealing with life on board, which in retrospect are among the most durable elements of the film: sailors exercising on deck in the sunlight, sunbathing, dancing, doing deck chores, artillery training, etc., all set against impressively lyrical views of the sea, day and night, fog and sunlight. A final third movement is more linear and narrative, frequently building up and resolving elements of suspense. It follows the *Port Arthur* through three engagements with enemy U-boats and narrow escapes from both a North Atlantic storm and a fog. This last movement, interpolated with the previous one to a certain extent, gives the film its overall climatic structure: the last engagement is a successful capture and scuttling of a German submarine that serves as a rousing conclusion to the film.

The three movements are complexly and subtly linked, like their antecedents in *Spanish Earth*.⁴⁸ The juxtaposition and, to some extent interpolation of expository passages with 'spontaneous' interludes and the more intense narrative *mise-en-scène* combat sequences give the film a rich and dynamic texture that not many films of its format, genre, and period achieve.

Undoubtedly the reason for the high visual quality of both the 'spontaneous' and the *mise-en-scène* footage in *Action Stations* was the reasonable pace and supportive production situation of the project. Ivens and his crew enjoyed six weeks on board the Corvette, out of a total four-month shoot, and thus had leisurely opportunity to study their environment and their subjects; an intimacy with both is an asset to the two modes. The shipboard environment, perhaps because of its limited space, is fully exploited in both modes, allowing Ivens a wealth of angular compositions and movement and depth within the frame that had perhaps not been visible since *Nieuwe Gronden*, where similar opportunities for the leisurely study of a dynamic environment had present-

ed themselves. Some of the living quarters down below, depicting the ‘rough democracy of the fo’c’sle’, as the commentary says, are unusually complex in their use of artificial lighting, depth, and interior framing in such a cramped location.

43. *Action Stations* (1943): homosocial intimacy, ‘rough democracy’, and *mise-en-scène* in the cramped below-deck living quarters. DVD frame capture. © National Film Board of Canada/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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On deck, the sailors’ work was approached, not surprisingly, with particular sensitivity and usually the results are dynamic and concise: one interesting pan, which may represent an endeavour to go beyond classical ‘synthetic’ editing, covers at medium-close range sailors practicing the firing of ‘ash-can’ depth charges, a particularly athletic task, and then catches without a cut the explosion of the charge on the distant surface of the ocean. The crew’s closeness to the sailors over the weeks of the shoot is also visible in the unusual intimacy of the ‘spontaneous’ images, where the figures seem to have grown used to the presence of the camera. It is visible in the *mise-en-scène* passages as well, where the collaboration between the filmmakers and subjects seems to have been quite unselfconscious and at close range.

A list of additional shots requesting extra material from Borradaile, presumably after a preliminary viewing of the rushes and the input of the commentary writer, illustrates the attentiveness with which Ivens approached the *mise-en-scène* of the film, his insistence on an intimacy with the subjects, and a typical means by which Ivens would guarantee the cooperation of non-professional subjects:

a number of ratings with hammocks returning from leave and boarding a corvette going over the gangplank, pref. sun or, if not, dull – also corvette on jetty: m.s. of same. faces of sailors passing through frame as they go up gangplank, about 8 people. 3. corvette on jetty, slow pan shot. Camera low. In B.G. sky and parts of corvette, faces (c.u.) of sailors. Best

way to take this is during an instruction on the corvette around a lifeboat or depth charge or gun – They have to have natural expression on their faces. Pictures should show close-ups – of them of their face one after another, very slow pan so that the commentator has time to say: ‘This is so-and-so, a year ago he was a farmer in Manitoba, his brother is in the Air Force’. Preferable fine sunlight. Shot has to have strong quality and show different type of people serving in the RCN. (Ivens, handwritten notes for *Action Stations*, n.d., Ottawa, JIA)

The instructions also contain, incidentally, a capsule formulation of the aesthetic of illusionism (‘natural expression’) and an indication of Ivens’s mindfulness of the Canadian unity theme.

The shipboard cinematography posed several unforeseen purely technical problems that Ivens, with his background in camera mechanics, was interested in solving. To eliminate the vibrations on board when the ship was going full speed, the camera mechanism was sometimes speeded up high above normal, and a gyroscopic tripod was used to counteract the ‘jitterbugging effect’. The situation also dictated special lens choices: telephotos were required for the great distance between ships in the convoy, while for the unusually short distances on-board and below-deck, the artificial spaciousness implied by wide-angle lenses had to be counteracted by the special placement of props. Furthermore, in order to ensure enough depth of focus and to permit shooting against the light, lenses coated in the Hollywood manner were used (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978; technical notes for *Action Stations*, JIA).

I have stated that fragments of the proposed characterisations are retained in the final version of the film. One of these fragments is a brief appearance of the cafe scene, which has been reduced to the conventional wartime ‘sealed lips’ message through a wall poster; another is the retention of the voice-over internal narration during the final submarine encounter, though this voice is not clearly linked to any specific character. As for the two exemplary characters, they are so greatly reduced as to be scarcely visible: one sailor, ‘Machine-Gunner Joe’ is glimpsed enough during the action and identified early enough by the commentary for him to emerge somewhat distinctly as a recognisable character, particularly at the point of the submarine encounter where he is seen shirtless, boyishly gripping his machine gun, and firing across the bow of the crippled vessel. However, on a single viewing of the film, it is not clear that this character is also the one connected to a tattoo motif seen several times, an image of a panther in pursuit of a U-boat. As for the rating from Winnipeg, he has virtually disappeared, though a few individual close and medium shots of a sensitive young sailor alone on watch duty may be vestiges of the earlier idea. There is no scripted dialogue retained in the film.

44. *Action Stations* (1943): The 'submarine capture' sequence, the most substantial dramatic element kept from Ivens's original treatments, complete with heroic captain and scowling stock Nazi. DVD frame capture. © National Film Board of Canada/CAPi Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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The NFB editors who completed the project after Ivens had supervised a rough assemblage were either not aware that these fragments were part of an original precise characterisation, or decided against exploiting the potential for an approach that was relatively rare up to that time in Ottawa. There had been at least two precedents for previous Canadian work on this model, a 1939 work on an unemployed Nova Scotian, *The Case of Charlie Gordon* (1939, 16), by Ivens's producer at the NFB, Stuart Legg (which in fact predates the studio's founding), and a series of three films for the Canadian Army following one man from his induction through his officer training to preparations for the European front. The last of these, *13 Platoon*, was by the NFB's other veteran of the US left documentary milieu, Julian Roffman. These experiments, however, were exceptional during the NFB's early years: at least one NFB producer remembers Grierson strongly objecting to personalised re-enactment elements in a project as being 'phony' (Glover, interview with author, December 1980). Grierson appears to have yielded later to the growing trend since more films along this line would be produced before the end of the war, for example *Alexis Tremblay Habitant* (Jane Marsh, 1943, 37) and *A Man and His Job* (Alastair Taylor, 1943, 17). Between the war's end and the development of the direct cinema approach (whose local variant was called 'candid eye' in the late fifties), the personalised model would be the dominant one at the NFB.

The 'submarine capture' sequence was the most substantial dramatic element kept from the original treatments. In fact, the scene comes closest to Hollywood scripted narrative fiction of any of Ivens's work of this period. Sailors were recruited to play the part of German sailors on the submarine to be boarded by the Canadians; some of them, particularly the first mate who has set off the explosive to scuttle the vessel, even scowl in close-up in the best manner of Hollywood's stock Nazis. Nevertheless, despite these stock responses – a fist fight between the Canadian captain and this officer, the suspense device of a ticking time bomb, and the captain's last-minute leap to safety –

the sequence must have retained a clear documentary aura for its spectators for two reasons. In the absence of synchronous dialogue, first-person narration continues on the soundtrack, which assumes an agitated ‘sports-casting’ function taken much further than similar effects in the aerial dogfight sequence of *Front*: ‘We swing to pick up our men. Some of the Germans seem afraid to jump. The Nazis still want trouble. AND HE GOT IT!... There she goes with another Nazi who hung on too long’!

The other factor is the presence of several ‘spontaneous’ shots even in this *mise-en-scène* sequence: the excited celebration of the sailors after the sinking of the submarine is conveyed in fast cutting, a flash pan, and a jerky camera movement. As if to compensate for the reduction of the intended narrative lines and for the minimisation of the two exemplary characters, other opportunities for a less detailed but still exploitable personalisation emerged in the ‘clash between concept and reality’, which Ivens eagerly seized. One member of the Corvette crew who attracts a certain amount of individual attention is the captain. Initially introduced by the commentator in relation to the Canadian unity line as an interior decorator from Victoria (other crew members come from Toronto, Edmonton, and elsewhere), the figure reappears frequently afterwards so that his role becomes the most visible in the film – it is he who finally oversees the capture of the submarine in the last action scene, personally subdues the villainous Nazi first mate and has just enough time to dive before the scuttled craft sinks and explodes. One possibly apocryphal report has it that Grierson learned of the captain’s background in amateur theatrics and secured permission to shoot aboard the *Port Arthur* by promising him a major role in the film (Evans, 1984).

Ultimately, however, the captain from Victoria remains slightly flat despite his theatrical experience, and the most striking personalisation effect may be located, paradoxically, in the ‘newsreel’ type sequences using synchronous sound, the most extensive of any that Ivens had directed up to this point. Though the two long sequences, filmed in direct sound, the commodore’s briefing of the convoy’s captains at a pre-departure meeting, and the vice-admiral’s inspection of the Corvette, are slightly more fluid than the ‘newsreel’ sequences in *Spanish Earth* and *Front*, it is primarily the quality of the sound that is responsible for the vivid, personalised impact of these scenes. I am referring to both the expressive, unrehearsed voice quality of the officers’ exchanges in both scenes, and to the prominent use of ambient sound, including much coughing and chair-shuffling, and even a series of ‘I beg your pardon – I can’t hear’ interjections, which were apparently deliberately retained (since the interjections appear written in the decoupage of the film). The decision to retain these explicit cues of ‘spontaneous’ sound-recording, probably as indices of authenticity, was well-advised: Capra later found that his military audi-

ence was highly critical of scenes that stood out as dubbed or 'faked' in the studio (Bohn, 1968, 208).

In any case, the speeches of the various officers and commanders who address each other and the sailors make them stand out to a contemporary spectator at least, as the most fully individuated personalities of the film. The demands of the reviewers of *Power* for the addition of live voices were by all appearances borne out by this limited experiment, despite the fact that the speeches actually say very little in terms of content. The voices' rich aura of military decorum and protocol, incidentally, gives Ivens's perception of the RCN an implied auditory class analysis, as well as a comic overtone, that were perhaps not unintended. The voices of the sailors themselves are not caught synchronously: however, the rowdy navy chorus that surfaces on the soundtrack twice, other instrumental musical offerings by the sailors (particularly the accompaniment to an infectious on-deck jig scene), and the actor's rendition of Machine-Gunner Joe's excitable internal narration, all suggest where Ivens's particular sympathies lie within this auditory class analysis.

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Other aspects of the soundtrack in *Action Stations* deserve comment. Normally the *Canada Carries On* and *The World in Action* series were notoriously conservative in their reliance on the voice-of-god narrator and expository, direct-address commentary. It was undoubtedly Ivens's special privileges as guest director that allowed him to experiment so fully with costly synchronous sound. It was likewise true of his use of several other sound innovations, including internal narration, current in the forties in the work of documentarists trying to escape the constraints of 'the impersonal third-person commentator', as Ivens (1969, 238) had put it in his proposal to MacLeish. The commentary, written by Allan Field, an ex-journalist who was the staff supervisor of the newsreel division, made good use of the multiple-voice approach and delivered a text that occupied a relatively low 47% of the soundtrack. This figure is the result not only of the lengthy synchronous sound sequences, but also of the fact that Ivens's image-track frequently fulfils much of the narrative and expository function. Occasionally, a sequence unfolds with little or no narration, told entirely by images, music or concrete sound. The effects-track is relatively ornate, with the whole range of shipboard noises of activity, weaponry, engines, and navigational instruments at its disposal, including background shouts, alerts, and commands. The night-time encounter with a submarine is told almost entirely on the effects-track, since there is no commentary and the visuals are limited to flashes against a black sky, illuminating the horizons and the convoy for an instant at a time. The sound of the radar scanner builds narrative suspense elsewhere as well, but another function of this aural stress on the new technology is clearly public relations for the RCN.

As a film by a prestigious foreign director, *Action Stations* was to have a spe-

cially composed score, and Louis Applebaum, the promising in-house composer, was assigned the job. This was the first major score of what turned out to be an important career and in retrospect can be seen as being auspicious. Complete with the *de rigueur* phrase of 'O Canada' at a triumphant moment, the score works effectively in the 'illustrative', 'non-experimental', 'un-complicated' manner of Moore's score for *Power*, skilfully incorporating a sailor's chorus and the songs and instrumental music of their shipboard leisure activities (Ivens, 1969, 222).⁴⁹ A high moment in the score occurs when a particularly lyrical seascape passage complete with leaping flying fish celebrates the lifting of a dangerous fog and the music offers just the correct amount of exhilarating support for this mood statement. Not all the instalments of the *Canada Carries On* series benefited from Applebaum's discretion and care.

As a morale and recruitment film, *Action Stations* was not designed to include any political analysis of the conflict for which Canadians were being asked to sacrifice, other than the vague implications in the introduction about the fronts around the globe. The ideological and political stakes of the war are all assumed, avoided, or left to other NFB films to deal with, and instead the mechanics and the emotions of the war receive priority attention. Later in 1943, Ivens was to speak to a Writers' Congress organised by the Hollywood Writers' Mobilisation and the University of California on the requirements of the morale film. Quoting a Soviet authority on the subject, Sergei Kournakoff (1942), he described three kinds of morale:

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The first kind is the fatalistic attitude which can be expressed thus: 'Well it's war. There's nothing we can do about it. Let's make the best of it'. Our superfatalistic Moslem troopers used to say simply *Kismet*.

The second type of morale is being developed among the more advanced peoples [*sic*]. It is of the kind called 'football team spirit' on the campus and '*esprit de corps*' on the parade ground, and is based mainly on a desire to show the so-and-so's the stuff we're made of.

The third kind of morale is rooted in a deep understanding of the values for which the contest is being waged and on a personal and direct link between those values and the individual fighter. (Ivens, 1944, 76)

Action Stations clearly belongs to the second category. Others of the NFB house directors would attempt to tackle the third as the war progressed. *Action Stations* is unlike all three of the previous anti-fascist films in its concentration on the military struggle exclusively, without reference to an accompanying social context or goal. This reflects in no small way the fact that this is the first of the war films not designed to promote intervention by neutral America in an international conflict; it also reflects the primary Canadian motivation for

initially entering the war, loyalty to the Mother Country, rather than self-defence. When Ivens himself would attempt in the subsequent project for Capra (already undertaken at the time of his October address) to instil analysis of political values into the text of the morale film, he would discover that there was perhaps less priority among the Allies on this level of morale than he imagined.

Because of his special status, Ivens was encouraged by Grierson to make a film that was exceptionally long (five reels, 43 minutes) for the *Canada Carries On* series. However the series' monthly instalments were distributed throughout the US by Paramount and throughout Canada by Columbia and were consequently locked into the two-reel format. For this 35mm commercial release then, *Action Stations* was routinely reduced to half its length by NFB editors and released as *Corvette Port Arthur* in 1943. The vicious circle of *Power* was repeating itself, though this time, presumably, Ivens knew well in advance. As a newsreel short, *Corvette Port Arthur* did not attract any special attention as an Ivens film and, as was customary, was probably not even credited to Ivens.⁵⁰ The original five-reel version of Ivens's film, entitled *Action Stations*, supervised by him to the rough assembly stage, would only have been available non-theatrically in 16mm throughout Canada and the Allies after six months of theatrical release, according to standard procedure. This release also did not attract any special attention; the film in this format would have reached the NFB's huge non-theatrical industrial, rural, and trade-union circuits, which by 1945 included in Canada alone monthly audiences of 250,000, 300,000 and 100,000 respectively, an astonishingly significant audience in terms of the Canadian wartime population of scarcely more than ten million. The growing non-theatrical circuits in the US would also have had access to the film.

NFB veterans recall some tension with Ivens over the necessity of releasing theatrically a shortened version of the film – Ivens may have had the illusion that he could persuade the Board to change a distribution policy over which they had little control. It is likely also that in his eagerness for theatrical distribution, he underestimated the relevance of such a large non-theatrical audience to his political goals. It is also recalled that Ivens seemed to have what NFB regulars considered a European disdain for 16mm and the possibilities for alternative distribution by this means (Glover, interview with author, December 1980). The largely rural population dispersment and the American monopoly over theatrical distribution in Canada had necessitated the development of such a system, a situation similar to the one faced by Grierson in the UK in the thirties. It is possible that Ivens's continuous globetrotting had desensitised him to the complexities of the distribution situation in the societies he visited. In any case, his Frontier Films contemporaries have been reproached for the same shortsightedness in stressing features designed for

theatres rather than exploiting alternative formats (Campbell, 1978, 409). The alternative network in Canada had been given a special stimulus by its government sponsorship: it would not really be until after the war that an educational film boom based on 16mm technology would become entrenched as a commercial reality in the US. In the meantime, Ivens reached with *Action Stations* a mixed theatrical and non-theatrical audience in much the same terms as his previous state-sponsored film, *Power*.

Upon his return to Hollywood, Ivens's friends, grouped within the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization Committee, organised a special screening of *Action Stations* in the spring of 1943 as part of their ongoing discussions about the morale film and the role of artists in the war effort. Otherwise, *Action Stations*, like too many of the fine documentaries of the NFB, continued its discreet career in the undeserved obscurity of the non-theatrical, 'documentary short' niche. Once revived only in connection with Ivens or NFB retrospectives, it is of considerable interest beyond its connection to those two themes nonetheless and is now the only Ivens film streamable free in a legitimate version on the Internet. Rotha (1952, 319) dismissed the film as 'barely recognizable as Ivens's work', a perception repeated by James (1968, 88), but Wegner (1965, 108) praises it as a 'true Ivens film'. The truth for this studio product by a guest director lies somewhere between these two extremes.

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KNOW YOUR ENEMY: JAPAN

Upon the completion of *Action Stations* Ivens returned to Los Angeles and resumed his teaching at USC and his involvement with the Hollywood left milieu, namely the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization, the nexus of what later became the 'Hollywood Ten'. He appeared on a Writers' Mobilization panel in the summer of 1944 along with Kline and Vincent Sheean to discuss three mining films as a 'vehicle for craft analysis': *Black Fury* (Michael Curtiz, 1935, USA, 94), *How Green Was My Valley* (John Ford, 1941, USA, 118), and *Coal for Canada* (NFB, 1944, Canada, 9) (notes, programmes, and clippings re: Hollywood Writers' Mobilization seminars, 1944, JIA). He also continued working on his memoirs with Leyda, and by the summer had joined the Special Services Division of the Capra Unit of the US Army Signal Corps, as arranged before his Canadian project. Appropriately, one of his earliest activities for this outfit was to draft a script for a film entitled *Know Your Ally: Canada* which was undertaken as far as the shooting stage in collaboration with Ivens's NFB colleague Allan Field but apparently never released (*Winnipeg Free Press* 1943).

Ivens's film for Capra, *Know Your Enemy Japan*, was to be part of the third series of this increasingly prestigious unit, following the *Why We Fight* films

and the *Know Your Ally* films. The purpose of the final series was to inform US soldiers about the enemy soldiers they were fighting, based on the premise that cultural and political understanding of individual opponents was an important military advantage as well as an inherent goal of a democratic army. There was also the unspoken premise that US soldiers would shortly be occupying the homelands of the Axis nations and would put this kind of orientation to practical use.

Ivens was to direct, Sergeant Carl Foreman, a leftist Hollywood scriptwriter who had enlisted into the Capra Unit, was to collaborate on the writing, and Van Dongen was to edit. It is doubtful that Ivens felt at ease in the unit from the beginning. Though Capra, like Grierson, had attempted to attract noted documentarists, and had secured Flaherty's participation for a brief unhappy period, the unit was composed primarily of recruits from the studios, and no outspoken leftist, other than Ivens and Foreman, appears to have been a part. It has already been pointed out that leftists were more inclined to gravitate towards the OWI. Furthermore, Ivens was the only civilian director in the outfit, although many composers and editors were also civilians, a possible additional factor in the eventual fiasco.

The film was to be a compilation film like *Front*, but an essential difference was that the unit rather than the director had ultimate creative and editorial control and was in constant contact with the filmmakers providing them with ideas and elements in the outline to be covered. That is, as has already been noted, unit filmmakers were required to search out archival material to correspond to a preconceived line rather than to derive the shape of their film from available material. Furthermore, as a government project this scenario was considerably more rigid than the independent *Front* project. Bohn describes some of the problems of this method as they appeared early in the work of the Capra unit:

The script of each film was written primarily by Eric Knight, once one of Hollywood's highest paid and intelligent writers. At first, detailed scripts and shot listings were prepared, but the task of finding shots in film archives to illustrate these scripts proved extremely difficult. Thereafter, just basic story outlines were constructed, making the job of locating specific shots less difficult.

While the scripts were written in Hollywood, most of the film from which shots were to be selected was located in New York and Washington, D.C. The distance created difficulties as the script writers wrote without detailed information on what film was available. Hence, arguments arose between the writers, who wrote with the assumption that shots were available or could be created to illustrate their scripts, and

the researchers, whose task it was to find shots to illustrate the scripts.
(Bohn, 1968, 105)

As a result of such problems, the Ivens team began planning long animation sequences to illustrate some of the scenario's themes of social analysis, sequences even more complex than those that had been a staple of the Capra films up to that point. Also in preparation for the film, Ivens interviewed representatives of the intended audience, the Armed Forces, to find out the extent of their awareness of Japanese society, and was discouraged from the outset by the ignorance and misinformation he encountered. The task of going through all available Japanese footage, including 120 captured features plus documentaries, military, and travel films – Van Dongen gives the figure of 500 films – was formidable (Van Dongen, interview with author, 1976). Ivens remembers continuing this exhausting process twelve hours a day with Van Dongen for several months: Van Dongen herself worked with the material for a year or more.⁵¹

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Three extant treatments for the film dating 16 August, 26 August, and 23 November 1943 do confirm that the filmmakers were working from pre-established themes for which they were seeking appropriate images.⁵² The first two treatments seem to be elaborations by Ivens and Foreman of a basic outline provided by the Capra Unit. They indicate basic themes to be covered using the same approach that Capra had used in his earliest diachronic films; that is, background chronologies of Japanese imperialism and social formation leading to an affirmation of the Allies' determination to defeat Japan. By the November version, a more precise emphasis has emerged. Continuing with the historical and military background, the filmmakers have now given new weight to the sociological analysis – of the composition and interests of the cliques manipulating the Emperor and enslaving the Japanese people, and of the actual conditions of life of the latter.

In fact, an identifiably Ivensian approach has emerged with regard to the conditions of life of the Japanese people. This version attempts to personalise the hitherto undifferentiated masses by presenting portraits of representative individuals: Mrs. Kawakami, a 50-year-old peasant woman, tubercular and undernourished, enslaved by society and her husband; her husband, little better off, who made \$16 last year; the Kawakami son Kenji; a factory worker, Mr. Sato, who works a seven-day 98-hour week, the unions having long since been smashed, and who will probably die of tuberculosis before his 43rd birthday; his daughter Kosube, sold to a cotton mill for three years where she makes 21 cents a day for her father; and so on. These characters were to be depicted by the use of archival material from fictional and documentary film, possibly the only attempt in film history to create fictional individual characterisations

in a compilation film.⁵³ Moreover this daunting task does seem to have been in hand by the time of the November version, since shots are specified along each unit of the exposition. A less ambitious attempt at personalisation is also attempted as regards the villains – the chief members of the military cliques, whom the commentary labels the ‘rogues gallery’. Each is presented and identified, with Tojo being branded as ‘Public Enemy Number One... the Japanese Adolf’ and appropriate introductions for a dozen or so of his cohort.

45. *Know Your Enemy: Japan* (1945): ‘the limits of compilation editing’. A compiled sequence showing Japanese women receiving ashes of their dead was slated for deletion by Ivens before his dismissal, because ‘it was so moving... their feelings were of great integrity and profoundness’. DVD frame capture. Public domain.



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Ivens’s notes for an animated sequence depict Japanese society as a monolithic architectural structure. Tojo is shown being supported by three pillars representing the militarists, politicians, and monopolists; below, the hard-working peasants are shown having ‘nothing for themselves, poor land, poor ways of working, poor resources’, alongside the soldiers, ‘cannon fodder’, and the urban workers. Each group was to be visualised as a layer of bending people, not so much bowing as in the stereotypes, but bending over beneath the load of the structure. The Emperor, depicted on top, is linked to the religious hierarchy. The filmmakers, then, were approaching an implicitly socialist perception of Japanese society or at the least an explicitly populist one, sharply dissident from the prevailing wartime image in the West of the Japanese as an undifferentiated mob of fanatic, congenitally treacherous automatons. The NFB equivalent of *Know Your Enemy: Japan*, called *The Mask of Nippon* (Margaret Palmer, 1942, 21), ‘describes the creed behind the fanatic barbarity of the Japanese militarists’, and informs its spectators that ‘the soldiers of Nippon are gruesome little men [... whose] double character will be [their] undoing’.⁵⁴

The November outline was evidently the approximate shape of a four-hour preliminary version prepared by Ivens, Foreman, and Van Dongen and sent on approval to Washington.

At that point the film was taken out of their hands and a 62-minute ver-

sion of the film was completed but never released. Both Ivens and Van Dongen would emphatically disavow this version as bearing no relation to their earlier work. This final unreleased version dropped the personalisation approach and restored the racist angle of most anti-Japanese propaganda of the period: it played up atrocity footage, and accented isolated aspects of Japanese history, like the persecution of the Christians during the seventeenth century or the alleged contemporary selling of young women into prostitution, illustrated by a scene in a fictional excerpt. The intended socio-analytical animation sequences are nowhere in sight. The Disney sequences in their stead depict the globe being smothered variously by a black dragon, an octopus, and proliferating pagodas.⁵⁵

Van Dongen (1976) describes their severance from the project as a 'discontinuation' because of a 'policy shift'. But Ivens would recall less euphemistically being called into Capra's office four weeks after the completion of the preliminary version and being fired in a forthright manner. Capra was embarrassed and blamed it on the higher-ups (interview with author, 1978). There seems to be no basis in fact for the version repeated several times that Ivens was given the opportunity to continue the film along a different track but refused to compromise.⁵⁶

The most commonly held theory and most plausible explanation for the discontinuation of the film was the US State Department's gradual evolution of its policy towards post-war Japan. Now that victory was in sight towards the end of 1943, the Allies had the option of either the retention of the Emperor in a kind of Western-leaning constitutional democracy (an option opposed by the Soviets and by Ivens), or the more laissez-faire approach implicitly proposed by Ivens's film that would permit a fundamental reorganisation of Japanese society, along the lines of German denazification, involving war crimes trials for the Emperor as well as those more directly commanding the Japanese war effort. There is evidence that by the end of 1943 the former option was being chosen, and it is reasonable to assume that this would have brought a halt to a US Army film that even implicitly endorsed the alternative. A letter written in November 1943 by Joseph Grew, the State Department's leading Japan authority, who as former ambassador had opposed any US firmness with Japan in the years leading up to Pearl Harbour, declared that the US should not blame the Emperor for Japanese militarism, and expressed his desire to see the Emperor remain as the basis of a 'healthy structure in future' (Kolko, 1968, 544). The US did in fact follow this line and unilaterally imposed it on the Allies in the various conferences planning the post-war world. For Ivens and the left, as well as for others of the Allies, this was anathema: 'we always thought that Hitler in a sense had imitated the Emperor of Japan, that Hitlerism in fact even had roots in Japan, in Bushido culture and in the military worship of Japan' (Hitchens, 1972, 207).

The disaster of Ivens's last American film may not be attributable wholly to this single point of State Department policy. The film's position on the Emperor, as revealed in the November version, is not fully explicit: Hirohito is cast more as a puppet of the fascist military cliques or a symbol of the system than as an individual war criminal like Tojo.⁵⁷ In any case, the toll of official interference and indecision in the military film sector is already well known as concerns the career of John Huston (Barnouw, 1974, 162-163), and the history of another film, *The Battle of China* (Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak, 1944, 65), also demonstrates the typical problems faced by Armed Forces documentarists in the last phases of the war. One and a half years in the making, *The Battle of China* was forced to omit any reference to the Communist armies, and to balance accounts it omitted more than passing reference to Jiang Jieshi. The resulting incomplete assessment of the total Chinese situation was also judged to be impolitic: the film was not seen by the general public and was ultimately withdrawn from circulation to the armed forces. Similarly, *Your Job in Germany* (Frank Capra, 1945, USA, 13), prepared for the Normandy landings, was also withdrawn due to a policy change (Griffith, 1952b, 351, 355).

Another aspect of the project which may have been linked to the fiasco is more artistic or theoretical, having to do with the basic principles of compilation filmmaking. Though compilationists had been reversing enemy footage against its originators consistently since 1940, the contradictions and problems of this were by no means resolved. Leyda, who was working with Ivens on *Camera* during the Japanese project, is very skeptical about what potential existed for reversing very strong fascist propaganda and states that this factor was an important one in the impasse reached by *Know Your Enemy: Japan*:

After more than a year under the direction of Joris Ivens, they found that the materials could not be shaped into what they wanted to say about this enemy. Perhaps the enemy films (chiefly fictional) which had been confiscated in California and Hawaii were too limited in their coverage of Japanese life, or perhaps the enemy's material resisted being turned against them; the project was not completed for release. (Leyda, 1964, 59)

Leyda goes on to conjecture that this inherent problem was compounded by the tendency, discussed above, for the US Army writers to use the 'illustrated scenario' method, though the November version suggests that this particular problem was within sight of being solved – the personalised portraits, for example, are all accompanied by notations for specified newsreel and fictional shots.

A further complication was undoubtedly that Ivens's personalisation approach, designed to solicit identification, had an arguable relevance to

anti-enemy propaganda aimed for armed forces orientation. It is conceivable that Washington might have perceived Ivens's portraits of Mrs. Kawakami and the rest as being too sympathetic and not conducive to a combat mentality on the viewer's part. Ivens was aware of the problem of being too sympathetic to the enemy. In a later interview he discussed the concrete example of a sequence that raises these questions:

You see, it is easier when you capture a machine gun from the enemy and you load it again and shoot the enemy – that's easy. But the film is much more difficult... you cannot do those things falsely, against real human feeling.

Shall I tell you a little example of it? I got the Japanese footage... When a Japanese soldier dies he goes straight to heaven because he dies in the service of the Emperor... So when the soldier is killed, the Japanese send the bones down there, they send the packages with the ashes to their country, to Japan. Of course, then they make a big memorial demonstration over there – they call the widows, relatives, sisters, and they receive the package in an impressive ceremony. But of course, we knew from the information we got that these were frequently not all the ashes of the man that was said, the name on the box. It was just plain ashes, or maybe of some other people who burned, and that was not too fair for the family. Then I started to use this material, to say – look, there's a scandal, first to claim that the dead soldier goes to heaven when he dies for the Emperor, then even to collect anonymous bones in a box and say that it is of this man and give it ceremony.

And then when we came to the editing, and we showed when the mothers, the sisters, the wives, when we showed the ashes of what they think was their husband, their brother, or their son, they were moved, terribly moved. And it was so moving that I left out the whole sequence. It went out. Because you couldn't do it. Because that picture, it was such a honest, straight people they were – they were fooled but still their feelings were of great integrity and profoundness. So... there are those limits to compilation editing, you see... (Hitchens, 1972, 209)

These considerations did not deter the final editors of the film from eventually using the ceremonial footage in the 1945 version of *Know Your Enemy: Japan*. The feelings of great integrity and profoundness described by Ivens are extremely visible on the screen, though the commentators unsuccessfully try to persuade the viewer that the women mourners are accepting their ashes without sorrow because 'if you are Japanese, you believe it is an honour to die in battle'.

Ultimately the question may be personal and political. Certainly Ivens's earlier compilation experience had involved successfully turning footage against its originators – in the militant Dutch newsreel groups, on the *Borinage* project – but in these cases the context was class conflict rather than national conflict. Despite the CPUSA's enthusiastic Popular Front support of the war effort, Ivens may have felt a profound – although perhaps unconscious – disinclination to depart from the deeper socialist vision of the enemy soldier as victim of a class system that existed across national boundaries. It has already been seen on several occasions that the portrayal of the enemy is an extremely minor and ambivalent theme in Ivens's work. It may be that Ivens's irrepressible instinct towards an art that seeks out the everyday human implications of war and the social values at stake did not permit him to succeed wholly in a project designed to reinforce combat mentality.

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Finally, the shadow of ideological discrimination over Ivens's exit from the American film milieu must also be acknowledged even if it cannot be verified. The ideological climate was rapidly changing during Ivens's last year in the US. The Los Angeles Writers' Congress of October 1943, at which Ivens had given his address on the morale film, boasted a welcoming message from the President and was supported by the mainstream of the American cultural establishment: among those present were Oscar Hammerstein, Carl Sandburg, Darryl Zanuck, and James Wong Howe in addition to assorted left luminaries from Howard E. Koch (*Casablanca*) to Leo Hurwitz.⁵⁸ But this represented the farthest point reached in the left's recovery from the disarray of the Pact years and its effort to broaden its base throughout American culture. At the same time, the Congress was being virulently attacked in the Hearst Press, in Washington, and, closer to home, by the California State Legislature's Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, headed by State Senator Jack Tenney. Tenney had a special obsession with the Screen Writers' Guild, an active participant in the Congress, and with the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization and the University of California, the two sponsors of the Congress (Ceplair and Englund, 1980, 158).

The roots of the eventual blacklist were already visible during the war years. Although many leftists had ended up in the relative sanctuaries of the OWI or certain studios, others were not so fortunate. Francisco Aranda has described the purges that took place at the Museum of Modern Art during the war years, victimising Luis Buñuel among others (Aranda, 1975, 125). Paul Strand was reportedly unable to get government work because of an apparent blacklist (Campbell, 1978, 247). Hurwitz seems to have suffered most: he saw his two OWI films cancelled just prior to the mix because he lacked security clearance: *Bridge of Men*, about goods convoys to the USSR, and another film about the relationship of sports to military training. Two others of his pro-

ductions were reportedly cancelled before production (Hurwitz, round table on 'Radical Films of the Thirties and Forties', US Conference for an Alternative Cinema, Bard College, 16 June 1979). The impression of a highly charged political atmosphere beneath the consensus is reinforced by Capra's humorous anecdote of his scraps with the Office of Internal Security because of his interest in Soviet newsreels (Barnouw, 1974, 157). It is well within the realm of possibility that the Army decided against accepting a contribution from a filmmaker who was not only a civilian alien but a likely communist.

As the Red Army pursued the Germans through Poland, the ambiguities around Soviet expansionist policy began to be noticed, and Ivens's own personal status with the State Department must have become no less ambiguous. US intelligence would later keep Ivens out of Indonesia in 1945 (Hughes, 2010), rather than Dutch recalcitrance, and the US refusal to re-admit him afterwards, based on the pretext of his ambiguous marital status, has an obvious political motivation (Ferno, interview with Erik Barnouw, 17 February 1974). In any case, upon his dismissal by Capra, a dismissal that presumably included Van Dongen (who officially became Mrs. Ivens in 1944), Ivens requested that he be parachuted into Yugoslavia with film equipment to record the partisan struggle against the then retreating Axis armies (Ivens, interview with author, February 1976). Ivens may have been inspired by the Soviet operators who were doing exactly that during this period, but it is unlikely that his request was seriously considered (Barnouw, 1974, 154). Aside from the US suspicion of the ideological affiliations of both Ivens and Tito, who had set up a provisional government in Bosnia in November 1943, the Americans considered Yugoslavia within the British sphere of influence partly because the US had thoroughly discredited itself by supporting a Yugoslav Quisling faction earlier in the war (Kolko, 1968, 133-138).

Embarrassed by the abrupt termination of the project, Capra and Ivens's other friends in Hollywood attempted to find work for him elsewhere in the studios. The first offer came from his USC film studies colleague Lester Cowan, the producer for Fox's *The Story of G.I. Joe*, a film treatment of the adventures of a US war correspondent in the Italian campaign, to be directed by William Wellman, a director who had been associated with various social and liberal projects during the war such as the anti-lynching *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943, 75). Ivens joined the production as a consultant and writer. *The Story of G.I. Joe* was part of a series of films that appeared at the end of the war attempting to provide a more realistic image of war than the earlier more romantic morale-oriented treatments. Others were Ford's *They Were Expendable* (1945, 135), Raoul Walsh's *Objective Burma* (1945, 142), and Milestone's *A Walk in the Sun* (1946, 117). Though Ivens's war experience had of course no connection to the Italian setting of the film, it was thought that, as one of sixteen writers

on the project, he could add to the documentary authenticity of the combat scenes, which were, incidentally, to feature real combat veterans. Zalzman claims that several scenes suggested by Ivens surfaced in the final version of the film. *The Story of G.I. Joe*, released only after war's end, was duly praised for its 'starkly realistic' documentary quality and appeared on *The New York Times* 'ten best' list for 1945 (Pryor, 1945). Ivens received no credit for the film.

Another Cowan project that involved Ivens during 1944 was less successful. Ivens was invited to work on developing a Greta Garbo comeback vehicle called *Woman of the Sea* together with Salka Viertel, a Hollywood expatriate who was known as a Garbo intimate, and Pozner. The latter, an old friend since *Borinage*, a Paris comrade from the Association des écrivains et artistes révolutionnaires as well as key future collaborator during the Cold War, had been a figure in the post-Revolution Soviet literary renaissance as member of the Serapion brotherhood, a soldier in the French army at the time of the French surrender, and the author of a novel on the Fall of France, *The Edge of the Sword* (1942), before joining the expatriate community in Hollywood.

Woman of the Sea was to be an anti-fascist melodrama set in the Norwegian Merchant Marine, to be shot in Canada aboard a Norwegian vessel. Ivens was to direct the exterior on-location scenes and another director would handle the dialogue interiors. Ivens was providing visual input as the two writers (collaborators also on a Brecht script, *Silent Witness*, 1945) were drawing up the shooting script. Garbo finally refused the project, bowing to the advice of the Swedish Embassy that participation in the film would violate Swedish neutrality, and of course to her own fabled reluctance to reappear on the screen after three years of retirement. This refusal came at a point when the script was two thirds written, the remaining third having only been sketched; Garbo was unmoved by a last-ditch plea by Ivens and Pozner not to sacrifice her stature with the world's freedom-loving millions (Ivens and Pozner, letter to Garbo, JIA, quoted in Ivens, 1969, 240-242).

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of this ill-fated project, abandoned immediately upon the disappearance of the intended star, was the working relationship formed with Pozner, and with one other important future collaborator and consort, Marion Michelle. Ivens met this American cinematographer, a native of Chicago and veteran of the WFPL, while she was an employee of the OWI, monitoring war content in Hollywood films. Together they filmed a 16mm exercise on board a Norwegian ship in San Francisco, testing visual ideas for the film that was never to be realised. Meanwhile in 1944, another career-shifting opportunity that did finally culminate in a key film in Ivens's *oeuvre*, also gestated in haste, arose.

INDONESIA CALLING

Indonesia Calling, the film that became a transitional moment for Ivens, his bridge between two different historical periods, is also a symbolic turning point in documentary film history. 1946 was the year when documentaries left the theatres, abandoning all the inroads made by independent political film during the Popular Front and the War, and settling into the proliferating 16mm educational market. It was the year when Ivens's small-scale contextual activism went against the grain of the predominant current of grandiose international projects cut off from documentary's street-level roots. It was the year when the left in the West prophetically held on to the 'third world' struggles as the last viable front as it edged in disarray towards the catastrophe of the Cold War era.

Joris Ivens may have been established as the prototypical filmmaker of the anti-fascist struggle with *Spanish Earth* in 1937, but the war against Hitler provided him mostly with a series of lost opportunities and disappointments. During the entire four-year period of the US involvement in the war that had now come to a close, Ivens had finished only a single film – the Canadian *Action Stations*. The setback around *Know Your Enemy: Japan*, ultimately political in nature and a foretaste of blacklists to come, was the final humiliation of Ivens's eight-year career in the United States. It is not surprising, then, that when a big opportunity finally came in the fall of 1944, Ivens did not hesitate to leave everything behind and move to the other side of the globe.

The amphibious Allied landing in Netherlands New Guinea in May 1944 had first raised the question of the future of the Netherlands East Indies. The Dutch government-in-exile, who had high-handedly refused Ivens's service three years previously (presumably because of his Communist affiliation) was now re-established by the progressive liberation of Holland after D-Day and began plotting the post-war course for its pre-war Empire. This government suddenly offered Ivens the most prestigious, well-funded and powerful film position he had ever held, as government Film Commissioner for the Netherlands East Indies, a Grierson-type position for a population approaching eighty million. Ivens was at first curious that the Dutch would not have ideological reservations about this appointment, but they responded with a tone of reconciliation, speaking of the changes in the global situation due to the Soviet alliance and the advent of socialism in Eastern Europe (Ivens, interview with author, February 1976). In retrospect he would later view this gesture as an opportunistic tactic for ensuring progressives' support for a return to pre-war Dutch colonialism. Ivens eagerly seized the opportunity, suppressing his skepticism and accepting the Dutch profession of adherence to the principles of the Atlantic Charter with regard to their Southeast Asian subjects, most

importantly the principle of self-determination. In a well-publicised New York press conference held to announce the appointment on 17 October 1944, both Ivens and his employers stressed the democratic bent of the post-war plans for the liberated colonies. The press release mentioned the 'liberation and the building of future Indonesia with Dutch and Indonesian working on a footing of complete equality' (Netherlands East Indies Information Service, press release, 17 October 1944, quoted in Ivens, 1969, 242-243).

Ivens and Van Dongen, who had been appointed Deputy Commissioner, were filled with enthusiasm for the new project, which was to be lavishly equipped and financed. Ivens was quoted as saying 'I'm not much of a desk man, you know... I'm really a film man and I'll get into the harness as soon as I can' (Weiler, 1944). The project, however, involved somewhat more deskwork than this implied. The Commissioners were to undertake simultaneously several film and administrative projects. This included most immediately a front-line film chronicle of the liberation of Indonesia from island to island, for which Ivens had already begun to assemble portable equipment and for which he had ensured the cooperation of the Capra Unit and the film units of the US Navy, Air Force, and Marines as well (press release, 17 October 1944, JIA). In addition to a feature on the liberation and construction of the new Indonesia personally directed by Ivens, the frontline unit would take 16mm footage to be projected locally 'to stimulate the daily fight against the Japanese'. Other units would make war report films and documentaries on the vital part played by the Dutch Army, Navy, and Air Force in the overall picture of the United Nations fighting in the Pacific.

The long-term goal of the project was a whole network of educational films that would be instrumental in bringing 'political maturity to the Indonesians in one generation' (Rotha, 1952, 319). The concept's closest model was perhaps the National Film Board of Canada; it also paralleled other emerging post-war models such as a post-Liberation French unit that had just been organised under the directorship of Jean Painlevé, the various United Nations projects already underway, or perhaps most specifically, in its combination of democratic rhetoric and colonialist subterfuge, the African projects to be developed by the British Crown Film Unit in the late forties and early fifties. The NFB model was particularly important, Ivens told the press conference, for its achievement in balancing institutional support and 'stimulation' for artists without 'dominating' them (*Motion Picture Herald* 1944). Ivens was planning a staff of 25 to 40 cinematographers at the outset and hoped to import others from the Netherlands, including Ferno, and to borrow still others from Ottawa. One idea was to instruct Indonesian filmmakers in the operation of the portable hand camera. Still motivated by the Popular Front goal of changing systems from within, Ivens displayed all of the eagerness of

an artist who had been kept from his materials for almost two years. At the moment in 1944, Ivens seemed to be at the head of what would be a dominant post-war trend in documentary: an official, institutional effort on the part of the filmmakers within the mainstream to address global social needs using official and private sponsorship to the fullest extent, with a 'wider collective purpose', as Rotha (1952, 214), this trend's eventual most representative practitioner and most articulate apologist, would express it. Radicals had entered the mainstream during the late thirties (e.g. Lorentz's US Film Service) and during the war (the Office of War Information attracted many veterans of the WFPL and Frontier Film, as we have seen), and it seemed as the war came to an end that this trend could continue.

At the end of the year, Ivens flew to Australia, where the Dutch East Indies government had located during the War, and immediately took up his duties; Van Dongen stayed in New York to continue the purchase of equipment and the collection of film material for the educational film program. In Brisbane and Sydney, Ivens, waiting for the Liberation to commence, began the planning of the study films to be shot as part of the educational project together with the group assembled for this purpose: Catherine Duncan, an Australian poet and radio actress who had been recruited from the left intellectual circles of Melbourne; Don Fraser, recruited from the NFB; Marion Michelle, the Chicago-born left-wing camerawoman who at this time stepped into Van Dongen's important shoes as Ivens's partner on and off the set, joining him in Australia six months after his arrival; plus assorted Indonesians in exile and Australian academics. Projected titles in the educational film series were *How We Learn*, *How We Work*, and other treatments of culture and science.

Meanwhile in New York, Van Dongen was compiling materials for the educational film packages. In October 1945, *Film News* reported that Tarakan and Balikpapan (two coastal towns in Dutch-held eastern Borneo – the Republican strongholds were mostly on Java and Sumatra) were already the scenes of resumed education with a program prepared by the Government's Education Department and that during the first year 20 educational film programs were to be prepared, each consisting of:

- 1) a 20-minute film the main theme of which will be a section of the history of the Second World War and the victory of the democratic way of life
- 2) a 10-minute film concentrating on some special aspect of the theme of the main film
- 3) a 10-minute film or travelogue dealing with human interest aspects treated in the main film. (Van Dongen, 1945, 24)

At the point of this publication, Van Dongen's film selections had been approved and she was on the point of negotiating their purchase.

In actual fact, the Allies applied the principles of the Atlantic Charter and the 'democratic way of life' very selectively as the Axis troops were driven back. Despite Roosevelt's distaste for the European regimes in Southeast Asia, Americans were much more preoccupied with China and Japan and tended to adopt a laissez-faire attitude to the return of the former colonial powers to Indonesia, Malaya, and Indochina. This was particularly true in the case of Indochina where the anti-Japanese independence movement was left-dominated. In Indonesia, however, where the independence movement led by Achmed Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta had no explicitly left orientation and had in fact collaborated with the Japanese, the US tacitly supported the Republicans, especially since Sukarno seemed flexible on the question of non-Dutch foreign 'interests' (Kolko, 1968, 448).

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Furthermore, the Indonesian archipelago had not been liberated by island-to-island fighting as envisaged the previous year, but by the Japanese surrender on 14 August, at which point the Dutch asked the Japanese to keep control of the colonies until they could send in troops. The Japanese did not prevent the Indonesian Republicans from declaring independence on 17 August and control began slipping from the Japanese to Sukarno before the British and Allied troops could arrive to accept the Japanese surrender towards the end of September. As the Dutch moved to re-impose 'order' on Java, the headquarters of the Republicans, they were frustrated by the British, who refused to help (Palmer, 1962, 46); they were also defied by the Indonesian crews of the eighteen ships of the Dutch colonial navy stationed in Brisbane, who, having succeeded in forming their first union during the War, went on strike to stop the ships from leaving Australia to join the blockade. They were supported on 24 September by Brisbane union seamen and dockworkers who announced a ban on ships carrying Dutch arms to Indonesia, and by Chinese, Indian, and some Dutch sailors (Grant, 1962, 154; Lockwood, 1982; Hughes, 2009).

Brisbane had been the wartime headquarters not only for the Dutch East Indies government-in-exile, but also for about 600 Indonesian political activists, internees who had been evacuated from their New Guinea concentration camps by the Dutch lest they help the Japanese, only to face internment in Australia, temporarily. These anti-colonial nationalists included many members of the Indonesian Communist Party, and their wartime organising among Indonesian expatriates had borne fruit. Although neither Labour Prime Minister Chifley nor the Australian Council of Trade Unions officially supported the ban, both did so tacitly, and Chifley and union officials spoke out individually in support of the nationalists. The Dutch were not deterred from instituting a blockade and bombardment of the Republican strongholds.

Ivens by this time was already relating more to the Indonesian exiles than his compatriots in Australia and was becoming increasingly disturbed that

the Dutch were not taking him to Indonesia as promised, especially since the 'liberation' of Indonesia now appeared to be *from* rather than *by* the Dutch. His work was also being undermined by an already existing, Australia-based Dutch East Indies Film and Photo Unit and by hostile Australian and Dutch intelligence operators. Did Ivens also have an inkling that the Allied command in Southeast Asia under General MacArthur had no intention of allowing this 'most dangerous' 'Soviet agent' into the former Dutch colony, thanks to vigilant FBI tracking (Hughes, 2009)? In early October, the Australian ship, *The Esperance Bay*, left Sydney carrying 1400 Indonesian exiles back to Republican-held ports with an Australian official aboard to guarantee that the passengers would not fall into Dutch hands. Early in November, strong Republican resistance to the Dutch and the occupying British troops broke out in Surabaya in southern Java.

Ivens could no longer countenance remaining on the side of the colonial army. In anger, he held a well-publicised press conference on 21 November to denounce the Dutch policies and to resign. He of course already had the hang of radical renunciations but this was the most dramatic and public to date. A statement, drawn up to maximise the impact of the resignation, declared that the Dutch had broken their share of the contract by refusing to respect the contractual principle of complete equality for Dutch and Indonesians in the future Indonesia and their permission to allow Ivens to film the restoration of democratic government in that country. The statement, wired to New York, and sent dutifully by Van Dongen to every major magazine and newspaper film critic in the US, Canada, South America, and Europe, concluded with explicit criticism of the Dutch actions in Indonesia, a reference to the flouted principles of the Atlantic Charter, and a ringing manifesto:

I have not and will not do any film work that would be against my principles and convictions. [...] There is a road to freedom for all peoples in the world. The documentary film should record and assist the progress along this road. (Ivens, telegraphed statement, 21 November 1945, JIA, quoted in Ivens, 1969, 243-244)

The publicity was effective and the event was covered in newspapers around the world, and reportedly on the front page of *The New York Times*⁵⁹ (Ivens, 1970, 157). Statements of support were forthcoming from many of Ivens's former Hollywood co-workers, including Milestone, Renoir, and Nichols. The Dutch replied that Ivens was no longer Film Commissioner since he had 'refused to make a film on the liberation of the Dutch East Indies' (Netherlands East Indies Information Service press release, n.d. [c. November 1945], JIA), attempted unsuccessfully to have him deported from Australia, and

would continue to dog him around passport legalities over the next fifteen years. His shocked compatriots considered him a traitor, John Ferno, who originally had been part of the Netherlands East India plans, was almost as negative about the new developments (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 203), and even the Dutch Communist Party withheld its support (Ivens, 1970, 157). Meanwhile, a Sydney newspaper reported the day after the press conference that Ivens had admitted that he knew of a film being made about the developments but that he did not know who was making it (unattributed clipping, *The Sydney Sun*, 22 November 1945, JIA).

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Ivens's and Michelle's informal documentation on the ongoing developments on the Brisbane and Sydney waterfronts may have taken off sporadically as early as August but only became part of a systematic film project with the Esperance Bay filming on 13 October. Recent evidence confirms Ivens's involvement with the activity while still under contract with the colonial bosses (Hughes, 2009). In any event, the filming, hampered by lack of stock, equipment, and financing lasted until the completion of the film about one year later. The pair eventually invited Duncan, who had resigned from the Dutch film unit before Ivens, to look at the rushes to see if she could detect anything promising. Recognising something that Ivens, Michelle, and the Indonesians had perhaps not, an authentically Australian subject ('There was a country there [in the rushes]!'), Duncan enthusiastically joined the group as a writer (Michelle and Duncan, 1960, 89). At this point, the group was using a borrowed, defective, hand-wound Kinamo portable camera, identical to the one with which Ivens had started his career as a young Dutch avant-gardist in the late twenties. For two sequences to be shot in synchronous sound, they rented a newsreel sound truck. Attempts were made to enlist professional cinematographers on the project, including John Heyer, the future head of the Australian National Film Board (who mistakenly shot a ship full of Indians thinking they were Indonesians, and saw his precious footage used in a scene showing Indian sailors joining the boycott). Michelle shot the rest of the film herself, with some help from Ivens. Since Eastman Kodak refused to sell the group stock, claiming post-war restrictions, they had to use material scrounged from wartime supplies that was not verifiable (Michelle, interview with author, February 1976), as well as leftover ends supplied by British director Harry Watt, then shooting the promising new national 'epic' *The Overlanders* (1946, UK, 91) (Hughes, 2009).

The major problem during the shooting was harassment by local authorities, police and journalists, despite the widespread government and union sympathy for the project. Duncan and Michelle have many anecdotes of the literally clandestine, guerilla tactics necessary for the filming, partly due also to the lingering wartime security regulations in all the harbours. The filmmakers

often had to resort to the tactics Ivens had learned thirteen years earlier during the shooting of *Borinage* on behalf of striking Belgian coal miners. One scene where Australian strikers are lounging around a street corner, pretending to play cards before springing into action, is in particular reminiscent of almost identical shots from *Borinage* in which strikers idly play cards in small groups along a street waiting for the signal to rush together to hold an illegal meeting.

46. *Indonesia Calling*: Union solidarity and oratory, changing Australian politics. Frame enlargement. Courtesy John Hughes. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The atmosphere for Michelle and Duncan, despite the danger – and despite initial animosity which quickly transformed to a lifelong friendship – was one of ‘adventure’ (Michelle, interview with author, February 1976). Most of the events of the strike and boycott were at first recorded spontaneously, but as the film began to take shape, a few events that had taken place at night were re-enacted, and, after the editing had begun, some additional covering and establishing shots were taken. By this time, the Australian Waterfront Union, whose leaders had led the local participation in the boycott, came to the rescue of the film and assumed lab costs. Financing for the film was also secretly obtained from an Australian communist businessman Fred Wong (Hughes, 2009), and the union made available some boats for the filming of some of the most spectacular material in the film: a sequence about an unsuccessful attempt by strikers in a small tug to persuade Dutch troops crowding a liner to lay down their arms; a more successful attempt also with a loudspeaker and a small boat to persuade an Indian crew, which the Dutch had sneaked through the embargo with arms for Indonesia, to turn back their ship (the union craft broke down and the camera boat had to tow it back to shore); and finally some enchanting travelling shots of Indonesian patriots on board a ship, with the Sydney harbour backdrop gliding past, dreaming, according to the commentary, of their besieged homeland. Australian researchers have recently confirmed the extent to which the small and clandestine operation served as a

rallying point for Australia's emerging documentary culture: the shoot benefited from secret contributions by John Heyer, considered a founder of national documentary; Watt and Axel Poignant, his cinematographer on *Overlanders*; Ralph Foster, the Commissioner of the new Australian National Film Board as well as his successor Stanley Hawes (both of whom were NFB veterans and the latter probably acquainted with Ivens in Ottawa), as well as members of the Melbourne's communist-affiliated New Theatre group. Despite these unofficial contributions, unacknowledged because of fears of political fallout, and the union's support, the filmmakers were still short of funds, and when it came to the sound recording they were required to choose music in the public domain. Accordingly, the soundtrack was based with surprising success on the repetition of a single cut called 'Mulberry March'. During the editing Ivens became seriously ill with asthma and practically had to supervise the sound recording from his bed. This weakened him so much that Michelle had to do the negative cutting on her own while Ivens recuperated.

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47. *Indonesia Calling*: exiles dreaming of their homeland as they glide through Sydney harbour, one of a defiant film's most lyrical moments. Frame enlargement. Courtesy John Hughes. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



From the form of the final version of the film, it is clear that this film, perhaps more than any other in Ivens's career, achieved its shape in the editing. Duncan's anecdote about the dubious sound engineer professing to be able to make *Ben Hur* in his back yard if anything could be made of such pitiful rushes is perfectly plausible (Michelle and Duncan, 1960, 89). It is a hybrid film made up of isolated documents, some of limited visual self-sufficiency. They are strung together chronologically and adhered with additional covering material, an establishing landscape from time to time – for example a bird's eye pan of the idle harbour and embargoed ships that Michelle shot while hiding behind some rocks (Michelle, interview with author, February 1976) – and the several stiffly reconstituted scenes of demonstrations and rallies. An expository scene giving some historical and economic background resorts to the

means Capra had fallen back on to fill in the gaps of *Why We Fight* – animation. Ivens, however, used the rudimentary animation technique of accelerated on-camera drawing, to good effect, within the narrative framework.

The direct sound sequences, filmed in static, frontal ‘newsreel’ style, consist of two ceremonial events at which speeches are given by representatives of the Indonesian nationalists and their supporters. These sequences function less as elements in the narration or exposition than as punctuation devices celebrating the solidarity of the Australian unions and other groups with the Indonesian protagonists. Other ‘newsreel’-type sequences are briefer and less important, except for a climactic parade scene in which a long file of representatives of the five nationalities appearing in the film – Indonesians, Indians, Chinese, Dutch, and Australians – stride briskly toward the camera four abreast over Sydney’s strikingly cinematic harbour bridge. Even the compilation principle is represented: the film opens with a ‘quote’ from an October 1945 newsreel depicting the departure of the *Esperance Bay*. The extreme eclecticism of this mix, dominated by documentary *mise-en-scène* (including reconstitution and other forms of collaboration with the subjects), and incorporating less ‘candid’ or improvised material than most other Ivens films, comes not from any intentional aesthetic outlined at the start but clearly from the reliable aesthetic principles of contingency and availability that Ivens and Van Dongen had proven both as compilationists and as radicals. The shooting ratio of the film is surely the lowest of Ivens’s career, approximately 1.1 to 1, judging from Duncan’s memory that the 22-minute film was derived from 25 minutes of footage (Michelle and Duncan, 1963, 71).

All of these diverse elements are held tightly together by a commentary that, for virtually the first time in Ivens’s career, carries most of the diegetic weight, providing the film with a strong and coherent narrative shape. This role was essential, not only because of the extreme diversity of visual elements, but also because of the undeniable sparseness of some of the images (though surprisingly few), and because the essential narrative idea, an embargo, is one of inactivity. Images of a deserted port or workers on a sit-down strike have not often been successfully handled in a medium based on movement; though the harbourscapes are classical images of the Dutch lyricist in Ivens, the idleness of the cranes are decidedly atypical.

The commentary provides a simple chronology of the events, from the newsreel flashback of the *Esperance Bay*, to the escalating boycott, to the climactic episode in which the Indian crew are persuaded to mutiny and turn back their cargo of arms. This latter episode includes an effective moment of narrative suspense orchestrated by the voice-over: as the ship recedes from view after the pursuit of the embargo-breaking arms ship, the voice-over announces ‘They’re gone!’, followed by a well-timed pause before reconstituted images

show the Indian seamen returning. The commentary is the most prominent of Ivens's career up to this point: the proportion of the running time occupied by future film star Peter Finch's reading is a high 77%, which exceeds the corresponding figures from even the seven *Why We Fight* films, though it is roughly comparable to most of the wartime National Film Board of Canada productions. As might be expected, however, the commentary does not consist exclusively of voice-of-god narration as with so many of the Capra and NFB films. In addition to the two synchronous 'newsreel' sequences with their platform oratory and patriotic cheers, the filmmakers vary the soundtrack diegesis in every possible way: indirect speech, post-dubbed live music with narrative content (a ballet-concert of traditional Indonesian music, featuring Sardjono, crew member and former intern, as the ornately costumed court dancer), two scenes where dramatic voices are post-dubbed (the two sea-borne pursuit scenes), several scenes where dramatic voices are assumed by the narrator, others where the narration becomes a present-tense sportscasting-type text, and two scenes in which the dubbed voices of blockaded independence-fighters broadcast to their compatriots in Australia (whence the title), not to mention moments of straightforward narration and exposition. It is a very dense, urbane, and variegated verbal diegesis, with enduring impact.

The durability of *Indonesia Calling*, however, is not only a function of its textual achievement, its surprising strength as documentary narrative, or its summative expression of the formal possibilities of the hybrid form of classical documentary in a zero-budget activist context at the end of the war. It must also be seen as a milestone in Ivens's career, in the embryonic histories of the Australian and Indonesian national cinemas, and, most important, in documentary and political film history as a whole because of its political relation to its historical context. In this regard the anecdotal parallel made earlier with *Borinage* must be extended, since the way in which these two films are both underground is emblematic of their unique stature as examples of contextual filmmaking.

Most of the other political documentaries of Ivens's career and of film history up to this point had been initiated as films from the exterior. *Borinage* and *Indonesia Calling* were admittedly made by filmmakers who came from elsewhere, but they were initiated and animated by the interior political dynamic of each conjuncture. Both films bore a subject-centred, activist orientation towards their context and for this reason had to be clandestine. The Indonesian nationalists and the Australian union activists and intellectual sympathisers functioned as leaders in much the same way as the Borin militants had; the filmmakers were technical resource-people responsible to their subjects, not independent 'artists' in the traditional sense, that is, with their subjects responsible to them. Both films not only 'record' a political process, they

are also part of that process, affecting it in a catalytic manner, 'assisting' it, as Ivens had put it in his press conference. The analogy of documentary methodology to the social sciences, for example to the 'participant observation' and 'case study' approaches of anthropology and sociology, loses its pertinence; instead artistic practice more precisely parallels political rather than scientific practice.⁶⁰

I have expressed Ivens's two achievements and the concept of contextual filmmaking in idealised terms of course, but the concept does accurately describe both *Borinage* and *Indonesia Calling* all the same, with allowance for the considerable difference in their two contexts. For example, Ivens and his colleagues' immersion of a few months in the Borin milieu is hardly comparable to the year and a half that Ivens and his crew devoted to the evolving Australian situation, nor to the immersion periods of Barbara Kopple in *Harlan County, USA* (1977, USA, 104), to cite a 1970s example of political contextual filmmaking, nor, for that matter, to that of non-political contextual filmmakers of the classical period such as Flaherty and Storck.⁶¹

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Another difference was that *Borinage*, unlike *Indonesia Calling*, had not been an isolated gesture in the conjuncture of the early thirties; it was very much a part of an international movement, an expression of the militant proletarian phase of international Communism before the advent of the Popular Front. The American left filmmakers, and workers' film movements in other countries, still being unearthed by film historians, were equally motivated by the ideal of the contextual, political use of documentary on a local level. Examples like Strand's Mexican *Redes* (*The Wave*, 1936, 65), or WFPL director Nancy Naumberg's *Sheriffed* (1934) had important affinities with *Borinage* as examples of contextual filmmaking, as Naumberg's description of her continuous consultation and collaboration with her subjects, farmers' union militants, made clear (Naumberg, quoted in Kennedy, 1935, 11). What is more, such films shared an integrated and dynamic international constituency that expanded as the Popular Front came to the fore. But in the long run, such precedents would not become part of a systematic process towards resolving the contradictions of the model: Naumberg's defence, for example, reveals how the model's emphasis on local input and non-professional film cadres had not yet overcome financial and technical limitations. *Cumberland*, a manifesto of labour militancy and popular education in the Appalachians, would be the only Frontier Films production on a domestic subject to bypass those limitations without losing sight of the contextual ideal.

As the thirties continued, most of the inspiration for the contextual ideal was drained off by the demands of the international situation and by the aspiration toward mass distribution. *Power*, however, can be seen as another intermediate step, with its emphasis on the immersion of the filmmakers in

the context (after three weeks in the St. Clairsville, Ohio hotel, the crew had moved right in with their farm family subjects, the Parkinsons, for the rest of the shoot), Ivens's involvement of the subjects in the filmmaking process, and his insistence on flexibility in the face of the reality of the situation. This scrupulousness was significant in an atmosphere charged, as the documentary movement wound down, with heightened consciousness of the potential for exploitation within the documentary project: Strand (quoted in Jacobs, 1979, 121) had declared that it was 'exploitation of people, however picturesque, indifferent and interesting to us they may appear, merely to make use of them as material', and the documentary book on share-croppers, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937), by Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, was roundly denounced by Walker Evans (quoted in Stott, 1973, 222) for 'profit-making'. *Power*, however, for all its integrity, was a Department of Agriculture commission that could only go so far; as Ivens said to the camera operator Ornitz, who had wanted to organise the Ohio farmers between takes (according to a story that may be apocryphal but is symbolically true), they were there to make a film not start the Revolution (Van Dyke, interview with author, December 1975).

Indonesia Calling must, then, have been an exhilarating experience for Ivens, after years of 'desk' work, discouragement, and detachment from the roots of his experience as a political filmmaker. It was a return to the harness in a sense that he had not foreseen at the moment of his 1944 press conference, a second return to the 'social function of the documentary', as he had earlier described the films of his politicisation period (Ivens, 1940, 42).

The echoes of *Borinage* and the whole proletarian period are palpable not only in the subterfuges and clandestinity, but also in the filmic style of *Indonesia Calling* – the low priority on technical aesthetic finesse, the loose episodic structure, the visual stress on groups of subjects as opposed to individuals, its simple, direct declamatory address, its defiant jubilant ending, the foregrounding of filmed demonstrations. Ivens must have felt a sense of a return. It is probably an accident that he discovered Mao Zedong's 1942 Yan'an discussion of art while in Australia in 1945 and he would not necessarily have been tempted to try a mechanical application of aesthetic principles derived from a peasant and proletarian revolution to the Sydney milieu (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978); nevertheless he must have felt that *Indonesia Calling* vindicated in a modest way Mao's ideal of the people as the source, material, and ultimate end of art. He probably could not have foretold, however, that *Indonesia Calling* would not be part of an international movement like *Borinage*, but a single anomalous gesture in the West of the post-war decades.

The film was shown in Sydney cinemas and elsewhere in Australia beginning in September 1946, where it had an important impact and gave the

fledgling Australian cinema an important boost. It also thrilled the local Indonesian audience who had not yet been expatriated to Republican Indonesia who saw it repeatedly with a simultaneous translation by one of the activists. The film offered Australians an alternative, less colonised model for its future course than Watt's big-budget epic. Finch's narration was reportedly the first that Australian audiences had ever heard rendered in an Australian accent (Delmar, 1979, 41). Duncan's recognition of a 'country' in the rushes was borne out: 'One thing is certain – the Australian audience saw themselves in that film. Watching the film they realized for the first time that they and their country had an important role to play in world affairs' (Michelle and Duncan, 1963, quoted in Delmar, 1979, 43).

More important perhaps to Ivens in the short term was the role played by the film in the Indonesian struggle, beyond its obvious importance in bolstering the organising efforts of the expatriates in Australia. Two copies of the film were smuggled past the Dutch blockade (into Java via Singapore) and were shown in a 16mm dubbed Malay version with portable equipment to many outdoors audiences (Ivens, 1970, 158). There, according to Duncan, the film became an important arm in the Indonesian resistance, which still at that time had several years to go; it contradicted for the blockaded Republicans the Dutch broadcasts to the effect that they were completely isolated and abandoned by the rest of the world (Michelle and Duncan, 1963, 43). Eventual screenings in Djakarta cinemas before *Gone with the Wind* no doubt had similar effect (Hughes, 2009). Later attempts by Indonesians to lure Ivens to the new republic to carry on his cinematic contribution were unsuccessful (Hughes, 2009). (A final sad footnote beyond the scope of this study would ponder the fate of many of *Indonesia Calling's* stars in the CIA-backed anti-communist genocide in 1965.)

In international documentary circles, the film went on to a more modest career whose limits reflected the tightening Cold War atmosphere. The Australian government had at first banned it for export, presumably to avoid offending the Dutch, but this controversial decision had been reversed after the full cabinet saw the film in November 1946. Thereafter the film attracted attention because of Ivens's reputation and the publicity that had surrounded his resignation. The film appeared to an appreciative audience at the 1947 Edinburgh International Festival of Documentary, and was released for US non-theatrical exhibition by Ivens's old distributor from the radical thirties, Brandon Films, in November 1947. There must have been disappointment, however, that the film did not make more of a splash. Richard Griffith (1952a, 319), chief spokesperson for US documentary in the post-war years, described it as 'violently revolutionary', a bizarre but symptomatic overreaction to a cheerful little film that scarcely goes beyond the Atlantic Charter principle

of self-determination unanimously endorsed by the United Nations. All the same, Griffith's description, written in 1952, provides a hint of the ideological environment into which *Indonesia Calling* was issued. The film failed to garner an Academy Award nomination as Brandon had hoped, and Cecile Starr omitted it entirely from her influential 1951 listing of 200 16mm documentaries available for US rental ('*Indonesia Calling* for Academy Award Screening', press release, Brandon Films, New York, 3 February 1948, JIA; Starr, 1951, 135-238).

I have stated that *Indonesia Calling*'s local contextual activism was an anomaly in the post-war documentary movement. By far the dominant trend of the post-war 'political' documentary was, to repeat Rotha's euphemism, 'towards a wider collective purpose'. The major films, varied in the problematic of official and corporate sponsorship, were too focused on global UNESCO-scope problems to be able to relate to local activism, too preoccupied with escalating production values and larger crews encouraged by increasingly generous sponsors, from UNESCO to the foundations, from the NFB to Shell Oil, to be able to reflect grass roots political realities. Ivens's own unfinished *New Frontiers* had perhaps been heading in this direction with its foundation sponsorship (the Sloan Foundation was linked to General Motors) and its large-scale ambitious vision of American history and society as a whole. What remains of the plans for that pre-war project clearly anticipates the encyclopedic films of the post-war period, both Ivens's own within the Soviet bloc, *The First Years*, an epic of reconstruction and socialisation in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria, and those in the West of which Paul Rotha's are typical, in which ambitious visions of the reconstruction of entire societies and the solutions to global problems are expressed. If 'land' was the hallmark of prewar documentary titles (*Power and the Land* [1940], *The Land* [1940-1942], *Native Land* [1938-1942], *Spanish Earth* [1937], *The Plow that Broke the Plains* [1936], *New Earth* [1934], *Land Without Bread* [1931]), 'world' might be seen as the symptomatic post-war equivalent (Rotha's *World of Plenty* [1943, UK, 42], *The World is Rich* [1947, UK, 46], and *World Without End* [1953, UK, 60], Sucksdorff's *En kluven värld* [*A Divided World*, 1948, Sweden, 9]). The typical post-war films are plodding, self-righteous and self-important, not because of any specific formal or technological syndromes, but because of their rupture from the small-scale origins of political documentary. Direct cinema would appear like such a gust of fresh air after the mid-fifties not only because of technological breakthroughs, but because it coincided with a return to the small-scale contact with subjects and audiences that *Indonesia Calling*, of all documentaries in the post-war decade, embodies almost alone. Ironically, Ivens (1969, 212) had spoken truer than he knew in triumphantly predicting in 1945 the demise of the 'one-man documentary'.

These conditions cannot be separated from the disarray of the left during

those years. The travails of prolific union documentarist Carl Marzani and his outfit Union Films, as recently uncovered by Charles Musser (2009), bespeak a lively scene admittedly, symptomatically overlooked by tastemakers and historians alike as Musser complains, but one hounded by authorities and redbaiters, like the left-wing unions it championed, and ultimately run into the ground. But this scene was hardly more than a rump of the dynamic and diverse worlds of the 1930s and wartime, resilient in the face of imprisonment, silencing, and defeat. The Marzani group's output of approximately 25 progressive short campaign, labour, and travel films between 1946 and 1953, and the three great canonical feature-length films of the American left of the post-war decade – *Strange Victory* (1948, 71) and the Oscar-nominated *The Quiet One* (1949, 70) by Frontier Films veterans Leo Hurwitz and Sidney Meyers respectively, and Herbert Biberman's semi-documentary *Salt of the Earth* (1954, 94), by Ivens's old associate from the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization days – are all the exceptions that prove the general rule of the demoralisation and depletion of the ranks during the HUAC years. Significantly, the three unique feature-length films have a theme in common with *Indonesia Calling*: they all point to the postcolonial struggle as the legitimate preoccupation of the left in the Cold War era of retrenchment (though both Ivens and Biberman situate this affirmation within the context of traditional union movements that were Marzani's cause as well and Hurwitz and Meyers do so in terms of the domestic racial problematic). In this sense, Ivens's *Das Lied der Ströme* (*Song of the Rivers*, 1954, DDR, 90), his most important film of his Eastern European period between 1946 and 1957, belongs to this group in its prophetic association of the anti-colonial struggles of Africa and Asia with workers' movements in the industrialised West. All of these isolated utterances predict with uncanny exactitude the essential significance of the 'third world' struggle for the Left in the last decades of the twentieth century.

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However, except for *Indonesia Calling*, the three feature films of the American left as well as *Lied*, are all comparable to the encyclopedic 'UNESCO' films in their pursuit of high production values and their orientation towards feature-length commercial viability. *Indonesia Calling*, with its low-budget short-documentary format, was more attuned, less by design than by contingency, to the realities of the post-war film distribution system. Few observers foresaw in 1945, least of all Ivens, that the wartime fulfilment of the late-thirties dream of commercial viability for documentary had been illusory, that the wartime documentary boom had been an artificially stimulated byproduct of the war, and that, now that the war was over, documentaries would leave the theatres as quickly as women were leaving the factories. Eighteen theatrical documentaries, mostly features, had been reviewed in *The New York Times* in 1943, fifteen in 1944, and fourteen in 1945; in 1946 the comparable figure was

four, of which all were either Soviet-bloc in origin or war-related, and in 1947, the figure was five, of which one was British, one Soviet, one Palestinian, and only two domestic. The theatrical market had evaporated.

The other side of the coin was that the 16mm educational film boom confirmed documentary in the thriving ghetto of non-theatrical marginalisation, a boom that Marzani arguably understood and profited from better than the feature-focused 1930s veterans. A wave of books appeared as the theoretical justifications, operating manuals, and consumers' guides of the 16mm educational market: Rotha's revised edition of *Documentary Film*, declaring that the potential for feature documentary had been 'grossly overrated' (Rotha, 1952, 216); Basil Wright's *The Use of the Film*, including a long discussion of the non-commercial nature of documentary (Wright [1948] 1972, 42); Gloria Waldron's *The Information Film* (1949), which reassuringly estimated the wartime non-theatrical audience to have been 30 or 40 million (Waldron, 1949, 14); Cecile Starr's *Ideas on Film: Handbook for the 16mm User* (1951); and the British *The Factual Film* (1947) (*Arts Enquiry* 1947). Television, of course, with its usurpation of the journalistic function of the newsreels and of the theatrical documentary, would consolidate this post-war pattern, while opening another medium to the documentarist (in theory at least). As I have stated, Ivens (1969, 209-225) in his 1945 stock-taking was not aware of this imminent radical shift in the production-consumption framework of the documentary, and his impending immersion in the controlled market of Eastern Europe would delay his confrontation with the new reality in the West for another decade.

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For documentary adherents in 1946-1947, the appearance of *Indonesia Calling* must have seemed the harbinger of a whole new chapter in Ivens's career, with its small-scale activist orientation and refreshing renewal of contact with the roots of his artistic political mission, and its dynamic sense of movement in the streets and on the sea. Instead, it was the closing page of a chapter just finished. Refused re-entry to the US, soon stripped of his Dutch travel documents, his former co-workers facing jail, unemployment, and ostracism in the US and Canada, Ivens left behind a period in which he had moved from the centre of the European avant-garde through the political awakening occasioned by the crisis of capitalism in Europe to the forefront of the anti-fascist struggle. Like Brecht, Eisler, and Pozner, Ivens migrated to the new 'socialist' republics of Eastern Europe. There he would see himself established as the unofficial filmmaker laureate for an entire decade, like Brecht and Eisler in theatre and music. There also he would soon see, in the same country where he himself had been a student 30 years earlier, the formation of Young Communist filmmaking clubs called Joris Ivens Leagues.

PART II




48. *Die Windrose* (1957). Hungarian film poster. Original in colour.
courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen

Torn Curtain: Ivens the Cold Warrior 1946-1956

There was virtually no artistic form in the diverse Eastern European films.

– Hans Schoots, *Living Dangerously*

The Iron Curtain was already christened as such in March 1946, less than a year after the end of the War. The decade or so that Ivens spent east of it, based mostly in Prague, Warsaw, and East Berlin, was, although a frustrating one for him personally and creatively, more productive – and artistic – than some accounts might indicate. It is also undeniably key to his *oeuvre* and legacy. If we need masterpieces, this period led to the production of a film that has often received that accolade, *Das Lied der Ströme* (also known by its official English title *Song of the Rivers* [1954, DDR, 90]), and I concur. *Lied* synthesised and consolidated many of Ivens's previous innovations, pushing in particular the compilation mode to match his epic artistic ambitions and global political ideals, as well as building prophetically on the postcolonial breakthrough of *Indonesia Calling* (1946, Australia, 22). At the same time, it echoed *Pierwsze lata* (*The First Years*, 1949, Bulgaria/Czechoslovakia/Poland, 99) and *Pokój zdobędzie świat* (*Peace Will Win*, 1951, Poland, 90) in speaking eloquently with the traumatised voice of his post-war generation. This period was also the crucible for some of Ivens's most problematical films – speaking both artistically and politically – those in which his most ardent hopes were most catastrophically dashed, those that Ivens himself looking back from the 1980s considered moments of repetition rather than development, films 'hav[ing] slid the most in history' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 243). Meanwhile, it was the interlude when Ivens offered his final synthesis of his relationship with socialist realism – final that is until wars and revolutions in Asia revived it in the late 1960s and 1970s. The time has come in this book to face that relationship head on. Finally, it was also an interval in which a 40-something artist stepped up his involvement in a focused way in producing, collaborating, and mentoring, and thus one that complicates any auteurist presumptions about documentary film history we might still complacently be nursing.



49. *Pierwsze Lata* [*The First Years*] (1949): Ivens directing the foundry lab sequence of the Polish episode with scriptwriter, partner and photographer Marion Michelle seen at rear, 1948. Production still, collection Marion Michelle (MM/EFJI) © EFJI, Nijmegen

Historically speaking, this was the period in which Ivens and his collaborators, both external and internal, weathered the violent contradictions and ultimately fatal crisis within the Old Left during the opening salvos of the Cold War. The historical chronology of this crisis spanned from the perfidious and paranoid implantation of Russian dominance in Eastern Europe (the Soviets were no doubt justifiably paranoid in the face of the nuclear arms race, sparked by American arms-testing in the immediate post-Hiroshima years, which the Soviets were not able to counter with their own first nuclear test until August 1949), to the emergence and consolidation of Euro-Communism in Western Europe at the time of the Thaw. The death of Stalin in March 1953 was followed by opposing pulls of liberalisation and retrenchment within communist societies, including the famous de-Stalinisation that finally ushered in the Thaw in question in 1956 and the contradictory suppression of that same disavowal in the shape of tanks rumbling through Budapest that same year. Biographically speaking, this period culminated, just as Ivens's adventures of the 1930s had, in exit and rupture, and in a crumbling marriage with yet another female collaborator, and with artistic/political salvation on another horizon – in this case within the 'progressive' cultural fronts of the West... of the South and of the Far East.

Certainly the eight films Ivens directed, produced, or had a part in during his Cold War period are those most disavowed across the board by the Ivens estate, and even, to a certain extent, by his foundation: this period is the only major vector of his career not represented in any way whatsoever in the 2008 DVD box-set restoration of his *oeuvre*. *Lied* is not the only work of note and grandeur to have emerged: another film, the troubled *First Years*, a transnational epic of reconstruction and nation building, offered what might be considered Ivens's most carried-through rendition of his personalised model of documentary form; and the uneven series of films, either directed, co-directed, or 'overseen' by Ivens, most like *Lied* caught in the potential trap of the commissioned 'congress film' format, must be seen as creditable efforts at the cinematic waging of peace in the era of the H-test. One of these, *Peace Will Win*, made enough of an impact that it had a second life as a tool in the US anti-war movement during the Vietnam era.

The erasure of these films, admittedly on the wrong side of history it could be argued, might be deemed an attempted rewriting of that history on the part of Ivens's executors – perhaps even Marceline Loridan-Ivens's testamentary credo – or simply a revisionist ideological statement of failed ideals. Or it might simply reflect the insoluble encounter with issues having to do solely with rights (most of this period's work was carried out for the East German state-owned production company DEFA and other concerns in Prague, Warsaw, and Moscow¹). Whatever the case, the smoothing out of history and the disavowal of a decade's artistic and political labour, however misguided or doomed or contradictory, is not an appropriate way to understand the progress of this international artist-in-exile as he moved from middle age to honorary elder status – nor to learn from it the valuable artistic and political lessons that abound there. Schoots ([1995] 2000) loses all judgment in writing about his period, as we saw in the hysterical epigraph above: about the Old Left and its artistic trajectory, about Stalinism and its political legacy, about post-war documentary and its artistic struggles. Ivens and his collaborators from the US and Australia, Marion Michelle, Catherine Duncan, and Paul Robeson, and his Eastern European collaborators – including Béla Balázs, Jerzy Bossak, Bertolt Brecht, Alberto Cavalcanti, Hanns Eisler, Joop Huisken, Pablo Picasso, Gérard Philipe, Vladimir Pozner, Ivan Pyryev, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Andrew Thorndike – were not fools or dupes, not opportunists, knaves nor cynics – though they may have been exiles, refugees, idealists, fellow travellers, or pragmatists, or all of the above. In any case, they deserve better of us, their descendants, than an indiscriminate silencing – a historiographical 'iron curtain' of another kind. Indeed, they deserve our honesty, analysis, and critique – as well as our empathy and solidarity.

THE FIRST YEARS

Joris Ivens and Marion Michelle disembarked in London in January 1947 after a four-week sea voyage from Sydney to encounter a world, cinematic and political, very different from the ones they had left behind as progressive filmmakers in the wartime US and in post-war Australia. Though the reconstruction of post-war Europe had scarcely begun, the Cold War that would preside over the final four decades of Ivens's career was already in full swing, with dire consequences for his generation of left filmmakers both inside the film industry and outside. And the hybrid form of the performed documentary that would dominate the post-war decade up to the explosion of direct cinema after 1957, a form to which Ivens and his contemporaries had been aspiring in the 1930s, and to which he was about to make his next, perhaps definitive contribution, was already implanted – not unrelated of course to the enthronement of socialist realism as the official communist aesthetic. The hybrid model had been buoyed at one end of the spectrum by the successes of wartime docudramas like *Target for Tonight* (directed by Grierson's disciple Harry Watt, 1941, UK, 50), and the early post-war breakthroughs of neorealism at the other end, which came to their arguably similar hybrid form from a direction opposite to Ivens, that is, from the direction of fiction. (*Roma, città aperta* [*Rome, Open City*, Roberto Rossellini, 1945, Italy, 103] had taken the Cannes Film Festival by storm in 1946 while Ivens was still in Australia and *Sciuscia* [*Shoeshine*, Vittorio De Sica, 1946, Italy, 93] was in its first run in Paris during his winter 1947 visit).

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Schoots ([1995] 2000, 211-214) recounts how several weeks of networking with Ivens's old colleagues in the Grierson circle in the UK – whom he now considered 'old-fashioned' (politically or artistically, one is not sure) – led to several weeks in Amsterdam. There he combined reunions with family, friends, and former fellow activists and artists with a couple of film gigs, public and private. The latter are very interesting in terms of the shape that the next phase of Ivens's career would take. He enthusiastically told the crowd who gathered to hear him at the event co-sponsored by the Holland-Indonesia Association that the narrowing of the gap between nonfiction and fiction – an eventuality he had himself, in fact, been pushing towards since the early 1930s – was intrinsic to the documentary's social political role. He cited as exemplary a film he had just seen in London, David Lean and Noel Coward's adulterous melodrama *Brief Encounter* (1945, UK, 86). If this film, which Ivens perhaps admired for its realist set of a suburban railway station (or perhaps out of empathy arising from his own adulterous proclivities), was otherwise incongruent with his message in its tear-jerk star discourses and glamorous chiaroscuro style, the other film cited fit better, notable for documentary loca-

tions, recent historical heroic narrative, and non-professional performances. This Australian outback docudrama *The Overlanders* (1946, UK, 91), directed by the now transplanted Watt and shot by Osmond Borradaile, Ivens's former collaborator on *Action Stations* (1943, Canada, 50), Ivens and Michelle had almost certainly seen in Sydney before their departure. However, what he showed to this gathering was neither of these two films nor oddly enough *Indonesia Calling*, though this film's career had hardly begun. Rather, what he showed was parts of the national epic *Zuiderzeewerken* (*Zuiderzee*, 1930-1933, 40-52), sure to warm the hearts of war-exhausted Dutch spectators, alongside a fresh-from-the-lab item just acquired in London, *Land of Promise* (1946, 67), by another of Grierson's protégés, Paul Rotha. This now-unwatchable yet epitomous sponsored work about the challenges of housing in the post-war UK laid out, apparently unbeknownst to the pair fresh off the boat, all the traps lying in wait for documentarists during the last decade of the classical documentary, from the lures of sponsor compromise to overwritten commentary to hokey and contrived performances in the name of narrowing the fiction/non-fiction gap. Ivens, already apparently learning to negotiate his public profile in the shadow of the Cold War, as Schoots no doubt correctly surmises, saved the *Indonesia Calling* screenings for groups of CPH members and artists.

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But London and Amsterdam were in fact only stops on the road to Prague. With the Netherlands East India gesture, Ivens had burnt his bridges to the world of corporate or state-sponsored documentary in the West, seemingly the prevailing employment niche for his generation of documentarists, from Grierson to Flaherty to Rotha, and had accepted a state-sponsored project in Eastern Europe. At that time, the Czech government was still a Communist-supported coalition, but the offer to develop a documentary on the new Czechoslovakia had come to Ivens through his old American distributor, fellow communist Tom Brandon, and through an old friend Lubomir Linhard. He had known the latter as a young film critic in Moscow in 1932 but Linhard was now a 'Party man', director of the Czech state film agency in charge of resuscitating the national cinema (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 231). At the outset, the film was to be based on the just-published book on the post-war reconstruction of the resurrected middle-European nation, *Bright Passage* (Maurice Hindus, 1947). Linhard welcomed the duo and quickly accompanied them on a tour of Eastern European capitals, their films under their arms (Yugoslavia's new strongman Marshal Tito reportedly liked *Indonesia Calling*), and along the way they expanded the project to include not only Yugoslavia, but also Bulgaria and Poland (but not Hungary, despite the wishes of another old friend Balázs). The idea according to Ivens, as Schoots ([1995] 2000, 214) sarcastically cites him, was a 'contribution to building of socialism in Eastern Europe'.²

Joined by Catherine Duncan, the talented Australian writer who had been

part of the *Indonesia Calling* team, the group plunged into their research on the four Slavic nations, tweaking the working title of *The Four Democracies* towards the final *First Years*. The three filmmakers settled on single themes and 'tonalities' chosen to match national characteristics and priorities that would dominate each of the four national segments: agriculture/'didactic' for Bulgaria, youth/'lyrical' for Yugoslavia, history/'epic' for Czechoslovakia and industrialisation/'dramatic' for Poland (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 232). The four states were committed to funding the production undertaken within their own borders respectively, plus 25% percent of the integrated total budget. By July the group was on location in a remote Bulgarian village, Radilova, and a year later all four episodes had been filmed, with only the editing, commentary writing, and post-production remaining.

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Easier said than done. Ivens, Michelle, and Duncan fulfilled their part of the bargain, in collaboration with local filmmakers in each locality, delivering high quality, fervent, state-of-the-art narrative essays about their chosen themes. But things were moving quickly on the political horizon: in February 1948, after the group had moved on from their Czech shoot to the final Polish stage, the notorious pro-Soviet putsch took place in Prague with the Communists seizing full power; four months later the Stalin-Tito tension erupted in the excommunication of the Yugoslavs from the happy socialist family. With the compilation now automatically reduced to three episodes instead of four (and the narrative of youth brigades enthusiastically building a railway through Bosnian mountains literally disappeared³), no wonder the cultural party bureaucrats who were providing the filmmakers with their infrastructure and support network were skittish. The expatriates camped out in a villa in Prague that summer for what stretched out to a year and a half to finish the film. The provisional rough cut was soon ready, but the Bulgarians developed second thoughts about whether the filmmaker's lyrical agrarian parable of drought and socialist irrigation really matched the positive and fully 'modernised' national outlook. The filmmakers spent a month during the summer of 1949 in Sofia persuading the Bulgarian authorities to accept an array of additional shots of 'modern' development to be interspersed with the original episode and then carrying them out. The premiere finally took place in Prague in December, and the film was then shown triumphantly in Paris three months later at an Ivens mini-retrospective at the Salle Pleyel to an adoring overflow audience of communists and cinephiles. The glow was short-lived, for within two weeks, notice came that the Bulgarians were pulling out, and the Czechs followed shortly thereafter (in both countries the project's initial sponsors had moved on, leaving the project as, in Ivens's words, 'an orphan with a great future, but the time of the future has not come yet' (Ivens, letter to Michelle, 6 February 1951, quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 227) or even worse 'an illegiti-

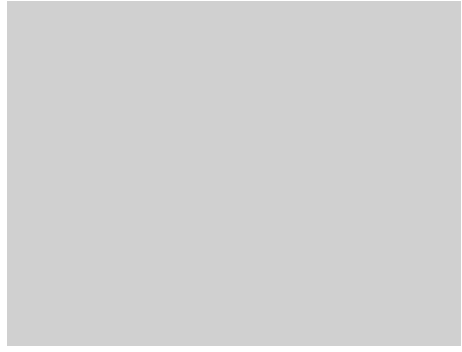
mate child [...] treated with complete negligence' (Ivens, 1969, 246). The Poles didn't bother to officially pull out; rather, they simply reportedly did not bother to show the film. Prints were called back from the international distribution plan that was already underway, from as far afield as India, and it seemed that more than three full years of Ivens's life now needed to be written off, along with what was perhaps the most ambitious film of his career up to that point.

First Years, that is the extant 99-minute triptych – the episodes featuring Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, in that order – may have not been seen by anyone but Ivens fans and scholars for over six decades. Nevertheless, this film deserves better, and has perhaps even improved with age. This elegant and fastidious work of propaganda and solidarity clearly shows on the screen and the soundtrack the intelligence, generosity, passion, and commitment – and deliberately paced research and accomplished (if not academic) journeywork, both technical and interpersonal – invested in it by the three expatriates and their indigenous crews in the three countries.⁴

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Each episode unfolds in the style chosen to match its national subject and in a carefully balanced sensibility to discursively match the compendium's overall geopolitical mission. The 'lyrical' Bulgarian narrative ('smotheringly' so, according to one critic), marries the agrarian heroics of *The Spanish Earth* (1937, USA, 53) with the archetypal though quirky character development of *Power and the Land* (1940, USA, 33). The episode follows an extended family, complete with craggy patriarch, pregnant daughter-in-law, and naughty pre-pubescent male scion through a drought-ravished tobacco harvest towards salvation in mechanical, collective modernisation, and gigantic power dams merging with subterranean springs. The Czech episode, labelled as the 'practical' one by Duncan, also displayed competing agendas: it deftly combines a spin on the previous year's putsch ('[Bourgeois politicians] were making plans for an old-time betrayal... We understood when the anti-planners [opponents of five-year plan] provoked a political crisis, it was their last attempt to restore the old order... Our people [workers militias] came from the factories, from the fields, and workshops. From the Tatra to the Bohemian forest, we came out to defend the Republic'), situating it as a vocal peasant-worker movement arising out of six centuries of popular resistance to hierarchical and foreign authority. It incorporated an imaginatively told national history compiled from period engravings and paintings, and ended with a 'personalised' twentieth-century history of the Bata shoe empire and its failure to support the Revolution. The Polish episode, having to confront total devastation from war and invasion, a society even more broken down than the other two host nations, is delivered suitably in what was conceived of as 'epic' mode. 'Epic' to be sure, but perhaps 'allegorical' and 'melodramatic' might have been added

50. *Pierwsze Lata* [*The First Years*] (1949): the Bulgarian episode. Sofia commissars disliked the outsiders' lyricisation of peasant culture, but this scene of an engineer showing off the new hydro dam to village boys passed muster. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



51. The Czech episode took even more political finesse: what stands out is its use of medieval manuscripts, e.g. of Bohemian martyr Jan Hus. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



52. The Polish episode: socialist realism imagines grieving widow Jadwiga turning her life around on her first visit to the new blast furnace. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



as qualifiers: the parabolic gist of its black-garbed female protagonist's recovery through participation in collective industrial reconstruction in the newly annexed Polish Silesia couches an individual drama of traumatic healing that in fact has real affect.

Yet distinct as they are, the three episodes all show the ineradicable stamp of the socialist realist heritage. The official aesthetic doctrine was in the immediate post-war years at the nadir of its contradictory history – Soviet 'propaganda tsar' Andrei Zhdanov⁵ was tightening his grip on the cultural

interregnum spanning the relative relaxation occasioned by the fervour of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ (for example *Malakhov kurgan* [*The Last Hill*, Iosif Kheifits and Aleksandr Zarkhi, 1944, 86] and the post-Stalin springtime Thaw, with its inevitable modulations developed by a new generation of relatively unscarred filmmakers (*Letyat zhuravli* [*Cranes Are Flying*, Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957, 97]). Ivens was on board, in theory, as evidenced by his 1949 denunciation of capitalist cinemas as ‘decadent, cynical, sexual, cosmopolitan’, such that they ‘lower the morale of the masses’ (quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 226) and of Carol Reed’s new Orson Welles-starring hit *The Third Man* (1949, UK, 104) for its degeneration; and in practice, as evidenced by the new film.

The three episodes of *First Years* all show the familiar ascending arc of both history and narrative, inhabited by characters and societies who alike affirm their revolutionary destiny, all against a backdrop of heroic socialist labour and world-historic collective production. From Ivens’s interviews and speeches about his documentary practice after 1934 and especially during the height of the Cold War up until the 20th Party Congress in 1956,⁶ one can distill certain key phrases and tropes that animate his objectives and practice. Together they provide a working definition of socialist realism that matches that that emerged from what Régine Robin ([1986] 1992) calls the ‘creative cauldron’ of the Soviet debates about realism in the 1920s and 1930s. Ivens had first implemented this aesthetic in Magnitogorsk in 1932 when he made *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, 50), at the height of the debates leading up to the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers of 1934 where the loose and open consensus around the ideals and pragmatics of realism became official. These tropes would become the centre of his drive towards establishing personalised characterisation within the documentary lexicon:

1. necessity of a hero, individual (personalisation) but clearly situated within collectivity
2. organic unity between life, the film, and the director
3. recognizability to audience, accessibility
4. working-class roots and perspectives
5. authenticity, reality, living men, not staying on the surface, but
6. simple person, everyday life, real life, connecting to milieu, to his work, ‘typical’, but
7. trusting in happy future, transforms his surroundings, transformed by his surroundings, ‘revolutionary romanticism’
8. must be audacious and challenge censorship, and show ‘national’ heroes, create understanding between peoples: peace
9. and specifically in relation to film [as opposed to the literature emphasized by the Congress]: words and image

- (a) 'choosing' subjects (dramatization), casting for expression of feelings but not psychology and not 'performance';
- (b) must find proper style for creating men living, not cheap or symbolic types – just like in the fiction film;
- (c) montage for placing our hero in his milieu. (Robin, [1986] 1992)

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The tension between revolutionary romanticism and the requirement of 'typicality'/everyday realism entailed what Robin ([1986] 1992) has called an 'impossible aesthetics'. But it could also be argued that this tension was not only the liability that it turned out to be for Ivens and many an aspiring artist, but also an artistic challenge – the challenge to wrangle intuitively the legacy of other populist genres of didactic narrative in Western culture, from the saint's life to the theatrical melodrama, from the poster to Brechtian agitprop. For Duncan (1950) the key word was 'positive': the filmmakers focused on finding a positive angle and making it a political lesson; it was possible to criticise everything, but the obligatory challenge was to be upbeat. (Ivens would, a few years later, ask Michelle and Duncan [1963] to toe the line when they produced a French radio play about Breton village life that diverged too much from the formula.) This obligation is, of course, the transhistorical marker of all solidarity image-making (Waugh, 2008) – including New Left/New Social Movement activist documentary (solidarity, advocacy, and social issue genres) to this day – and perhaps it is only the intensity and Cold War flavour of the iconography that evokes the pall of Zhdanov.

The Bulgarian episode is the sunniest, thanks literally to the Black Sea summer climate and to a Balkans-folkloric motif of the colourful old-timer who can hear the aquifer gurgling under the villagers' parched fields – what might later have been called magic realism. This colourful material was clearly more interesting for the filmmakers than the dam construction whose friendly engineer gives guided tours to runaway village boys, an element apparently imposed by the Sofia bureaucrats onto the final version.

The Czech episode had its original concept of using puppets promoting the new Five-Year Plan deleted (too close to appropriation of Jirí Trnka-style animation and the national pride already associated with it). Instead the no doubt required task of linking the consolidating new regime to centuries of peasants' and workers' resistance led to this episode being the least personalised, even after the narrative gets around to the model shoe artisan and his family who will benefit from Soviet-imposed economic planning. Still the historical discourse is fresh with the medieval manuscripts played up effectively, the two-dimensional hieratic figures set up as the ancestors of the peasants and workers who assemble beneath the statue of pre-Reformation national hero Jan Hus, literally and metaphorically, to celebrate their 1948 victory.

Duncan was proud to have had a part in innovating this cinematic rendering of flat, still archival graphics for a historiographical purpose, an innovation not really acknowledged at the time, but her pride was not misplaced. One critic of the day said Ivens and company were not Luciano Emmer (the Italian leader in art documentary in the post-war era, now forgotten), but, in fact, the cinematography of the graphics is fluid and expressive, and the narrative editing dynamic.

The Polish segment is the darkest, and not only because of the dour mien and black costume of the heroine, Jadwiga, the middle-class piano teacher who has lost her engineer husband and daughter at the hands of Nazi firing squads and bombers respectively, who attends the war crime trials and then leaves the bombed-out capital, vividly portrayed in aerial shots, to make a new life in the western regions. That the filmmakers chose to represent the intelligentsia is as interesting as it is cryptic, given that the Nazis and the Soviets between them had almost wholly liquidated this class. But Jadwiga's self-redemption in the industrial workplace is telling, and the setting of the steel mill, of course, allowed Ivens a familiar set for modernist pyrotechnics à la *Komsomol*. Even *The Monthly Film Bulletin's* (1950) hostile and anonymous Cold War reviewer recognised the artist's hand in the visually robust depiction of the blast furnace setting. Jadwiga's redemption is finally indicated, in true socialist realist shorthand, in her participation in surpassed industrial quotas, her tentative re-embrace of piano music, and a concluding smile that recalled Hazel's upon the first use of her electric oven but with possibly more historical materialist momentousness.

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As mentioned, the first and third segments offered the filmmakers the most opportunity for the development of the practice of personalisation. Jadwiga's character is perhaps Ivens's most fleshed out of the entire classical era (despite the linguistic impasse between citizen actress and crew). One assumes that Michelle's input was decisive in the development of this character's performance and that of her crane-operator gal pal (and in other proto-feminist touches throughout *First Years*). Production notes reveal both the tight professional scheduling and how focused and fastidious the casting process was, motivated both by socialist realism's 'representativeness' and psychological nuance. Jadwiga's boss in the steelworks lab, for example, was to be chosen with great care and on time!:

5/48: 'Casting requirements. One personal [sic] director. A friendly man of about 50 years. Fatherly. A man with authority, prestige. A little gray. To be found among leading people in Bobrik or Pokaj. The little man in the personnel office in Bobrik is no good, neither his assistant.

Mr. Kias, personal director in Pokaj is no good, not fatherly, a little

too young. But Mr. Kias can help you find the right person in Pokaj among the leading factory people, or maybe in a labour union or town office in New Bobrik or Bytim. The man should be capable to act and to speak a few lines. (see script.) Also should have no failure in his speaking. [...] Candidates for the part of personnel director to be shown to me between 12-1 on Wednesday. (Ivens, production notes, JIA)

As for the soundtrack, Duncan's commentary, building on her brilliant contribution to *Indonesia Calling*, is both writerly and cinematic throughout, well-measured and rarely overblown, clearly reflecting study of her mentor's *Spanish Earth* in terms of both terse poetry and sound-image dialectic/counterpoint: if voice-over commentaries had to exist in the three decades of the classical documentary it was good they included passages like the proto-feminist indirect discourse of 'Go ahead and grumble. What was good enough for mother isn't good enough for me. Catch me going back to the river!' (ascribed to women at Czech laundry machines that have now replaced riverbank washing by hand, thanks to the new economic plan). A small degree of synch-sound dialogue in the original languages is featured, most notably in the final Polish segment, carefully shot with synch-sound in certain key reconstructed sets (even this modest effort no doubt monopolised the state film technical resources), and the only moment that grates in the English version comes when the crane-operator in the blast furnace has her first-person thoughts chirpily voice-overed in a cockney accent.

As indicated, *First Years* circulated very little among audiences in the host countries or elsewhere, other than in the special premieres in Prague and Paris and Ivens retrospectives thereafter (the London reviewer must have seen it in Paris). Nevertheless, the modicum of critical response received helps situate the filmmakers' accomplishments. Project collaborators Duncan and Stanley Harrison (co-narrator of the English version) both published insider accounts that were not surprisingly highly laudatory, timed for the expected premieres and offering readers insights into the long-term research, contextual and participatory process behind the film. French reviewers were most responsive and, again, not surprisingly, ecstatic: Pierre Michaud (1953a, 1953b, 1953c) acknowledged the work's propagandist spirit, but praised its psychological penetration and its humanity, as well as the effect of making an individual in each case the symbol of a general national problem. Georges Sadoul (1950a, 1950b), emerging dean of Paris' left-wing critics and historian, in two articles in the PCF-friendly *Lettres françaises*, called Ivens 'one of the greatest living cineastes, who dominates, along with Flaherty, the history of the documentary', thereby cementing a long-term personal friendship – and soon an artistic collaboration (see *La Seine a rencontré Paris* [*The Seine Meets*

Paris, 1957, France, 32] below). His new film is ‘perhaps with *Zuiderzee* Joris Ivens’s most perfect film, by its sensitivity, its poetry, its humanity’. The British *Monthly Film Bulletin* (1950), no less caught up in the escalating ideological polarisation that even cultural magazines could not escape, provided an antidote to the praise, characterising the work as ‘1% film and 99% propaganda’ and as both ‘spiritual surrender [...] to the Party Line’, and ‘hollow rhetoric’. The anonymous reviewer called the commentary ‘naively pretentious’ and compared the whole ‘fatiguing’ experience to looking at recruiting posters for one and a half hours. In short, ‘the change of emotional climate and address seems to have divested [Ivens] of his personality as a filmmaker’. Still, admirable qualities were evident in the last section: ‘humanity in the figure of the woman’ and ‘cinematic strength’ in the foundry sequence. The debate that could have emerged among such critical voices was of course moot, as the film became a casualty less of ideological stress than of the timid *ressentiment* of cultural bureaucracies.

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No doubt one of the hindrances to reading the film 60 years after its star-crossed premiere is the vagueness of the line between solidarity documentary and the subgenre we might call the interloper parachute commission. Ivens’s group was sensitive to their contradictory status as foreigners airlifted into unfamiliar cultural and political territory – but this had been true of almost all of Ivens’s projects since *Misère au Borinage* (*Borinage*, 1934, Belgium, 34) and arguably defines the entire career of the ‘Flying Dutchman’ – their commitment to mentoring local artisans and crews must have seemed as simply the latest version of the usual delicate balance of sponsorship, intervention, and deference. Nevertheless, Ivens’s ultimate patrons, the Russians, whom the commentary treats with partial truth as liberators, were also imperialists no less than the Netherlands East Indies government that Ivens had signed on with and then repudiated so recently. Was his decision to try to negotiate the ambiguity and promote socialist ideals in this overdetermined context opportunist and wilfully blinded, as Schoots would have it, or simply, as Michelle would put it much later ‘terribly naïve’? Or something else? Was the good-faith effort to develop further the nonfiction-fiction hybrid of the personalised documentary, in the rearguard of an occupying army, too vulnerable to co-optation by the imposed smiling and hieratic two-dimensionality of ‘recruiting poster’ rhetoric to allow deeper documentary analysis and dramaturgy a chance? ‘Humanity’ was discerned as a feature of the film by the above-cited three critics at opposite ends of the Cold War ideological spectrum. The term was flexible/extensible enough to operate as code for both socialist realist programmatics and begrudging acknowledgment of the promise for rounded realist characterisation within the new hybrid format. In each case it disavows or complicates the film’s reading then as now as stereotypical propagandist

fodder for the Soviet machine, which overwhelmed the response of my test audience of Eastern European-diaspora friends in 2011. At mid-century, Stalinist culturecrats of the three host countries did not give critics and audiences the chance to negotiate these readings for themselves.

PEACE WILL WIN, FREUNDSCHAFT SIEGT, PEACE TOUR

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Upon the ill-fated release of *First Years*, journalists and critics offered news of Ivens's upcoming projects in Holland – one on music and another in a Dutch fishing village, another hybrid – as well as plans to go to Java in 1947 and a bit later to settle in France, but none of these plans were to come to pass. Instead, Ivens's roots and networks in Poland were becoming more substantial, given the relative success of his collaboration with Polish filmmakers on the *First Years* shoot and his intermittent teaching over two years beginning in 1948 at the new national film academy in Lodz (a lively oasis of relative liberalism and creative ferment, where his future co-director on *Peace Will Win*, Jerzy Bossak [1910-1989], was also teaching). Soon his new attachment would be consolidated by an apartment and a new wife and occasional collaborator, the Polish former resistance fighter and poet-translator Ewa Fiszer (1926-2000; almost 30 years his junior, wed in 1951).⁷ Accordingly, he followed the path of least resistance and accepted a 'congress film' commission from the state documentary studio in Warsaw and then in quick succession three more similar assignments based in East Germany. The first three of these led to what are undeniably 'minor' films but perhaps it was the frustration of having to plod through three bread-and-butter projects with complicated collaborative arrangements that somehow led to the inspiration of the fourth one, the magistral *Lied*.

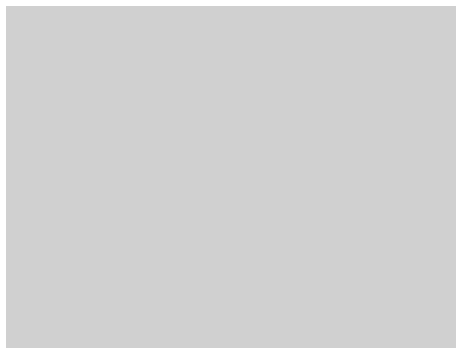
Peace Will Win was to be the official film of the Second International Peace Congress, a Cold War-era gathering organised by the Soviet-backed International Peace Council, to be held in November 1950 in Sheffield, England, a stronghold of the British Communist Party. The Clement Atlee Labour government (deeply implicated in the nuclear arms race, despite its socialist pretensions) claimed to be all for freedom of speech and assembly but, in fact, took a dim view of what it saw as a propaganda event being convened by a foreign superpower under its nose and denied visas to many of the international delegates. The organisers were forced to reconvene the assembly in Warsaw, presided over by the French Nobel-winning scientist Jean Frédéric Joliot-Curie, President of the Council, and convening its international array of Communist Party superstars in tow, from the South American writers Pablo Neruda and Jorge Amado, to Soviet cultural luminaries Dmitri Shostakovitch, Vsevo-

lod Pudovkin, Alexander Fadeyev, and Ilya Ehrenburg. The event and the film, co-directed with Jerzy Szulubski (aka Bossak), a Lodz colleague who had several documentary shorts under his belt, took on a special urgency because of the outbreak of the Korean War that same summer. The Soviets, who had been out-manoeuvred in the United Nations, seized on the UN-led and US-dominated intervention as a major focus of their arms-race propaganda, so Ivens and Szulubski's film has the conflict as its moral and rhetorical focus point.

After a compilation-based prologue detailing with appropriate outrage the global nuclear arms race and then the Sheffield fiasco, the 90-minute black-and-white documentary sticks relatively close to topic, with impassioned demonstrations, speeches, and low-key committee meetings all brimming with cheerful delegates. The itch to move outside the claustrophobic congress site is relieved periodically however: whether in street views of the city rebuilding in parallel to the congress organisation, or in endless smiling, garlanded arrivals and departures, or most notably in a stunning scene where African-American delegates silently tour the site of the Warsaw ghetto, and the soundtrack for once halts its clatter and matches their reverent response with its own silence.⁸

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53. *Pokójzdobędzieświat* [*Peace Will Win*] (1951): in a stunning scene standing apart from the endlessly arriving, cheerful delegates, African-American delegates silently tour the site of the Warsaw ghetto. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marcelline Loridan-Ivens.



A similar moment, with perhaps less affect because of its almost campy anticipation of Lodz student Andrzej Wajda's *Człowiek z marmuru* (*Man of Marble*, 1977, Poland, 165), produced a quarter century later, shows foreign delegates marching out onto the scaffolding outside the congress centre to meet on the job the bricklayers who are rebuilding Warsaw, only to have one cheerful Stakhanovite trouper show up moments later in suit and tie as a congress delegate. Much of the film is constructed in the static 'newsreel' mode that Ivens had first attempted to emulate in his Popular Front films of the late thirties. Another echo of the Popular Front work is a speech by Pak Den-Ai, the North

Korean delegate and 1950 Stalin Peace Prize laureate – in Russian, interestingly – which sets off the first of two atrocity interludes in classic *Spanish Earth* style, denouncing aerial bombardment and its victimisation of innocent lives. Conspicuously noteworthy is a vehement denunciation of the Allies' use of napalm against civilians, and the film occupies an ominous place in documentary history for that reason alone. On-site sound recording was a still awkward documentary technology in 1950, especially away from the high-tech panaceas of Paris and New York, though Ivens was very happy to access all of the resources of the embryonic Polish film industry and placed two cameras on the podium in order to provide cover. *Peace Will Win*'s undeniable static quality is seemingly anchored both in the filmmakers' reliance on such synch-sound 'newsreel' set-ups for the speeches and in the potentially stultifying effect of any closely monitored, politically charged commission. This was even more of a danger in the 'congress film' subgenre that had theretofore produced one illustrious predecessor, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, Riefenstahl, 1935, Germany, 120) and has otherwise been relegated then as well as now to the trash bins of documentary history.⁹ Still, the co-filmmakers, despite the sometimes awkwardness of their collaboration (purportedly linguistic), invested much creative energy in their thankless task: one flourish they were proud of was the sound edit of Beethoven's Fifth laid over Pak's speech, fading dramatically into an emotional ovation for the diminutive white-kimonoed woman. This is not to say that the other oratory was ineffective. In a film that is basically about people talking to each other, many memorable talkers and much eloquent rhetoric are transmitted, from the legendary 'Red Dean' of Canterbury Hewlett Johnson,¹⁰ to anti-colonialist figures from the emerging 'third world',¹¹ such as Guinean unionist and future president Sékou Touré alongside his peers from Syria to Vietnam, who more than hold their own amid the Nobel prizewinners (and take the stage of world documentary for possibly the first time – post *Indonesia Calling*, that is). The simple discourse of peace must

54. *Pokójdobędzieświat* [*Peace Will Win*] (1951): the filmmakers raised oratory by Pak Den-Ai, the North Korean delegate, above the static 'newsreel' mode. Even *The New York Times* was struck by her 'passionate utterances'. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



be taken at face value in a post-war decade that saw the planet's first graze with nuclear annihilation and the birth of the 'Ban the Bomb' movement: the voices are often stirring, all the more since the line-up includes many women and people of colour dislodging the usual stuffy white-men-in-suits stereotype. In moments such as Soviet novelist Ilya Ehrenburg's declamation, *Peace Will Win* transcends the paranoid and cynical bureaucratic posturing of the Cold War:

An enormous weight has fallen on our shoulders. It's not our own destiny that we're thinking of now. Upon us weighs the responsibility for all of the children of London, the children of Moscow, of Paris and Beijing, the children who play among the skyscrapers of New York and those who play among the ruins of Korea. Upon us weighs the responsibility for all those who are in love, for all the books of the world, for all the cities, for all the gardens. War is not the midwife of history, it's the maker of angels that destroys the flower of humanity. I am for peace, not only with the America of Paul Robeson and Howard Fast, but also for peace with the America of Mr. Truman and [US Secretary of State] Mr. Acheson.

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It is not surprising that the film saw a second career during the Vietnam War, minus its topical compilation prelude, but nothing is known of this revival except the existence of the 16mm prints.¹²

Unlike *First Years*, *Peace Will Win* can be said to have had a modest career, both in theatres and in progressive non-theatrical spaces, in English in the US and the Commonwealth (with a version in English by aforementioned Communist novelist and author of the 1951 novel *Spartacus* Howard Fast [Greliner, 1965]), and in French as well as in Polish, German, Russian, Chinese, and other bloc languages (Lacazette, 1951). In the US it was distributed thanks to Artkino, the left-wing outfit who had handled Soviet and radical films in the US progressive network since the 1930s. Two New York City reviewers greeted its January 1952 premiere with reviews that predictably toed the US Cold War line while offering refreshingly open-minded insights. In the face of this 'propaganda', *The Herald Tribune's* Joe Pihodna (1952) tempered his hostile boredom with the concessions that the 'candid and illuminating' shots of the speakers held his attention and that Ivens's newsreel shots were 'surprisingly good'. His counterpart at *The New York Times*, Howard Thompson ([1951] 1970), shared Pihodna's reserves about a film in which 'plenty is said and little done' but also his strong impression of Pak, 'whose passionate utterances are underlined with a shrewd montage of bombers, obviously American, and the bloody, fly-covered corpses of Korean children'. However, Thompson located Ivens's real accomplishment 'in his camera's concentration on faces, not only on the rostrum but in the hall itself', and was also struck by the scene of the

African Americans viewing the ghetto rubble. French critics were predictably more adulatory while back in Poland, Jerzy Toeplitz (1951, quoted in Schoots [1995] 2000, 234) referred to 'a complete artistic triumph'. While Toeplitz may have slightly overstated things in deference to his Lodz colleague, we should not forget that this film was an accomplished entry in an under-examined documentary cycle of this period whose commitment to continuance of the human species and the planet was no less fervent than the eco-political cycle of the twenty-first century.¹³

Looking back in the last decade of his life, Ivens was not proud of this commission, something neither to hide nor boast of (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 234), and even at the time confided to Michelle (1951, quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 234) that it was 'not a wonderful film'. These perspectives may be understandable on both counts, but resourceful and effective journeywork on a commission tightrope does not require shame and Ivens had known this for decades.

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The next two works in the congress film cycle do not hold up as well. Hard on the heels of the victory of peace, came the triumph of friendship. In June 1951, still editing *Peace Will Win*, Ivens came to Berlin to launch what would become an intermittent five-year, five-film relationship with the East German state film enterprise DEFA (Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft),¹⁴ all the while keeping one foot in Warsaw, where he had a flat and, after October, a wife. His new topic was the International Festival for Youth and Students, which was to unfold over two weeks in August in East Berlin, with 66 countries participating. What attracted Ivens in this ambitious co-production between DEFA and Mosfilm? Its sponsorship by the party offices in Berlin and Moscow? The opportunity to co-direct with Ivan Pyryev, director the previous year of the 'Magicolour' musical *Kubanskie kazaki* (*Cossacks of the Kuban*, 114), one of the few Soviet popular hits of the Zhdanov period? The unprecedentedly massive deployment of resources that would be at his command (24 operators, twelve German and twelve Russian, each with a journalist assigned to him to seek out good images [Grelier, 1965], a 600-member crew from set designers to drivers installed in as many as 30 offices, a fleet of more than 20 vehicles, a crane [!] and even a medical base [Jordan, 1999, 90]? Perhaps it was simply the chance to work. Period. Offers were not coming in, fantasies of filming in Western Europe notwithstanding, and Ivens had always been open, positive, and pragmatic about commissions. Still, it is small wonder that Ivens remembered an 'enormous machine', feeling that he was 'losing touch with reality', and being reduced to the role of 'production management' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 237).

And then there was the 100 kilometres of Agfa colour stock. Did Ivens the technical university graduate see the chance to make his first film in colour as an offer he couldn't refuse, the last of his generation to take up the challenge?

Not only Pyryev, but most of Ivens's major contemporaries in fiction in the West had recently broken into colour,¹⁵ but documentary was understandably harder to push into the fray. Kodachrome 16mm had existed since the 1930s, the most important colour format for amateur filmmaking and small-scale documentary work, but mainstream A-level colour work was still in the experimental phase because of the lag in the production of sensitive enough stocks. Case in point: the National Film Board of Canada's big colour breakthrough *Royal Journey* (David Bairstow, 54) surfaced a year before the *Freundschaft siegt* (*Friendship Triumphs*, 1952, USSR/DDR, 100) shoot in 1951, a full-blown 'news-reel' monstrosity that shares *Freundschaft's* propensity for capturing a lot of costumery and hand-waving, deploying the omnipresent Princess Elizabeth rather than the determining absence of Joseph Stalin (visible only on huge posters proceeding through street demonstrations), both films charming with their ambitious fawning, stiffness, and 'innocence'.

Resisting his production manager demotion, Ivens developed ambitious plans to humanise the event with very Ivensian individual narratives around the congress participants, to curb the Riefenstahl temptation through a materialist grasp of the lives and socio-cultural contexts affected. This plan, a trial run for *Lied*, a template more successfully realised the second time round, involved a Julian-like episode around a Breton fisher youth who would end up writing home from Berlin about the congress diet, thereby exploring the logistics of feeding such a mass. This would leave the 23 other crews free to cover other aspects of the preparations for the event, including a few other personalised vignettes and aspects of local conditions and travel to Berlin, which were to take up almost half the running time of the 95-minute film. If the stress of being tied down by colour technology and Cominform bureaucracy wasn't enough, pure grandiosity got the better of Ivens and Pyryev, and the three-month edit in Moscow, devoted ultimately to 55 hours of footage over which they had had little control, could not fix the messy web of superficiality, compromise, and complicity. If hostile Western cold warriors had undertaken to imagine their ultimate stereotype of Stalinist propaganda, this film would be it: with almost no trace of Ivens's hoped-for personal vignettes, *Freundschaft* is rooted in deliriously pastoral, socialist realist landscapes from the delegates' homelands (including the Agfa-hued national costumes) and boarding and disembarking from planes and trains, frantic bricklaying, waving, torch-bearing, running, folk dancing, rallying, clapping, chanting, marching, and hand-shaking, doves flying, all under choral music and an alternately soothing and frenzied voice-over.

55. *Freundschaft siegt* (1952): happy delegates and the 'triumph of logistics over art, an unappetising banquet of largesse in image, music and text'. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © DEFA-Stiftung/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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The mosaic is interrupted a few times by strident newsreel interludes about West German and capitalist warmongering: West German 'fascism is rearing its ugly head, armed with the most modern American weapons', unemployment and poverty prevails, and 'the flags of the new democratic Germany are now flying here. But they do not fly over all of Berlin, because the capital of our fatherland is divided. In the East, the German people rule, in West Berlin it is the American occupiers'. The climax of the film is a visual and aural acknowledgement of Stalin, '*der beste Freund der Jugend*', otherwise represented only in posters, and in a final coda of 30,000 voices intoning the dictator's name – as if to ward off (or welcome?) Uncle Joe's death less than a year after the film's premiere in April 1952.¹⁶ The presence of the younger generation of political leadership may be more significant however than the frozen icon of the mustachioed figurehead, and recurring dynamic oratory by future Euro-Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer is symptomatically prominent. Moreover, according to Jordan (1999, 92), Ivens exceptionally 'retained the deeper things': for example when a British woman who lost her brother in Korea meets a Korean man on a Berlin street, the Korean touches her gently and a smile ensues: 'the camera stays with these two people who are speaking, and [Ivens] recognizes a scene in it'. Otherwise, it may well be to Ivens's credit that his *Triumph of the Will* is far from Riefenstahl's hermetically sealed, steel-clad choreography, but rather a chaotic kaleidoscope of movement and colour with very little of the screen time devoted to the actual on-the-verge-of-anarchy proceedings in the new Walter-Ulbricht-Stadium. In short, if *Peace Will Win* in comparison was 'all talk and no action', with the saving graces of eloquence, ideas, principles, ideals, and passions, *Freundschaft* offered mostly action and almost no talk, and moreover according to Ivens's DEFA colleague Jordan (1999, 90) the 'aesthetics of their era', the 'triumph of logistics over art, an unappetizing banquet of largesse in image, music, and text'. Largesse indeed! The parade of national delegations all flaunting local costume and dance moves, especially

from the emerging ‘third world’ from Trinidad to Vietnam, and the prophetic denunciation of ‘Drink Coca-Cola!’ imperialism that surfaces as a motif, themselves constitute a stirring time capsule that more than vindicates the 2015 restoration.

56. *Freundschaft siegt* (1952): Ivens ‘retained the deeper things’ in this scene of a British woman who lost her brother in Korea meeting a Korean man in Berlin. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © DEFA- Stiftung/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

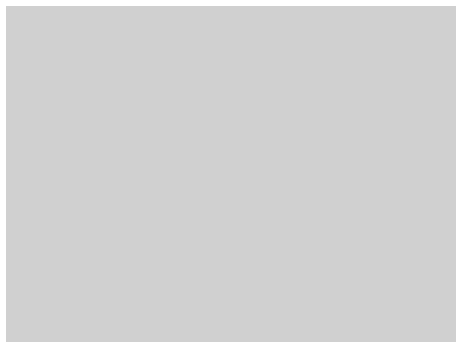


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And if *Peace Will Win* and *Freundschaft* were indeed Ivens’s negative *Triumph of the Will*, one might wryly wonder whether his next assignment, *Wyscig Pokó-ju Warszawa-Berlin-Praga* (*Peace Tour 1952*, 1952, Poland/DDR, 53) was his counter-*Olympia* (Riefenstahl, 1938, 239). His second colour film, also a multiple-camera co-production, this time between DEFA and Warsaw, *Peace Tour* is basically a reportage of a bicycle race in the spring of 1952 between the three Soviet-bloc capitals, undertaken according to Schoots ([1995] 2000, 240) in order to remain closer to ‘home’. If much of the film is taken up with shots of the racers, from a vehicle tracking ahead of them or behind them, or bird’s-eye views (larded with observational footage of cyclists at ease or of spectators), much of the discourse is around the three reconstructing societies en route, with special attention to proud images of the ‘new Warsaw’ (again, lots of brick-laying). Both sports community and political community are accented, along with the obligatory peace theme: ‘from here to the Pacific Ocean, we have no borders: people don’t think of war but of a peaceful life’. All leads up to a ceremonial climax in the same East Berlin stadium that Ivens by now knew all too well. Ivens recruited Fiszer to write the commentary, which Schoots ([1995] 2000, 240) terms a futile attempt to involve her in his work since the marriage was in perennial crisis throughout the decade it was to last. The final result apparently met the producers’ objectives since Ivens carried on at DEFA, but Ivens confided in Michelle (1952, quoted in Schoots ([1995] 2000, 240) that the outcome was ‘a light film without any sophistication’ and even Grelier (1965, 94) finds the 45-minute work ‘a little laborious’.¹⁷ The 2015 DVD restoration

by DEFA Foundation however offers a handsome reminder of its enthusiasm and the intensity of its discourses around world peace. Indeed the film bears useful comparison with the exactly contemporaneous Canadian stop-motion peace fable *Neighbours* (1952, 9), by Ivens's friend at the National Film Board, Norman McLaren, not only in their shared declamation of the word peace in many world languages, but also in their vivid registration of the still unhealed trauma of war.

57. *Wyciąg Pokóju Warszawa-Berlin-Praga* [*Peace Tour 1952*] (1952): 'a light film without any sophistication' but a vivid registration of the still unhealed trauma of war. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © DEFA- Stiftung/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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In fact, looking at the first four quite different 'Cold War films' in their totality, one can perceive a common dynamic: in all, cheerfully utopian international communities are shaped by a deep structure of not only communist politics but also the processing of the trauma of wartime violation, partition, and reconstruction, sealed with Euro-Communist critical adulation. One can dismiss such films as delusional and paranoid Kremlin-style blustering, brinkmanship, and bombast, salted with the desperate search for legitimacy by the Warsaw Pact regimes, especially East Germany; discourses of the kind that my and subsequent generations in the West were trained to block. But is a scarred generation's desire for peace ever cynical? After all, General MacArthur had advocated nuclear deployment in Korea and given the filmmakers a key rhetorical tool that they didn't need to fabricate. Ivens's letters and diaries, uncovered by Schoots ([1995] 2000), brim with both cinematic ideas and the fear of war. Rebounding from the humiliation of *First Years*, harnessing the positive energy as well as the 'straitjacket' (Taylor, 1973, 93) of socialist realism, and the positive energy of young people coming to him for training at Lodz as well as performing enthusiasm for his camera in East Berlin, Ivens responded to the challenge with his traditional resourcefulness. After the sad ending to *First Years*, little was made of these ideas and they must be seen as a dress rehearsal for a major work around the corner.

LIED DER STRÖME

1952 was a busy year with never a dull moment for the 53-year-old Ivens. January had seen the New York premiere of *Peace Will Win* (not that the US authorities would have let Ivens attend), April saw the premiere of *Freundschaft* in Berlin, while the *Peace Tour* shoot soon wrapped up, including footage of May-day celebrations, and entered post-production. The next month Ivens was invited to Berlin for discussions with DEFA about a major documentary on the Third World Congress of the Soviet-backed World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) scheduled to take place in Vienna in October of 1953. Meanwhile, according to Schoots ([1995] 2000, 241), lots of more personal film ideas were in the air – in Poland (about the fishery and coastal industry, about the Vistula River), in the DDR (about German unity), even in Italy (a trip there at the end of the year included discussions with CPI counterparts about Calabrian workers, and then with the 33-year-old Gillo Pontecorvo, *Peace Will Win* and *Freundschaft* contributor and Italian Resistance veteran, about another river documentary, on the Po). An idea for a documentary on the relationship of Dutch and Italian painting in the 16th to 17th century also emerged. But none of these possibilities went anywhere except for the ‘river’ concept and the Vienna commission, which were soon to fuse in creative alchemy.

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In the DDR political and economic unrest led to a congress in July of Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED, Socialist Unity Party), the DDR’s ruling party, which ominously opted for increased Sovietisation of the satellite state, and increased state control not only of the cinema but also of the economy, which led directly to the following year’s June 16 workers’ uprising, three months after the death of Stalin. Ivens’s Dutch and Italian projects notwithstanding, and despite his consciousness of a ‘relative freedom’ that entailed ‘some restrictions’ on his self-expression, Ivens (interview with author, April 1978) recalled ‘sincere enthusiasm’ for his Eastern European work. He remained positive about commissions, feeling ‘that as an artist you have to think more than the other people, higher than the other people who order the film’. His utterances of the time revealed him wholly on board with the socialist realist project as a whole, which he praised in 1951 in the Federation’s French publication, *Mouvement syndical mondial* (Lacazette, 1951) in relation to the positive experience of teaching working-class filmmakers in Poland. Still, he felt apprehensive about becoming the ‘Congress man’, of playing the court photographer role (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 234) and at first resisted the Vienna project that would soon become *Lied*. Offers from both DEFA and the WFTU were too appealing to refuse however, especially when the WFTU General Secretary Louis Saillant and Committee President Guiseppe Di Vittorio quickly accepted his counterproposal. Ivens’s pitch was

to use the Congress as a pretext to create a grass-roots epic about work, workers, and union organising around the planet, emphasising what would soon become known as the 'third world' and crystallising in thematic narratives around six of the world's great rivers. A climactic final movement would centre on a seventh symbolic river, the movement of the revolutionary working classes, but the Federation downplayed this angle. The actual reporting of the congress would only take 20 minutes of a feature-length project.

For their part DEFA seemed to realise the limitations of the 'giant machine' approach that had made everyone unhappy (except the cheering onscreen 'youth') with *Freundschaft*, and offered a scaled-down project with less infrastructure: only two rooms, one telephone and a car, and above all the congenial Hans Wegner (1919-1984) as production head. An intimate and very productive working relationship would evolve with Wegner, as well as Ivens's first biography in 1965. Moreover, two of Ivens's close friends were 'high-ranking apparatchiks', and appropriate lubrication was anticipated and no doubt delivered (Jordan, 1999). The fourth congress film soon began to feel like the first major Ivens-initiated project since *First Years*, with the theme of work and union organising assuming a positive energy beyond the reactive, top-down declamatory thrust of *Peace Will Win*, *Freundschaft*, and *Peace Tour*. By June 1953 (ironically a few weeks before the uprising), a one-year contract with DEFA finalised the project that would take up the next year and a half of his life. The gathering momentum would result in 'the most personal film I made in the East', 'the most lyrical of my entire career' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 242), 'one of the largest productions in the history of the documentary cinema' (Bakker, 1999, 41) and by majority agreement then and now (except for Schoots of course) the one unambiguous artistic achievement of this period. If nothing else, *Lied* might be considered one of the lovingly luminous swan songs of black-and-white 35mm documentary monumentality on the eve of the 'less-is-more' direct cinema explosion and 16mm.

This time, even though Ivens was involved directly in the cinematography in the DDR only, his role involved much more than 'production manager', and can be termed 'creative producer/orchestrator' alongside his official credit of 'director'. The original *Freundschaft* concept of grass-roots narrative and thematic threads contributing to a master exposition was finally taken seriously and now developed and implemented as fully as possible. Ivens and Wegner assembled a team of local filmmakers from around the world, many of whom Ivens knew from his travels and leftist networking over the years. Each received general instructions to film local preparations for the congress, especially single delegates in local contexts, 'where he works, what he does, how he lives, etc.' before and after Vienna (Leyda, 1964, 74).¹⁸ On the level of micro-artistic practice, Ivens would integrate archival images with these on-site mate-

rials. His talents as a compilationist, demonstrated in *Borinage* and *Nieuwe Gronden*, as well as in the World War II American projects, would be tested and confirmed here on a whole new scale.

At DEFA a multinational team was set up (DEFA documentary institutions seemed packed with expatriates and migrants like Ivens himself, as if the Ulbricht regime could not trust German communists to carry out such important work). The roster of principal collaborators was headed by Vladimir Pozner, Ivens's old friend from Moscow, Paris, and Los Angeles, collaborator on the script undertaken that summer, and writer of the commentary once the shape of the final film was clear (in the official credits Ivens shared top-billing authorship credit with Pozner, though not the directing credit). Also on board were assistant directors Joop Huisken (1901-1979), Ivens's compatriot and the erstwhile CAPI salesperson and collaborator on *Regen* (*Rain*, 1929, Netherlands, 16) and *Zuiderzee* who had emerged from a Nazi Stalag to become one of the leading DDR documentarists, viewed by his colleague Jordan as an exemplar of political and artistic accountability to worker subjects but who now accepted a backseat role to his old mentor; and the Frenchman Robert Menoz (aka Robert Ménégoz, born 1926, who had just finished a documentary short on the Paris Commune). As cinematographers Frenchman Sacha Vierny, who would shortly collaborate with Resnais and Marker, and elder East German Erich Nitzschmann, who had worked with Riefenstahl on *Olympia*, first came to Ivens's mind 30 years later, while the Ivens Foundation website mentions two additional cameramen Anatoly Koloschin and Maximilian Scheer, presumably Soviet and East German respectively; finally Ella Ensink (1897-1968), a veteran of the Weimar and Nazi periods of German cinema, quietly marshaled the editing process and would continue working with Ivens/Pozner on *Mein Kind* (*My Child*, Vladimir Pozner and Alfons Machalz, 1955, DDR, 22) and *Die Windrose* (*The Windrose*, Cavalcanti et al., 1957, DDR, 110).

This seasoned and prestigious team was in place, but it may have been the anonymous contributors in the field who stole the show. New visual material from six continents was at the centre of the 75 hours of rushes, alongside abundant archival material from both western and Soviet-bloc archives, plus recycled images from Ivens's Dutch productions, as well as from *Borinage*, *The 400 Million* (1939, USA, 53), *Indonesia Calling*, and even *First Years* and *Peace Will Win*. Judging from the final selection and production documents, the rushes submitted from the cinematographers in the field were from Australia, Austria, Brazil, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Sweden, the UK, and US; the still colonial areas of Algeria, French West Africa (Cameroon¹⁹), Nigeria, and Sudan; the recently 'liberated' India, Indonesia, and Egypt; the Soviet-sphere countries of China, DDR, Poland, USSR, North Korea (post-armistice [Panmunjong]) and Vietnam (pre-Dien Bien Phu); and with

lesser presence – i.e. only a shot or two each – from Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Iran, Mongolia, Romania, and Spain. Most of these jurisdictions had communist parties with a strong underground presence (South Africa, US) or legitimate visibility within the public sphere (India, the Euro-Communist zone, the Soviet sphere). Cold war security precautions in the non-bloc countries have ensured that the exactness of the sources and even the distinction between archival and original imagery cannot often be verified. (The foregoing list, minus those jurisdictions possibly relying exclusively on archival materials [Nigeria?²⁰], probably constitute the 32 designated source countries.) Little is known about the production of the footage from the field except what is on the screen, but over the years the filmmakers let out anecdotal tidbits alongside the predictable allusions to funding problems, customs challenges, and clandestine shipping of rushes: amateur union cameramen were the contributors from Australia whereas professionals produced the images in both China and Japan; prison shots were obtained clandestinely from pre-revolutionary Cuba²¹; the Soviet material was very ‘pink’, with uniform and ‘boring’ urban shots from Berlin to Vladivostok, and this selection thus emphasised Ivens’s usual last resort, never boring schoolchildren; the two American cameramen had some of their footage destroyed; the Iranian contribution was strong but understandably only shows figures’ backs²² (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978).

The final *Lied* – epic yet lyrical, materialist yet affecting, outraged but optimistic, vividly cinematic but with a fine-tuned and efficient deployment of the spoken word, anchored in the local but envisaging the global – shows Ivens inspired once again and in control. The 93-minute feature, more symphonic than song-like in its encyclopedic scope and complex structure, interpolates a meandering essayistic safari along the six selected world rivers – in order, the Mississippi, Ganges, Nile, Yangtze, Volga, and Amazon – with thematic excursions first celebrating labour (the Marxian theme of the human transformation of nature), then exposing capitalist exploitation and misery, next a movement of approximately a half hour on the Congress itself, tracing local preparations for it around the world, the gathering in Vienna, and the follow-up back home. Then come short extrapolations of the motifs of bread and the land, the arms race and capitalism, segueing into a utopian glimpse of socialism in practice in China and the Soviet sphere. Finally the struggles of the workers’ movements against war, hunger, and state/police oppression progress to the triumphant surge forward of the workers’ movements, the seventh river as originally pitched by Ivens.

Three of the most developed clusters from the field cinematographers were from Africa: striking but somewhat stiff *mise-en-scènes* of union drives, workers’ oratory, and the election of congress delegates in Cameroon and

Algeria (Cameroonian fieldworkers are summoned to their organising meeting by drums!), and urban and rural shots of labour and police harassment in Egypt, focusing on irrigation, agriculture, and the cotton industry, as well as foreign militarisation.²³

58. *Das Lied der Ströme* (1954): incorporating unique footage by African cinematographers in the field, such as *mise-en-scènes* of agricultural union drives. © DEFA-Stiftung/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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The India segments are also strong and well developed, including rallies, meetings, and demonstrations (most from West Bengal, where the state communist party was poised to take electoral power), as well as shots of famine and brutal manual labour (barefoot rickshaw-pullers and elderly women carrying punishing headloads of stones), all deploying the moral outrage that is a characteristic of local left discourses following the Great Famine and Partition of the 1940s.

Intercutting archival footage and the new material surprisingly seamlessly, Ivens revisits most of his familiar motifs, from the analysis and celebration of manual work to the exploration, both lyrical and metaphorical, of the elements, especially water, not surprisingly, and earth. River iconography has, of course, an almost archetypal resonance in 20th-century documentary. While Musser (2002) sees echoes in Ivens's river motif of Pudovkin and the Filmliga adventure around *Mat* (*Mother*, 1926, USSR, 90) 25 years earlier, Ivens's metaphorical figuration of rivers also references Vertov and Ivens's own 1930s work on both sides of the Atlantic. With regard to the rivers as vehicles of history, Jordan (1999, 104) helpfully connects *Lied* to another major trend at DEFA, where a cycle of historical compilation films emerged shortly afterwards, modelled to no small extent on Ivens's and Pozner's film. These projects were responding to the imperatives of denazification and socialist construction of course but also no doubt to the frustration engendered by repeated futile efforts to second-guess the ever-tightening ship of state on touchy contemporary domestic political agendas, especially post-June 16. The year of *Lied*'s

release, Ivens reportedly had a supervisory hand in the Thorndikes' *Du und mancher Kamerad* (*You and Many a Comrade*, 1956, 110), which Jordan (1999, 96) considers among the most successful and affecting of these historiographical efforts in the way it 'discovered the internal force of archive material'. Indeed, *Lied* should not be considered in isolation from its complex intertext.

Ivens's old friend Leyda (1910-1988)²⁴ was the first to situate *Lied* as a masterwork of the editor's art, specifically of compilation, and he was right on both the macro and micro level. Nine elegant aqueous-motif interludes mortar the movements of the film together. Within the movements, the ever tactful Leyda (1964, 77) praises Ivens's and Ensink's ability to produce spontaneity in even 'over-polished Soviet footage and the arranged Chinese shots', and their ability to bring 'maximum clarity' out of the amateur footage. Not surprisingly, rather than the fluid narrative and expository passages that are the architecture of the film, invariably connecting local detail to larger plan, it is easy to note the moments of virtuosity or even flamboyance. Leyda (1964, 77), for example, praises the skilful orchestration of the Mississippi's flooding of its banks as if in angry response to the racial violence on its shore.²⁵ One transition that stunned me the first and every subsequent time I've seen the film comes in the Amazon movement where a rainforest tribesman kindling fire with his 'primitive' bow device produces the mushroom cloud of a nuclear blast (perhaps the Soviet H-bomb test that had rocked the world as Ivens and Pozner were working on the script in 1953), a miraculously concise denunciation of the misuse of human productive technology that then segues into a critique of post-Korea arms-race geopolitics.

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59. *Das Lied der Ströme* (1954): an eloquent edit in the Amazon movement, from a rainforest tribesman kindling fire to the mushroom cloud of a nuclear blast. DVD frame capture. DVD frame capture. © DEFA-Stiftung/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

For Leyda (1964, 144), in short, '[a] chance to re-see his *Song of the Rivers* reinforced my admiration for it as a textbook of documentary idea, of cutting and selection, of reconciling breadth and detail, and of compilation'.

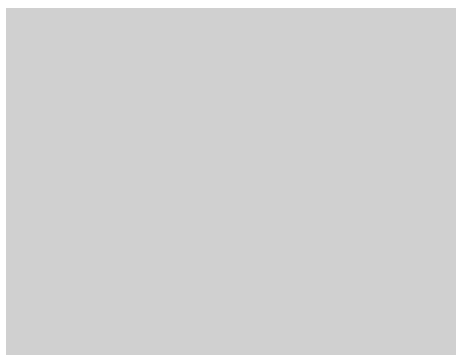
The editing cannot be considered apart from the voice-over commentary of course, and Pozner's brilliance is soon evident in this respect, officially joining the line of talented writers from Hemingway to Duncan who had honoured Ivens's work since the 1930s with their creative counterpoint. Grelier (1965, 34) and Jordan (1999, 94) are among those who have praised Pozner's restraint and imagination: the former admires the priority given to the images, and points specifically to the Indian footage of porters, while the latter praises the way Pozner allows spectators to create their own narrative, to join him in questioning images in an abstract rhetorical way, 'general' and 'planetary': 'Pozner's commentary registers the swings, connections, and meanings of the images and sequences, and develops a new concept for the combining of image with text'. Nevertheless Jordan (personal communication, 2015) modulated the enthusiasm years later by observing that the raw material for Pozner to process diminishes in interest as the film advances. For his part, Pozner was rightly proud of how evocatively he was able to explain through a simple question the relatively abstract Marxian concept of surplus value over footage of South African gold miners: 'In one year, a miner extracts 900 grams of gold. Where do the 800 grams of gold go that he extracts but does not keep? If we have the possibility in a film to explain what surplus value is, and moreover even more important things from Marx, in a way understood by millions, we must do it. Of course, it's not a question of showing it in a primitive way but in a simple form' (Ivens, [1955] 1965).

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In the coffee-table book that accompanied the release of the film Pozner elegantly describes the extent to which he had drawn inspiration for his short-hand commentary poetry from banners:

I wanted it to be short, simple, and very repetitious. I had found my model while watching films of workers' demonstrations, meeting, strikes, while reading what the workers themselves had written on the flags and banderoles the police were trying to wrest from them, what they had written on the walls of slums, on the entrances of struck factories and also on the huge streamers in Red Square in Moscow, in Tienanmen Square in Beijing, in Constitution Square in Warsaw, and Marx-Engels Square in Berlin. I had Japanese posters translated, Romanian banners, Burmese streamers, Mongolian slogans, and discovered without surprise the universal language of the workers. 'Wir fordern Lohnerhöhung', Austria said, and the echo came from Cosa Rica: 'Luchamos para una alza de salarios'. 'Libérez Henri Martin', France was demanding and Cuba 'Para la libertad

60. *Das Lied der Ströme* (1954): a Bombay demonstration. Commentary writer Pozner drew inspiration for his commentary from the universal poetry of workers' protest signs. The visible fragment of the Marathi-language placard demands "accept it!" [a wage hike? a contract?]. DVD frame capture. © DEFA-Stiftung/CAPi Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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de Lazaro Peña'. 'We are hungry', Algiers said, 'Our children are hungry', Bombay said. 'We want work', Dublin said, 'We want a better life', Djakarta said, and to all of them Toronto responded: 'Justice'. Thus from demand to demand the commentary wrote itself. (Ivens and Pozner, 1957, 19)

Critics would often single out Pozner's work for praise: the politically unaligned *Image et son's* (1964, 9) admiration was based specifically on its alternation of tone, 'dry, tender, satirical, etc.'

As for the second layer on the soundtrack, the music, much was made at the time of the contribution of Paul Robeson (1898-1976) to the film. The 55-year-old performer delivers verses of the theme song over each of the river movements, and then does so again in the finale, backed by chorus. The narrative of the marooned and passportless Red Scare martyr recording it a capello in his brother's Harlem parsonage made the rounds,²⁶ and the performance with orchestral accompaniment added retroactively in East Berlin is indeed charismatic as well as a propaganda coup. However, Brecht's lyrics seem to have been badly translated by Robeson's American colleague, metrically awkward, and what is worse not fully audible in existing DVD versions of the film. The original German version featured famous Brechtian singer Ernst Busch, which presumably works better. As for Shostakovich's anthem-like song and accompanying score, it is catchily populist and melodious, larded out with recycled motifs from the already canonical wartime Eighth Symphony (1943) and his 1949 Zhdanovian oratorio *Song of the Forests*. Admittedly overbearing in spots, it allows lots of breathers and lives up to its task of monumentality despite its unfortunate, but perhaps symptomatic, echoes of the Protestant hymn tune 'Beneath the Cross of Jesus'.

Lied bowed in East Berlin's Babylon theatre on 17 September 1954, with the full DDR political hierarchy present, in Vienna a month later, and at the Karlovy Vary festival later in the fall. The self-congratulatory reports of mass

audiences reached thereafter presume systematic union screenings and non-theatrical circulation in left political organisations around the world (such as the Realist Film Association in Melbourne, where it was screened in January and March, 1956). But such reports unfortunately paper over uphill battles faced by the filmmakers in theatrical distribution channels – as usual. Jordan (1999) reveals that *Lied* was not distributed theatrically in the DDR after the premiere, but is not clear whether this was due to bureaucratic inertia or the ambiguous political shift towards the film industry that he locates earlier in 1954 (it was seemingly nothing personal around Ivens, for he remained the most honoured filmmaker in the DDR over the next decade, with several retrospectives beginning in 1956 and many other honours); two years later, a repeat of the same distribution debacle happened to Huisken's important film *China – Land zwischen Gestern und Morgen* (*China, Land between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, 1956, 72). At least the silence did not go unnoticed by civil society: the Academy of Arts, of which Ivens was a corresponding member, protested 'it is the most humiliating incident in our documentary film history. This lack of appreciation for Joris Ivens's *Lied*, one of the most important works in the history of the international documentary film' (Jordan, 1999).

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Things were no better in the West: the UK and France were both brutal in their censorship, both presumably because of anti-colonial discourses. The former trimmed one-third of the running time of the film, and the latter's list of required cuts took up eight pages single-spaced, leading to an all-too-familiar tone in Pozner's letter to his colleague:

There remained the sentences we had to delete. We started to fade them out, once, twice, three times, but the truth doesn't let itself be rubbed out, facts are a stubborn thing, we lowered the speaker's voice, but one still heard it afterwards, only a whisper was left, but more revealing than a shout. Thus, we were forced, death in our hearts, to scrape the emulsion. The print was wounded: it's the first casualty of the great battle just beginning to show the film, to get the film seen. (Pozner, letter to Ivens, 1955, JIA)

In the US the film was never shown in any format, and Robeson (1958) was only able to see it at a Canadian screening, presumably in a Toronto left organisation (where he performed in 1956). The 1978 Berkeley screening during Ivens's and Loridan's tour of *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, 1976, France, 718) was likely the first ever screening in that country.

Such problems did not hamper an unsurprisingly polarised critical reception upon *Lied*'s release. Paris's left-leaning *Esprit* was the most extravagant,

praising the film's collective provenance and thereby comparing the film to medieval cathedrals, and citing *Battleship Potemkin* as a work worthy of comparison. The critic specifically mentioned the filmmakers' ability to sustain the film's opening 'souffle' due to its strong editing and 'formal audacity' (Legotien, 1955). The Dutch centrist newspaper *de Volkskrant* echoed Ivens's current disfavour with the country's regime, arguing that Ivens had paid for his communist allegiance with his artistic abilities, but in terms that are not wholly unfavourable: 'primitively exciting' and 'naively brutal' (*de Volkskrant* 1954).

382 | As political cinema, *Lied* tends to have a rough ride with post-New Left viewers in the West who take on the task of providing a final retroactive judgment. Even Ivens's sympathetic ex-East German ex-colleague Jordan (1999, 94) offered a fatal diagnosis: 'the motive for the film and its progressive credentials are outdated'. Yet 'outdatedness' – ephemerality – it can be argued are a characteristic by definition of any committed film, as I argued long ago, and the core of any 'aesthetics of political use-value,' 'the common fund of our activist legacy' (Waugh, 1999, 175):

Instead of meeting the criteria of durability, abstraction, ambiguity, individualism, uniqueness, formal complexity, deconstructed or redistributed signifiers, novelty and so on, all in a packageable format, political documentaries provide us with disposability, ephemerality, topicality, directness, immediacy, instrumentality, didacticism, collective or anonymous authorship, unconventional formats, non-availability, and ultimately non-evaluability. (Waugh, [1984] 2011, 13)

Schoots's opinion is another case in point, basically a refutation of Marxism *tout court* and shooting the messenger:

Although *Song of the Rivers* can be seen as an attempt to go beyond the standard congress film, it remained a product of centralist thinking, forcing a pluralistic global reality into a simplistic framework that reduced workers to extras in a single global movement. A telling metaphor in the film is a field of waving grain, visually echoed in the following shot of a mass of workers. (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 244)

Jordan (1999, 94) echoes this critique with the term 'oversimplification of the world' but seemingly contradicts it in proposing aptly that 'Ivens's achievements are to present the view of a coherent world'. Yes, the virtue and the liability of ambitiously offering a Marxist analysis of 'a pluralistic global reality' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 242) – all six rivers, not just one – is by defini-

tion coherence or simplification, depending on what side you're on. I prefer Pozner's formulation of simplicity, and to me the beautiful metaphor of waving grain is about unity and coherence, artistic insight into common stakes across cultural and geographical boundaries, rather than centralist and simplistic reductiveness. In the post-war world a desperately urgent need to understand the planet as an integrated system was felt by all, and organisations like UNESCO and projects like Edward Steichen's USAID-sponsored international photo exhibition, *The Family of Man* (1955), all registered this need. Ivens should not be faulted anachronistically for his ambitious plan to do likewise, nor for seeking principles of coherence beyond the ideologically charged banality of 'humanity', 'family', or 'man'. It is surely Ivens's great contribution to link workers in France to workers in Vietnam in a single cinematic enunciation, in fact literally showing them embracing, while maintaining a strong sense of cultural and social particularity even on the gestural and behavioral level alone. Towards the end of his career when Ivens (interview with author, April 1978) would frankly remember his frustration during the Cold War years with the trap of his congress commissions, he ruefully acknowledged the crucial role of resistance, of negation, in his work, and ventured 'I'm a guerilla. I'm at my best when I'm in opposition'. But in fact his filmography would reveal that Ivens's talents as an oppositional guerilla filmmaker saw their stiffest test not in the capitalist west but east of the Curtain, and in the unlikely site of this gargantuan congress film, in this particular contribution of vision and coordination, not even behind the camera but in the facilitation of other guerilla filmmakers around the world.

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It is all too easy to dismiss dogmatic Cold War ideological discourse rather than considering empathetically its artistic vehicle in its historical context, on its own terms, within its own generic conventions. *Lied* is a work of artistic advocacy negotiating a classical Marxist worldview, accepted as a given, and creatively grappling with the agenda of applying it to a radically transformed world, to engage with a politics of the future. It intervenes, not only within static and hegemonic top-down Stalinist and Russian production, but also within the ferment that characterised cinematic cultures within the Eastern Bloc, whether within the Lodz film school in Poland, at DEFA, or in the Leipzig documentary festival constituencies beginning in 1955 – and international cinematic cultures as well. Ivens's 'evo[cation of] the dream of a socialist utopia' (Musser, 2002, 111) is articulated not so much in the stodgy 'pink' Volga scenes, but in the images and sounds of the global South, fully caught up in an entire generation's anti-colonial struggle still ongoing 60 years later. The iconography of what would emerge as 'third world' politics at Bandung two years later, images of struggle from Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, fleshes out Ivens's grass-roots anti-colonial concept, prophetic and dynamic artistic

and political vision. Surely in an era when even the national communist parties of the imperial powers were having trouble sorting out the contradictions of racism and colonialism (Smith, 2008), for Ivens and Pozner to apply a lucid class analysis to colonialism and to bring to life onscreen the bodies, voices, and comings together of workers from Cameroon, Algeria, Egypt, India, Italy, and the rest is surely a cinematic achievement that is incontrovertibly unique.

Musser (2002) correctly emphasises the film's intertext of *Family of Man* and of Ivens's own previous work here recycled, which he rightly declares makes the film intensely personal. But it is important to keep in view other post-war Cold War documentaries and hybrids, both those that rank with *Lied* as progressive documents of struggle against imperialism and racism, such as its companion pro-subaltern masterpieces *Strange Victory* (Leo Hurwitz, 1948, 71), *The Quiet One* (Sidney Meyers, 1948, 65), and *Salt of the Earth* (Herbert Biberman, 1954, 94) as well as the union documentaries of Carl Marzani (Musser, 2009) – to mention only American films of the same decade – but also parallel works that don't measure up to their high standard. Take a film by Paul Rotha for example, a UNESCO-sponsored feature documentary with a similarly aspiring title but evoking prayer rather than song, *World Without End* (1953, UK, 60), with ambitions similar to *Lied's* and almost exactly contemporaneous to it. By this time Grierson's disciple had become head of another state documentary unit, the BBC documentary film department, and he emphasises the 'universality' and 'humanity' of his Mexican and Thai subjects alike, the gospel of cute children that are nevertheless 'crawling with lice' with a traditionally miserabilist message of 'love your neighbour'. This vivid but unwitting demonstration of the political insufficiency of top-down structures of 'development' and 'aid' offers no artistic dynamic of agency much less empowerment, no struggle or contradiction.

One final point might be a vindication of Ivens's original 'seventh river' concept. I have explored in 'Joris Ivens and the Legacy of Committed Documentary' (Waugh, [1999] 2011) the trope of the demonstration, both onscreen and off, as a convergence of artistic politics and the real-world politics of street theatre. But I was not able at that time for reasons of availability to include *Lied* in my transhistorical corpus, surely the über-demonstration film to end all demonstration films with its triumphantly climactic montage of workers' demonstrations on every continent. *Lied's* spectacular peroration exemplifies my 1999 analysis:

[Although] the demonstration is first and foremost about local space and its indexical recording [... it is] not only a cinematic trope but a political resource of great transformative power [...] not only documents of collective actions of public defiance, but also performative engagements with

those collective actions, active interventions by filmmakers and consequently by spectators into the political worlds of the films. [...] A demonstration has [...] to do, by definition, with public space, with territory, since the demonstration occupies the streets where the state stages its authority. The demonstration shows its force and commits ritual speech acts that perform territorial possession and liberation. [...] The filmic act both performs and represents the demonstration. [...] The film process infinitely extends the discursive space of the original demonstration: the original speech act not only proliferates through this magnification but is also changed qualitatively. [...] The demonstration stops being a short-hand record of dissent, and becomes [...] a subject-centred cinematic performance of political action. [...] 'Staging' [a demonstration] acquires the innuendo of street theatre, of political performance, and by extension, since theatre is transformed into the real, of performativity in the public political sphere. (Waugh, [1999] 2011, 275-276)

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In contrast with my 1999 transhistorical sample of representations of single-event demonstration, Ivens extends this transformation with *Lied's* montage structure, qualitatively again, cumulatively and dialectically, to perform a transhistorical and global demonstration as the peroration of this film, a global act of defiance, the seventh river of his original concept. Perhaps Ivens was referring to this when he looked back on the film as 'romantic become dialectic' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 242).

On what other counts can *Lied's* engagement with other future politics be faulted? The film's proto-feminist credentials are admittedly somewhat less impressive than those for the American *Salt of the Earth*, which scooped *Lied* both by six months and by its cross-pollination of anti-racist and anti-patriarchal discourses. A woman worker does not surface in *Lied's* opening hymn to labour until the six-minute mark, yet there is no need to dwell on this surprising gap when we have the stirring examples of *First Years*, *Mein Kind*, and *Windrose* to compensate, thanks no doubt to the women collaborators on all these works either as scriptwriters, producers, or directors. Let us touch then on another urgent issue: perhaps an even more conspicuous ideological shortfall around Ivens's longstanding celebratory engagement with the Soviet program of development, applying the Marxian gospel of the mastery of nature in terms of the industrialisation of natural resources, hydroelectric dams, blast furnaces, etc. While such critique can admittedly be anachronistic, the contradictions are in fact visually and thematically embedded in the film in a way that they were not a generation earlier in the Five-Year Plan *Komsomol*, and seep out from its clear thematics of harmony with nature and of the control/ownership of development of the natural world (more than one critic felt the pro-

logue was stronger than the rest of the film). Wall Street or public/collective ownership? the film asks, but shows little corresponding sustainable vision of the latter. The iconography of the mushroom cloud emerging from the Amazon shatters the coherence of the film's discourses of development. Left documentary would not desist from equating smokestacks and dams with utopia – either in the west or in the 'third world' – for at least another generation, but thanks to Ivens this equation was clearly showing its wear and tear in 1954.

In retrospect, another ideological dynamic, this time a silence, is striking. This film, developed during the months of mourning for Stalin, premiered a mere sixteen months after his death in the vassal state that would soon lead the resistance to Khrushchev's legendary de-Stalinisation campaign begun in February 1956. Yet the late leader is noticeable for the absence of all verbal or visual reference to him in either English or longer German version (except for mention of Stalingrad, a World War II turning point of great strategic and symbolic value that can of course refer obliquely to its namesake, but not necessarily). Lenin is mentioned in the lyrics of the verse about the Volga ('Lenin showed the way'), but otherwise the only other identifiable political leader depicted is Mao Zedong, shown greeting a female peasant, in a likely archival shot. If one can discern political shifts in minuscule nuances, can it be that *Lied* offers a first cinematic taste of Thaw? That Ivens and Pozner, quietly and in their byzantine and oblique way are scooping Khrushchev? On an even more global scale, can one discern also the post-war 'crisis' in the left brought to the surface by the Cold War that I evoked in the introduction to this chapter? Can the climactic synthetic surge forward of the ending be seen as a disavowal or refusal of that very crisis, and its triumphalism its very symptom?

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MEIN KIND, DIE ABENTEUER DES TILL EULENSPIEGEL, DIE WINDROSE

Before following Ivens as he moved westward, southward, and eastward to the next productive episode in his career, in Western Europe and in the emerging global south, let us consider three final DEFA films, undertaken at 'arm's length' and intermittently, more or less simultaneously, throughout 1955 and 1956, his last two years behind the Curtain. These include two fine and under-recognised works both commissioned by the East Berlin-based, Soviet-front International Democratic Women's Federation (IDFF), both narrated by typically well-honed Pozner commentary and introduced/narrated by the veteran Brechtian actress, the charismatic Helene Weigel:

- *Mein Kind* (*My Child*, co-dir. Vladimir Pozner and Alfons Machalz, 1956);
and

- *Die Windrose* (*The Windrose*, coordinator Alberto Cavalcanti,²⁷ individual episodes directed by Alex Viany [Brazil], Sergei Gerasimov [USSR], Yannick Bellon [France], Gillo Pontecorvo [Italy], and Wu Guoying [China], 1957).

Both projects assigned Ivens the official credit of ‘artistic supervisor’, but were reportedly ‘inspired’ and ‘produced’ respectively by Ivens, and thirdly

- one unprecedentedly ambitious fiction feature *Die Abenteuer des Till Eulenspiegel* (*Les Aventures de Till L’Espègle/Bold Adventure*, 1956, 90, directed by and starring the French film star and fellow-traveller heart-throb Gérard Philipe, co-produced by DEFA and the French Productions Ariane, Ivens’s contribution described variously as artistic supervisor or production coordinator ‘for DEFA’).

Windrose is the most durable and interesting of the three works, applying *Lied*’s grass-roots contributors concept to short fiction, more formally, and producing a coherent anthology of five excellent and distinct women-centred mini-narratives from five countries and three continents. It is anyone’s guess as to why this film is almost never shown or revived (outside of one or two of the most thorough Ivens retrospectives). This is all the more curious since *Windrose* brings together more big names than any other Ivens work – and not only stars Simone Signoret and Yves Montand, who both perform luminously in the French entry – namely Cavalcanti, for whom this is the first of two major German projects around this time, one on each side of the Curtain, as well as future stellar directors Bellon, Gerasimov, and Pontecorvo, plus prestigious scriptwriters Jorge Amado and Franco Solinas. Even the work’s proto-feminist and proto-‘third world’ credentials alone, not to mention its unique glimpse of Great Leap Forward-era Chinese fiction, should have guaranteed this work a constant circulation, but it is apparently the curse of socialist realism and no doubt of more official East German idiocracy – and dare we say executorial myopia? – that has kept *Windrose* from its rightful place in the canon. Not that socialist realism in these five late incarnations is an overwhelming liability, for the freshness, creativity, and technical accomplishment of their interpretations of the formula, obligatory oratory tropes, and moderately happy endings notwithstanding, vindicate Ivens’s and Cavalcanti’s mentorship trust in the five sets of young directors and scriptwriters. Hanlon (2012) rightly opines that the audacity to critique, however circuitously, gender roles in socialist countries, is further evidence of the Thaw.

Ivens oversaw a complex selection and pre-production process: the detailed commissions called for short fiction projects each with a different theme, in the national style and language, with scripts to be approved by the

national IDFF committee. The films were to be produced autonomously on the national level without interference from Berlin, though Berlin meetings took place before the concept was finalised with delegates either invited by the Berliners or pre-selected by the host committees: Ivens was already close to Pontecorvo and knew French scriptwriter Henry Magnan, Bellon's husband, while Cavalcanti likely had a hand in the Brazilian selection. Eyebrows were apparently raised when the Chinese committee sent Wu Guoying (b. 1921), a film educator at the Beijing Film Academy as well as painter and poet, as if recruiting woman directors for this women's project had not occurred to the Berliners. Further meetings considered the final scripts. Not surprisingly the whole process did not go without a hitch: Brazilian authorities allowed the export of the film only after half a year of negotiations (famous scriptwriter Amado was then in exile in Eastern Europe and had appeared in *Freundschaft*); Magnan's and Bellon's script was not at first acceptable to the national French committee; the Tuscan factory to be used as location for the Italian project, partly idle, was withheld at the last minute. But in the end all five films arrived, all too long and necessitating Cavalcanti's diplomatic streamlining; the Soviet film in particular was twice the requested length of two and a half reels. The two supervisors organised the preface together and Pozner provided a voice-over commentary that both cohered and translated.

The five films offer a politically charged tour of women's issues as understood by the international communist movement of the day, echoing *Salt of the Earth* in this respect. The French film is unique in developing a theme of intellectual rather than physical work and is joined by the Soviet film in desisting from the other films' automatic link of gender politics with maternity – though not with romance of course! Even so, Dennis Hanlon (2012) cites insider Thomas Heimann's (1996) view of the proto-feminist theme as the thin edge of the post-Stalinist wedge:

Heimann argues that the makers of this film took advantage of the apertures opened in DEFA production by the Thaw that took place after Stalin's death in a way few others did; according to Heimann, the inclusion of episodes critiquing the status of women in putatively socialist states would have been unthinkable before this Thaw, giving further evidence that the film was a fortuitous product of the Thaw following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.

The goal of rendering each narrative in national style is well realised. The technically superb Soviet entry, *Nadezhda*, the closest to the musical genre among the five shorts, is admittedly a bit 'pink' (to use Ivens's descriptor for the Soviet footage in *Lied*), but even here with its focus on the Khrushchev era's

61. *Die Windrose* (1957): Brazilian episode, *cinema novo*-style. Fieldworker Ana crosses the parched *sertão* and helps a fellow passenger give birth in the back of their truck. Frame enlargement courtesy DEFA-Stiftung. © DEFA-Stiftung/Joop Huiskens, Robert Menegoz.



62. *Die Windrose* (1957): Magnan's and Bellon's French episode 'Un matin comme les autres', harnesses star power (Simone Signoret and Yves Montand) to offer socialist realism inside a 1930s poetic realist aesthetic. Frame enlargement courtesy DEFA Stiftung. © DEFA-Stiftung/Joop Huiskens, Robert Menegoz.



63. *Die Windrose* (1957): Italian episode. Pontecorvo's and Solinas's 'Giovanna', a fiction of striking women textile workers torn between solidarity and maternal duty, gracefully deploys neorealist aesthetics. Frame enlargement courtesy DEFA Stiftung. © DEFA-Stiftung/Joop Huiskens, Robert Menegoz.



'new lands' program and romantic teen conjugality, a slight whiff of thaw can arguably be inferred, and in retrospect the resemblance to *Cranes Are Flying* (in production at approximately the same time and premiering seven months later) is striking. As for the Chinese entry that concludes the anthology, the misty frontality of its political aesthetics is unmistakable in the very prolific age of *Bai mao nu* (*The White-Haired Girl*, Chouï Khoua and Bin Wang, 1950, 111) – the dramatic crisis is a storm that threatens the new village cooperative at harvest-time, not human failing, though the challenge of illiteracy, slow-to-awaken elders, and recalcitrant husbands are also on the scene. But

it too is charmingly fresh with its exploration of hieratic non-naturalistic Chinese realism and its interrogation of patriarchal hurdles to collective agricultural productivity. As for the other three short fictions, what is remarkable is the way they too, like the Soviet and Chinese filmmakers, apply national cinematic aesthetics to their distinct heroines and plots, while adhering to the coherence of the IDFF mandate and template: Viany's and Amado's *cinema novo*-style tale of Ana follows an agricultural day labourer travelling across the parched *sertão* from Bahia to São Paulo in a ramshackle and crowded truck that happens to be a macrocosm of Brazilian society, complete with a prescient sexual harassment anecdote and a fellow passenger who gives birth en route; Pontecorvo's and Solinas's *Giovanna*, a fiction of striking women textile workers torn between collective solidarity and maternal duty, shows the graceful deployment of neorealist aesthetics; Magnan's and Bellon's *Un matin comme les autres*, a narrative of a school teacher (Signoret) whose politically motivated dismissal is rescinded thanks to pressure from her cute pupils and cute proletarian crooner boyfriend (Montand), updates a 1930s poetic realist aesthetic in a straightforward on-location narrative that shows Bellon's previous documentary experience and her anticipation of New Wave naturalism. Almost nothing is known of the circulation of this omnibus film, but judging from the DEFA track record it was probably not extensive. Nevertheless judging from the appearance of a television set in the preface and the TV-friendly voice-over, one presumes that small-screen distribution was part of the plan.

Mein Kind is an essayistic short extension of the anti-war themes of *Peace Will Win* and *Lied* through the proto-feminist lens of universal 'motherhood', a kind of offshoot of *Windrose*. The work was assembled while Ivens was off on his wild *Till Eulenspiegel* chase in Western Europe by trusty comrade Pozner along with Alfons Machalz, Ivens's young archival research assistant on *Lied*, whom Ivens had sent off to finish his 'theoretical' education but who had now resurfaced.

Ivens was most involved in the initial conception of the film. Upon one of his periodic returns from *Till Eulenspiegel* activities, Ivens found *Windrose* well underway with the assemblage of the five national productions under Cavalcanti's wing. According to Machalz, disagreement ensued about whether the documentary mortar between the five fictional episodes, advocated by Ivens, was necessary. He was outvoted,

but Joris did not let go of this documentary section. A few days before he had to leave – I had just been in a meeting with Hans Wegner – Joris came in and said: 'We should make two films, without any extra costs. *Die Windrose* and a documentary film about mothers and children'. It would be a film that spoke to mothers all over the world. Then he took one of

his usual scrawls out of his pocket and read his idea out loud: 'A child is born. Everywhere in the world children are born. They are raised with difficulty and sacrifices. Their mothers protect them from pain and danger and raise them to become honest, peaceful people. But one day war comes and takes their children away. In the future, women and children should be spared from this fate'. These words, written on the back of a menu of a restaurant, was our shooting script until the end of the film. (Machalz, 1999, 110)

Ivens approved of Machalz and Pozner as the directorial team, and the former assembled archival materials from socialist countries while the latter, like Ivens a Euro-Communist commuter, did the same in Paris. Machalz and Pozner, who had already developed a basic text for the commentary, did not always see eye to eye on what the often unreachable Ivens would do in the face of their artistic problems, such as the lack of covering shots or the choice of music. With regard to the latter, Pozner prepared a score of Bach and Mozart, which Machalz thought killed the film and changed to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, supplemented by Bach's Air on the G String. Stubborn Pozner asked for composer Eisler's input, but the veteran Ivens collaborator agreed with the younger man, and suggested an additional children's song to boot. This simple, but spellbinding, score and another poetically barebones, interrogatory commentary from Pozner, linking gesture and thought, was a good fit for the associative collage of shots of mothers and children from many different cultures, north and south. These shots, blending universal 'madonna and child' iconicity with the documentary grain of local conditions and cultures, are soon threatened editorially by *Spanish Earth*-style violence, both its media representations (are the images of television in both these DDR productions a first in Ivens's filmography, not to mention the conventional documentary canon?) and its traumatic geopolitical enactment. Notable a half-century later are images of breastfeeding much franker than would have even been thinkable in the Eisenhower 'free world' and images of boys at play with toy guns and bullying girls that are unusually prophetic in their linking of violence to the culture of education and childrearing. As compilation, the work is masterful, and *Spanish Earth* shots are unsurprisingly prominent alongside striking material from Latin America and Southeast Asia in particular. The film's intercultural iconography was consonant with DEFA filmmakers' outward-looking sensibility beginning in the mid-fifties, and Marion Michelle, still in the picture, shot the beautiful images of harvesters rocking their infants mid-field in Syria.

64. *Mein Kind* (1955): Marion Michelle contributed a Syrian harvester rocking her infant – intercultural iconography consonant with DEFA's outward-looking sensibility of the mid-1950s. DVD frame capture. © DEFA-Stiftung.



65. *Mein Kind* (1955): European madonna and child emerging from bomb shelter. Mothers from many cultures, north and south, choose a 'new path' away from geopolitical violence. DVD frame capture. © DEFA Stiftung.



By the time the film was finished, 'Ivens had [still] not seen a metre of it', but the filmmakers phoned their mentor in Paris and persuaded him to let 'artistic direction Joris Ivens' be in the credits, where it turned up climactically as the final big-name credit, trumping the normal 'directed by'. Ivens finally saw *Mein Kind* in December 1955 and liked it. So did juries at festivals in Mannheim in May 1956 and in Montevideo the following year (though the directors were not allowed to travel to these events). East Berlin cultural bureaucrats were less enthusiastic about this unique production of their studio, 'the most poetic film in the history of the DEFA documentary film' according to its co-director. They denied it the national award it was thought to deserve, consigning it to 'closed screening' purgatory in the country (Machalz, 1999, 112), though some international distribution reportedly ensued (Jordan, 1999). But even its restricted availability had an impact on Machalz's generation of young DEFA filmmakers who were eager to emerge away from the shadow of either Ivens or Huisken (Machalz, 1999). The reported reason for the chill was that the film's pacifist credo was too strong for the volatile post-Stalin, nuclear-arms-race context, especially for the most hardline of the Warsaw Pact countries in the Budapest aftermath.

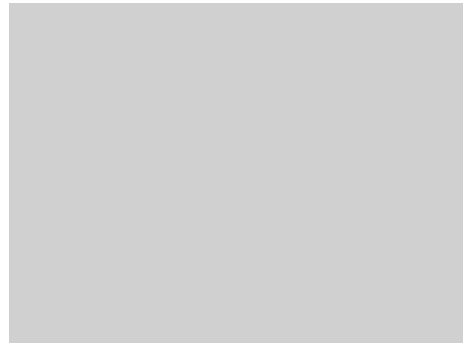
Of the three last Cold War films, Ivens's creative energies were invested most directly, extensively, and concretely in *Till Eulenspiegel*, ironically the least successful (to describe this disaster tactfully). This role, together with his ambiguous final credit makes it all the more paradoxical that it is the most inaccessible of the extant films Ivens touched (I could not see it for decades, still languishing in co-production hades, perhaps the star's only vehicle not available on DVD until its very limited release in 2009).

According to Sadoul, both Ivens and the French screen idol had independently around 1952 developed the idea of bringing the legend of Flemish national hero Till Eulenspiegel to the screen, but there is also evidence Ivens had first considered of developing a Eulenspiegel biopic in the thirties. Eulenspiegel was a figure of late medieval folklore, a Low German prankster who had been appropriated by nineteenth-century Belgian novelist Charles de Coster as a fictional hero of the Low Countries' revolt against the Spanish occupation and Inquisition in the 17th century, an anti-authoritarian proto-guerilla and subversive prankster. It was Philippe's industry clout that made the idea a real possibility, and the actor, who had recorded the French commentary for *Peace Will Win*, was now caught up in the career move of a first directorial project, commissioning treatments and scripts based on the original novel. Unable to obtain French financing for an expensive costume drama with on-location shooting (in Sweden to guarantee the required frozen lakes), Philippe turned to Sadoul, who engineered the meeting of the minds of the aspiring fiction director and the documentarist. The cinematic collaboration began concretely with Philippe screening all of Ivens's films at the Cinémathèque française (together with his wife Anne, who also had an interest in the story due to her Belgian roots), and then meeting Ivens and the Sadouls at a Paris bistro, apparently in late 1953 or 1954. The discussion continued in the spring of 1954 in Berlin. Ivens's clout at DEFA allowed him to persevere through the bureaucracy and obtain a co-production agreement with the French private concern, a groundbreaking East-West collaboration at the time and perhaps a hint of political shifts in the wind. Ivens's rationale was that the communist state had a stake in financing this politically sympathetic project by a socialist friend in the West, unable to find a chance in his own country. The propaganda stakes in a collaboration with a major Western film star were clearly also evident to the East German authorities and film bureaucrats. Paris's other communist film scholar Léon Moussinac opined that Ivens would not have taken this on without Philippe, who participated in every phase including post-production, and that Philippe, for his part, saw Ivens's support as essential to the enterprise, and that Ivens's promotion of the project gave it its main thrust.

Ivens's notes on the project script for DEFA showed the continuing alertness of his political convictions: although playing up the hero's familial bonds

(for the purpose of narrative identification?), he elaborated the historical and political dimensions of the project and at the same time emphasised the need to maintain the context of popular struggle for this tale, to see more clearly the power of the Spanish occupiers and the class betrayal by the nobles and monks, to strengthen the relations between the people and a hero whose conception had initially drawn too much on typecasting along the lines of Philipe's most popular role, Fanfan la Tulipe, a romantic peasant swashbuckler. The shooting scripts are also full of Ivens notations about script changes, camera set-ups and compositions. The final film has not fully registered this input: Till, innocent playful wastrel who can't hold a job, followed Quixote-like by a mute baker's apprentice on a donkey, sees his guerilla father burned at the stake and his mother killed, conducts a campaign of tricks against the Spanish forces, with the farcical component played up and his mystical side omitted, pursues the assassin and saves William of Orange in the process, and then finally, the boy become a man, humbly returns to his village and his girlfriend Nele.

66. *Les Aventures de Till l'Espiègle* (1956): Co-director/star Gérard Philipe as a trickster defying the imperialists. Feeling 'more at home with "real" people than with actors', Ivens became 'supervisor for DEFA' on his only fiction feature. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © TF1/DEFA-Stiftung.



Challenges arose almost immediately as the production began, with the socialist approach of 'over planning' clashing with more efficient French film-industry methods (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978). Interpersonal divergences and artistic tensions soon also surfaced, due to the ill-defined collaboration and what Ivens described as Philipe's increasing authoritarianism as the pre-production and the shoot advanced through the winter of 1955-1956. It eventually wrapped up with more exteriors in the DDR and interiors in a Nice studio mid-year 1956 (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978):

Nothing is more illusory than this kind of relationship where each one believes himself obligated to be either too much or not enough himself. Gérard Philipe was undertaking his first directing job, he felt completely capable of doing so and thought sincerely that I could help him. But during the shoot he became not so much haughty as authoritarian. It was regrettable but clear. This badly shared joint power created a climate of tension and all I could do was withdraw. The respect and friendship we had for each other allowed us to avoid the trap of misunderstanding. We decided to delimit our functions: he was responsible for the directing, myself the production organization in relation to DEFA. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 244)

To his CPF friends at the time, Ivens (quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 247) had elaborated further:

My escapade with *Till Eulenspiegel* in the fiction film area was interesting, but I believe that it is a question of temperament, or whatever you call it. I feel more at home with 'real' people than with actors. Documentaries give me more scope as a visual artist, more discipline in the form and more freedom as far as the content of my work is concerned.

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Schoots describes the dynamic more bluntly: Ivens was inexperienced with professional actors and was subsequently 'squeezed out' by Philipe, leaving his position 'that of supervisor for DEFA'. The biographer twists this curious episode in film history into an object lesson on Ivens's skills and blind spots: in his view Ivens's forte was 'visual improvisation' skills, and that his dogged pursuit of 'docudrama' since the thirties 'was not one of his strong points':

His theories about storylines and amateur actors were actually a put-up job [...] adopted [...] during the discussions in the Mezhrabpom Studio in 1931 and a filmmaker was expected to have a theory. [...] When further interpretation of the facts was needed, he could always fall back on his ideology. (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 247)

While it is true that Ivens's only encounter with large-scale industrial fiction had a once-burned-twice-shy impact on this career trajectory, it had nothing to do with the traps and delusions of socialist realism.

Upon the November 1956 release of the film in a chic Paris neighbourhood, the critical censure was unanimous: most conspicuously, 'young Turk' critic and aspiring director François Truffaut, clearly identified the project with the '*cinéma de papa*' he was committed to dismantling, both in the political and the artistic sense, and named it the worst film of the year. The premiere coin-

cided with the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising, and the reviewer for *Le Monde* ascribed the flop in part to this timing, the film's story of guerilla peasants opposing an invading army losing its charm and the comedy falling flat in the geopolitical context. In his view, a structural disunity and authorial timidity were also to blame: the badly constructed film was 'nothing but a brilliant mosaic' (de Baroncelli, 1956). First-run audiences more or less agreed with the critics, though Ivens remembered that Philippe's traditional fan base in the second-run suburbs as well as audiences in the DDR, where it opened the following January, prevented a total commercial catastrophe (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978). The unfortunate outcome no doubt cemented Ivens's growing resolve to leave behind both DEFA and his days as a film bureaucrat and 'coordinator'. In any case, the star-crossed timing of the *Till Eulenspiegel* release had unfortunate consequences for his relationship with Philippe. Schoots ([1995] 2000, 248) provides a dramatic narrative of uproar in the Paris streets, demonstrations on the left and right, the PCF defence of the Soviet suppression of 'Hungarian fascists' that led to demonstrators' attacks on the office of *L'Humanité* and three people dead, Ivens's acceptance of the events as a 'historical necessity', and then the gradual loss of Philippe's friendship.

The following month Ivens and Fiszer travelled to Beijing for a symbolic reboot for his artistic and political career alike, symptomatically missing the premiere of *Windrose* and the Berlin premiere of *Till Eulenspiegel*. The Moscow-Beijing rift was already in the cards, hence the symbolic valence of Ivens's return to China, and although Ivens continued to be lionised in the DDR until the Prague crisis twelve years later, he would never again work in Eastern Europe. The invitation and the travel plans had no doubt been arranged well before Budapest, but Schoots ([1995] 2000, 249) is right that the symbolism tells of an irreparable and growing tear in the Curtain.

A conclusion to Ivens's productive and busy, frustrating and interrupted Cold War chapter, the full decade between the docking of the 'Flying Dutchman' in London and his landing in Beijing, can at best be provisional, pending the much needed recirculation of his two feature documentaries and two medium-length films as well as several minor and 'supervised' works within cinematic and political cultural networks. The work from behind the Curtain must be incorporated into the ongoing conversation about the legacy of this artist from which they have been excluded – even and perhaps most egregiously at the time Ivens produced it.

This conversation must not only include this crucial segment in the full assessment of the artist's heritage and address the ineradicable status of party line advocacy, journeywork, mentorship, and the commission in documentary/film history, which as researchers from Nichols (1980, 1999, 2001) to Hage-

ner (2007) have long since demonstrated, can no longer be understood and taught as a canon of texts but must be seen as a history of practices, institutions, and receptions. Throughout his career, Ivens embraced the commission as part of his political and aesthetic gospel of labour, of everyday productivity; late in his career he disputed the facileness of his Cuban friend Santiago Alvarez's distinction between 'free films' and 'command films' (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978).

The conversation must also, most importantly, situate this period – a prolific and varied one after all, however pockmarked, interrupted, and frustrating it was – in relation to the history of the Left, old and new. In all of these projects the place of socialist realism is fundamental, understood in its broad historical presence not only as a narrow and dogmatic template imposed from above, the 'cynically conformist utopianism' (Stollery, 2006) that has been too easily and contemptuously dismissed or ignored for 80 years, but also as a set of narrative and affective practices encoded dynamically and transculturally – often ethically, passionately, idealistically, and imaginatively:

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I have understood better that the greatest reward for a filmmaker is not in the applause of an enthusiastic audience who simply recognizes the beauty of a film, but in the certitude that he has exalted confidence in humanity, the love of life, and has given to the spectator the desire to struggle to make triumph his aspirations towards a better reality. [...] For the artist must not only believe in beauty, but must, first and above all, have a perspective, see man in his environment, in his becoming, think the future and help him to release it. (Ivens, quoted in Lacazette, 1951, 29)

The procession of nonfictional and semi-fictional characters who populate Ivens's work of this period, the representation of their objective everyday labour and their subjective aspirations, in many cases their language and voices and in others simply their faces – from Jadwiga to Jeannine, from Pak Denai to Paul Robeson, must be encountered on their own terms as distillations of this idealism, as semi-fictional constructions, fantasmatic projections, and historical agents. This hybrid aesthetic of 'personalisation' at its least inspired may well be caught up in what Robin ([1986] 1992) depicts as socialist realism's often tense monologism. But it functioned also as a constraint similar to any other generic, cultural, economic, or institutional discipline, and in this case is inextricable from the undeniable but unrecognised artistic and political fervour, inventiveness, impact, and contradictory achievement of this current, which I hope I have demonstrated through my textual analysis. I am speaking especially of the reinvigation in the Cold War context of the left's political

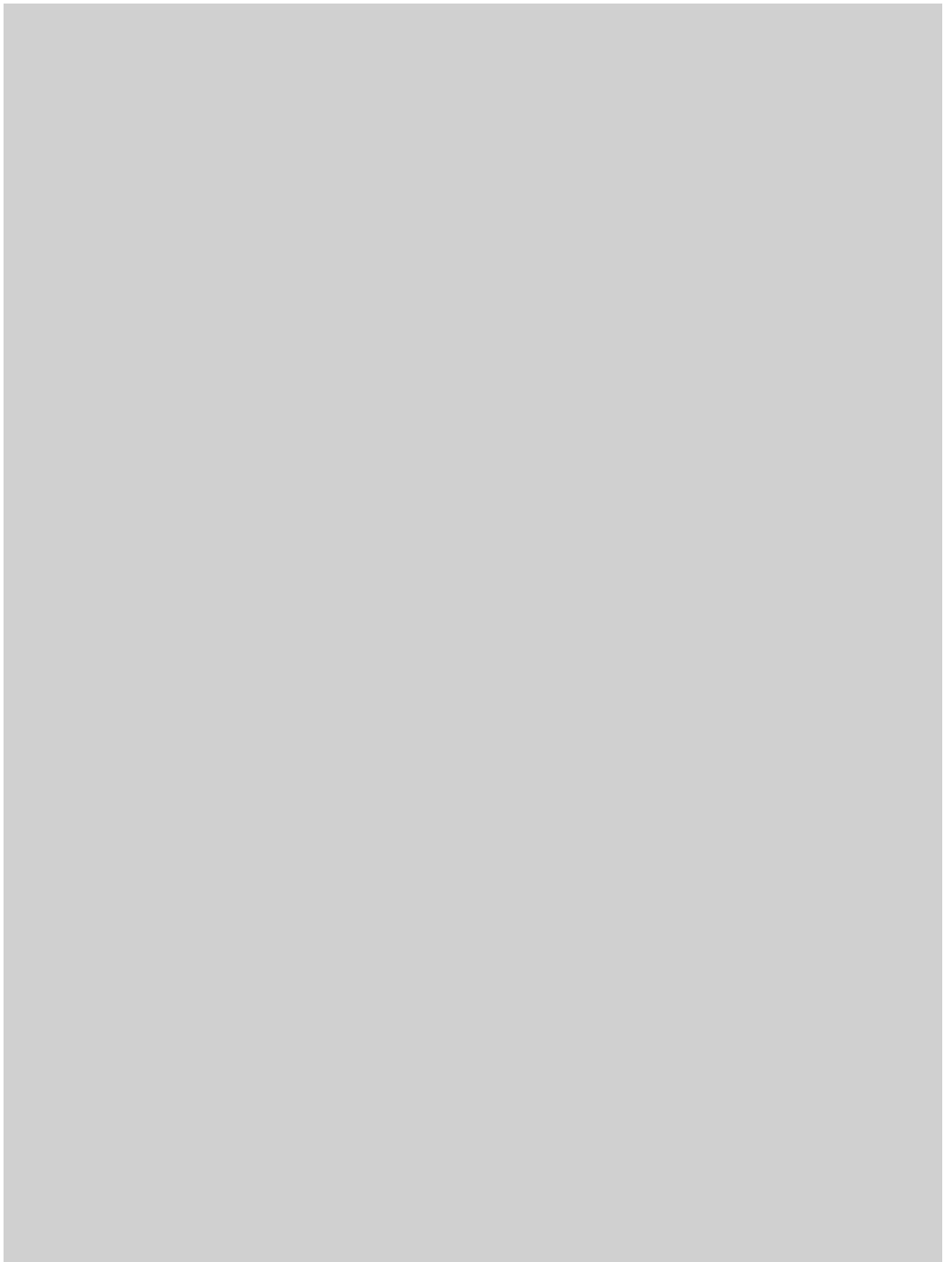
aesthetics, less that of class – though the classic discourses and iconographies of union organisation remains first and foremost, and ever urgent in the context of the CIA assault on unions around the world – than of the emerging and prophetic agenda of gender and anti-colonial/anti-racist struggle.

Even if some of the Cold War work was repetitive and lacked development (as Ivens himself allowed 30 years later [Ivens and Destanque, 1982], and he was only partially right); even if the films were not allowed to fulfil their organic process of interacting with audiences; even if their visions come close at times to CIA caricature; even if Ivens's commitment to socialist realism and its hybrid documentary forms that enable 'personalized' historical agents rooted firmly in their collective spaces to change the world onscreen seemed compromised by his 'naïvely' trusting relationship to the Soviet occupiers – despite his sustained collaboration with local subjects, artists, and students throughout the period; even if his nuanced and negotiated relationship with what we might call cinematic subcultures and civil society in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and above all in the DDR were too often stymied by refractory, paranoid, and inevitably xenophobic apparatchiks who budgeted their contributions with one hand and hampered their distribution with the other; even if the collective nature of Ivens's work with a transnational and transgenerational network of committed artists can be problematised, if only in terms of linguistic and other barriers to Ivens's ideal of contextual, grass-roots, 'guerrilla' documentary; even if the Cold War Ivens has too often been consigned to oblivion... Even in the light of this litany of 'even if's', these nine cinematic texts with their rhythm of defiance and eventual victory, their encyclopedia of global critique, and their canvases of everyday sweat and heroism, stand themselves as a testimony and legacy, all the more vibrant for their shortfalls and contradictions.

Queer theory's achievement of productively overturning the legacy and affect of shame might serve us as a template for considering productively the legacy of Cold War Ivens and the Old Left in general: what Sedgwick (2003, 65) calls the 'powerfully productive and powerfully social metaphoric possibilities' of shame. The shame that occupies the middle ground between and informs my New Left generation's combination of amnesia and denial on the one side, and of oedipal repudiation on the other, must be used creatively. The Cold War and the Stalin era required two to tango: the United Fruit Company, Senator McCarthy, the Marshall Plan, and Eisenhower's famous 'military-industrial complex' lined up against the Cominform and a disempowered Old Left who, like Ivens, publicly tolerated Budapest as 'a historical necessity'. The 2002 American tour of the triumphant, first posthumous Ivens retrospective 'Cinema without Borders' was organised by a New York outfit called 'Red Diaper Productions'. Spearheaded by Wanda Bershen, who is like so many baby boomer New Yorkers the offspring of CPUSA members or sympathisers of the

Cold War era – who affectionately think of themselves swaddled in diapers the colour of the communist flag – the retrospective was one of the few Ivens ventures to showcase *Lied* just as the Foundation and the estate were seeming to orchestrate, either actively or by default, the erasure of the Cold War era from memory and cinematic history (however ‘Cinema without Borders’ significantly did not include any *Yukong* item among its sixteen selections). The shame of communist infamy and the shame of infant excretion had been confronted in one blow.

We are all red diaper babies and Uncle Joe is part of our legacy. *Lied* is not only part of our Old Left ancestry but also part of our human selves in the savagery and paranoia, blind obedience and conformity, amnesia and denial – and of course personality cultism – that Stalin cultivated and stood for and that the epic film obliquely conjures up. We have not fully processed this shame. After *Yukong* and the death of Mao, Ivens would begin to do his part in his own process of claiming the decade in Eastern Europe. Slightly defensive but proudly unashamed, he acknowledged that the structure of the party in Eastern Europe was ‘topheavy’ and that the Revolution didn’t come from underneath but was imposed from above. ‘If I’d had a chance to leave in 1954 I would have’, he said (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978). The contradictions of the Cold War era must be kept at the forefront of our historical research, and in our shame we must distinguish between the historical public persona and his private and artistic negotiations with his political conscience. Not signing petitions like Philippe (and Simone Signoret’s pupils in *Windrose*) – or rather only those in support of the Hollywood Ten – Ivens voted both with his feet and with his camera. The 21st-century global left has yet to conduct its truth and reconciliation commission about its legacy of Stalin, but Ivens’s Cold War camera and its output onscreen is a good ‘Exhibit A’ for starting this process.



67. *Lettres de Chine [Before (Early) Spring]* (1958): original poster captures Ivens's second Chinese film's pastoral flair. Original in colour. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen.

The 'Poet' Reborn?

1956-1965

Where is the fist, Joris?
 – Karl Gass, 1957, DDR

Several chapters of this book commence with Joris Ivens's arrival in a city, whether New York City (Chapter 3), Prague (Chapter 5), Hanoi (Chapter 7), or Beijing (Chapter 8). A new place allowed Ivens to pursue a new phase in his career, where his work would move from renunciation to embrace, where it would take on the artistic character and political sensibility of the new setting – its space, its time, its culture, its governance and undercurrents of resistance, and its people. This chapter begins with an arrival in Paris in 1956. Although the 58-year-old Ivens had frequented Paris regularly since his adolescence, it was this moment when Ivens finally put down roots in the metropolis that would host, nourish, and 'brand' him for the next 34 years of his life.¹ Of course Ivens continued to be the 'Flying Dutchman' – as he loved to be called and which critics always found charming and exotic – and if anything his frenetic schedule of visits, teaching gigs, festivals, and productions around the planet intensified as he moved through the 1950s and 60s. But there is a sense that the aging exile was on some level also seeking moorings and, although he maintained his expatriate identity, here on the *rive gauche* he found an apartment, a new spouse, and collaborator with whom he would remain for the rest of his career. He also found an artistic and political milieu that would anchor his productions throughout his final prolific, jet-setting decades, by far the longest chapter of his career rooted in any one place.

This chapter covers the next nine or so years of Ivens's career, inaugurated by the migration from East to West, a phase that might be characterised, however reductively and interestedly, as his 'lyrical essay film' period. Between his 1956 exit from the Soviet bloc and his 1965 return to wartime solidarity/activist work brought on by his immersion in Vietnam, Ivens would make twelve short and medium-length documentaries, major and minor. Though they were produced in seven different countries, north and south (Cuba, Chile, China, Mali,



68. ...à *Valparaiso* (1962): Ivens dramatising everyday life in the dance club sequence (The Seven Mirrors). Local intern Sergio Bravo seen foreground by tripod, French operator Georges Strouvé on right (obscured). Production still © EFJI, Nijmegen.

Italy, and Holland, as well as of course France), his Paris base provided his primary audience, critical and collaborative constituency, the requisite material infrastructure, and its thematic continuity.

It is important not to overstate this continuity, for the twelve films of this period vary widely. They thematise rural and urban labour and social life, post-colonial transformation, struggle with the elements and with international capitalism; and formally speaking they hybridise lyrical nature/landscape modes, 'third world' solidarity discourses, pedagogical exercises, socialist realist-shaped didactic dramatisation, and the travelogue and city film genres (but not one major mode of the day, 'direct cinema' – and more of that later). Yet this entire corpus can be grouped loosely, but usefully, under the rubric of 'essay', arguably the presiding framework for the most exciting developments in French documentary as a whole during the 1950s and 1960s, benefiting as Lagny (1999) and others have pointed out from a conducive funding and exhibition infrastructure unique to France as well as a critical constituency

energised by fresh winds and new waves. Ivens's alignment with this form and the diversity of his projects themselves testify to the creative stimulus that the restless filmmaker found in his new spaces, networks, and resources (or lack of resources), his recharging of artistic and personal batteries after the negativity of the East that had spanned from the undistributed *Pierwsze lata* (*The First Years*, 1949, Bulgaria/Czechoslovakia/Poland, 99) to the mixed box-office record of *Die Abenteuer des Till Eulenspiegel* (*Les Aventures de Till L'Espiegle/Bold Adventure*, Philippe, 1956, DDR/France, 90). In particular, he put behind him his experience of the bureaucracy of the East Berlin film industry, where his pigeonholing as a producer and hands-off administrator had increasingly frustrated the artist (his message to film students in the two socialist societies he would soon be encountering, China and Cuba, would include warnings away from bureaucratic filmmaking [*Cine cubano* 1962]). Their non-canonical status notwithstanding, all of the twelve individual films could stand alone for their merit as part of any historical selection of documentaries of this period, though their under-recognition by metropolitan taste-makers is neither surprising nor uninteresting. The dozen or so 'lyrical essays' have much in common with the European and specifically French context in which they were produced. In fact, this series of evocative and personal documentary essays, most often deriving their inspiration from the travelogue genre, should be seen as part of a last prolific wave of French documentary before the technological revolution of the technical and aesthetic revolution that is variously called *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema.²

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One of the best known of this last climactic wave of the classical documentary in France is the film made by Ivens's future collaborator Chris Marker who was moving east just as Ivens migrated west, *Lettre de Sibérie* (*Letter from Siberia*, 1957, 62), but Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955, 32) and *Toute la mémoire du monde* (*All the World's Memory*, 1956, 21), Georges Franju's *Hôtel des invalides* (1951, 23), Agnès Varda's *L'Opéra-mouffe* (1958, 16), and Jean Rouch's *Les Maîtres fous* (*The Mad Masters*, 1955, 36) are also part of the canon (these last two films also look forward to the period of direct/*vérité* that would soon impede on the 'lyrical essay' phase).

These films were almost all silently filmed explorations of various landscapes, natural or architectural, usually using travelogue conventions. A characteristic structural feature of these films was the commentary, a suggestively poetic voice-over narration that enriched the images with its allusions and overtones of intimacy and subjectivity rather than confine it with literal explanations as mainstream English-language commentaries usually did at the time. Marker himself was at the centre of this lyrical-travelogue-essay wave, writing the best commentaries for the film essays of Resnais and Ivens, as well as of his own. His film impressions of visits to Beijing, Japan, Siberia, Isra-

el, and Cuba set the pattern. His excursion into the realm of African art with Resnais, *Les Statues meurent aussi* (*Statues Die Too*, 1950-1953, 30), Resnais's tours of the National Library and Auschwitz, and Rouch's ethnographically inspired films of West African life are variations of this pattern, as François Reichenbach's American excursions are its most successful box office reincarnation and Gualtiero Jacopetti's *Mondo cane* (1962, Italy, 108) is its inevitable commercial and ethical debasement. It was a period of great maturity and inventiveness not matched anywhere in the English-speaking world, where documentarists were often too involved in straining against the restrictions of non-sync, non-portable technology to be able, like their French contemporaries, to work creatively within the limits of the traditional hardware.

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Politically speaking, the shift from Cold War rhetoric to *rive gauche* lyricism cannot be seen as a defection (though defections were of course in the air in Paris, with Rudolf Nureyev *grand jeté*-ing to 'freedom' at Orly Airport in 1961): DEFA had tried in vain to persuade Ivens to stay with a more stable and luxurious living arrangement than the hotel he had used as his headquarters, and he maintained his close relation throughout this entire period with his old studio and friends in the capital, holding court annually at the Leipzig festival and definitively parting ways only in 1968. Schoots's ([1995] 2000) inference that his Soviet bloc patrons dispatched him to instigate revolution in the fermenting trouble spots of the Western Hemisphere strains belief: I doubt that the philistine politbureaus of Berlin and Moscow saw documentary film as the cutting edge of ideological transformation (as the Khrushchev Thaw hardened into the Brezhnev re-freeze) and no doubt passively presumed that Ivens's services could be equally valuable in East and West, perhaps as some minor kind of celluloid Picasso or Neruda. An important factor in this respect is that Ivens deliberately avoided explicit political themes in many of the works of this period, not because of a conversion to Western liberal individualism, and not only to avoid the censorship that had scarred his Cold War productions (and would scar a few of these 'apolitical' lyrical essays as well). It was also about avoiding legal problems as a vulnerable immigrant in France (no sensitive Algeria themes, only safe Cuban ones!) or as a foreign guest in Chile (no explicit oppositional statements that might embarrass his hosts, who were aligned, after all, with the communist party that was poised to win the next election, or the one thereafter!).

In more personal terms, Ivens (interview with author, April 1978) would later claim that he had never felt as if he was working in his own society in the post-war decade and would always have wanted to return home to the capitalist west if the harassment by the Dutch passport office had not prevented work opportunities from arising. He was still close to Michelle, who, with her US passport, had preceded him to Paris, and others of his friends and collabora-

tors from Pozner to Sadoul were also based there, all close to PCF culture and politics, not to mention the networks of progressive film stars grouped around the Philipès and the Signoret-Montand couple whom Ivens had got to know a few years earlier with *Die Windrose* (*The Windrose*, Cavalcanti et al., 1957, DDR, 110).³ Post-war screenings and retrospectives in France had often been greeted with full-house adulation, sparking a major consecration in a *Cahiers du cinéma* serial profile (Michaut, 1953a, 1953b, 1953c), and during the first decade of Ivens's settlement in Paris fully two monographs on his work were published within Paris's rich cinephile culture (Zalzman, 1963; Grelier, 1965); no doubt the temptation to be a prophet with honour in his own country was a strong one. That said, it was not easy to immigrate to France, even with the Dutch authorities easing off on their harassment campaign. Ivens's friend Philippe did much to get his collaborator the necessary working papers (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978), notwithstanding their unspoken disagreement about Budapest. Schoots ([1995] 2000) goes into great detail on how Ivens's marital status always seemed to parallel his political/civic instability. The details he provides of the deterioration of Ivens's relationship with Fiszer are as vivid as they are sad, though this long-distance phase, punctuated by the visits of the complex and unhappy Polish writer to Paris, Beijing, Havana, and Santiago continued into the 1960s (Marceline Loridan, Ivens's final conjugal collaborator, was demonstrably on the scene by 1963). Nevertheless Schoots ([1995] 2000) is right to imply that the pattern of shifting women along with shifting country of residence had been a well-established reflex for almost three decades of Ivens's career. Ultimately, the migration was not only a characteristic renunciation but also a pursuit of the job market and a combination of the final performance of a desire that had been harboured for some time and no doubt the path of least resistance – not an ideological gesture in the strict sense.

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Cold War critics saw things differently however, and saw the turn towards lyricism as a welcome return to Ivens's 'apolitical' poetic roots after a decade of communist propaganda. If Cynthia Grenier (1958) set the tone for this reading, it surfaced in French criticism as well (Mardore, 1958), and in fact it has persisted in Ivens scholarship more than half a century later. Grenier's tirade, an early pronouncement by a future right-wing scribe, is worth quoting at length:

One feels that Ivens's career is to some extent an illustration of the debilitating effect that abstract conceptual thinking can sometimes have on artistic creation. Essentially ideas, per se, cannot make a work of art. [...] Ivens did adopt an ideology, with all its political principles. It was Marxism-Leninism, as it happened. [...] If we compare any one of his social realist documentaries, whether made for the US Department of Agriculture or for the Iron Curtain countries (leaving aside the obvious political

considerations), we find the worn clichés of liberal or Communist conceptual thinking. There are none of the concrete minutiae that characterize the true artistic vocation. [...] Ivens's concern with the human condition undoubtedly gave him a driving force, a desire to make films in the hope of ameliorating man's social lot. But in so doing, he by-passed his own very great gift for much of the time, and lent his name and talents to much easy propaganda, often unworthy of his intelligence. [...] Apart from *Song of the Rivers*, with its often arrant dishonesty, the rest of his social realist pictures – *The 400 Million*, *Spanish Earth*, *The Power and the Land*, *The Russian Front* [sic], *Indonesia Calling*, *The First Years* – are all competent documentaries, with occasional passages of lyricism. But they are no more than competent; and from a man who has one of the greatest camera-eyes in the world, this is scarcely enough. [...] *The Seine Meets Paris* seems to make a turning-point in his career; but it cannot be assumed that his 'social realist' period is over. This is the story of a man who may seem to have confused ideas with art, and whose personal talents as a filmmaker did not really suit the ideas he had chosen for himself. 'Five ideas can swallow a man', wrote e.e. cummings. Fortunately, Joris Ivens really had one idea, and in *The Seine Meets Paris* is proof that he escaped being swallowed. (Grenier, 1958, 207)

Ivens (quoted in Schoots, 2000, 254) angrily and frequently refuted such simplistic and willful misunderstanding however:

It is not so that Ivens has two guises: the leftist and the esthete. Some people say that only the purely esthetic films are artistic; the rest are not art. Others see me exclusively as a militant filmmaker. Both are incorrect. When I made *The Seine Meets Paris*, my views were just as left wing as they were when making political films. With political films I have often been just as rigorous about finding the best artistic form.

Ivens was right. The films from this period may well be mostly short, poetic essays, full of humour and warmth, sentimentality and whimsy – and yes lyricism. But there is also the ever-present base of political analysis beneath the surface of the lyricism, articulated with varying degrees of explicitness. ...À *Valparaiso* (1963, France/Chile, 27) uses its engaging confrontation with the hilly topography of this Chilean port city as an entry point for an essay on its historical and political topography. *Pour le Mistral* (*For the Mistral*, 1965, France, 33), for example, Ivens's essay on the landscapes, winds, and elemental struggles of Provence, just happens to explore shantytowns of North African immigrant workers and to record how difficult it is to carry water by hand

to the workers' homes. However much the new personal tone of such films was an abrupt turnabout from the cold, official quality of some of the less inspired commissions of the Eastern Bloc period, the binary of poetics and politics is as deeply problematical as Grenier's (1958) absurdly prescriptive Cold War premises about art and lyrical minutiae, and we shall come back frequently in this chapter to this issue.

We will be discussing the twelve films as markers of this period chronologically: first the inaugural film *La Seine a rencontré Paris* (*The Seine Meets Paris*, 1957, France, 32), the sentimental city film that ritualised the arrival of the exile; next the China films; then the two commissions by state agencies in Italy and Mali respectively; next two further clusters of 'South' solidarity and teaching films from Cuba and Chile respectively; and finally the two final European 'place' essays *Mistral* and *Rotterdam Europoort* (1966, Netherlands, 20). But first we must come back to the notion of the essay film itself to establish more thoroughly the historical and theoretical framework for my use of this category to describe this period. Over the last decades, essay cinema has become a major new conceptual tool for both historicising and understanding certain tendencies in nonfiction cinema. The bountiful literature in English, French, and German that has appeared since the 1990s forms somewhat of a consensus, albeit slightly strained, on the criteria for and characteristics of this hybrid, as well as on the canon of *essayistes* who have emerged in film and video since World War II.

Basically, the newly 'discovered' genre – at least 'newly discovered' by English-language criticism – is considered to bring together elements of art cinema, experimental cinema, and documentary. However, there are some disagreements, and some general problems and lacunae in the ongoing and very lively conversation about essay cinema. Most critics agree that the essay film presumes and flaunts its literary heritage, which dates back to the late Renaissance in French (Montaigne) and in English (Bacon), and even earlier, and echoes the forebears with its short format as well as its aspiration to 'stylistic flourish' and 'eloquence'. Like its literary forebears the essay film articulates authorial subjectivity in an encounter with the external world, intervenes in the public domain, and shares a thought process in which ideas are developed, problems are tackled, questions are asked – though judgments or conclusions may be deferred. The 'first person' mode is thereby habitually present, even often through an authorial corporeal presence, and the autobiography, the diary, and various tropes of self-reflexivity are recurring elements. Extrapolating on the notion of 'sharing', some also emphasise the artist's relationship with the reader, analysing her or his 'interpellation' or inclusion through the filmic structure, what Rascaroli (2009, 15) calls a 'spectatorial pact'. In this sense, this taxonomy of the essay

can be seen to anticipate Nichols's (1994) proposed mode of the performative mode of documentary.

Formally speaking, the key word is 'hybridity', and the literature identifies discursive or textual density that produce plurivocality, indeterminacy, or fragmentariness, typically playing with a 'complex temporality' (Renov, 2004, 182). In short, the expository, narrative, or didactic coherence of the classical Griersonian or Flahertian models is supplanted, and the later '[pseudo-] objective' observational logic of direct cinema in its 'fly on the wall' mode is forestalled. Some critics delve into the ear-eye, sound-image dialectic that is characteristic of the essay cinema, especially its recurring voice-over trope, which is the site of much of the form's literariness and which Rascaroli (2009, 15) moreover argues usually incorporates a 'strong [first person] enunciator'. There is no agreement within the literature whether such typical documentary tropes as collage, performance, interviews, and direct cinema idioms in general can be part of the essay repertory. There is even less agreement whether the essay film inherently presumes a political vantage point, let alone one that can be called nonconformist, minority or 'accented', oppositional or 'counter-authority', or a distribution or exhibition practice that is innovative or alternative. While most critics in their role as cultural arbiter disclaim prescriptiveness as counter to the inclusive and improvisational sensibility of their essayistic object, when it comes to canon-formation and taste-making the tone of the essay debates is often more exclusive than inclusive, a culture-centric triage that confuses description with evaluation, and shrinks from the catholic and promiscuous eclecticism that I myself thrive on.

This contradictory enterprise of closing doors rather than opening windows can be sensed in the canons that have emerged from the literature, which all incidentally favour the post-World War II periodisation that is most common: typical of English-language critics in particular is the heavy emphasis on five European Union artists, the *rive gauche* Parisians Alain Resnais and Jean-Luc Godard, and of course most universally Chris Marker, Ivens's frequent collaborator, plus the West Germans Harun Farocki and Alexander Kluge. A second rung of artists, invoked less unanimously, opens up the circle of the elect to Italians, Britons, and Americans as well as women and queers and even a person of colour: Duras, Fellini, Franju, Gorin, Herzog, Jarman, Keiller, Pasolini, Rainer, Trinh, Varda, and Welles. My irony about the canonisation process is not to deny that this unanimity has spot-lit meritorious geniuses of the medium but rather to interrogate the narrow limits of its scope, the familiar crowd, 'usual suspects' of the art cinema calling out for graduate student dissertation production. Ivens shows his face only in a larger third rung of artists who surface only a couple of times in the literature⁴ and then only with his testamentary and arguably atypical work *Une histoire*

de vent (*A Tale of the Wind*, 1988, France, 78), rather than any of the titles from the period under discussion – much less obvious essay candidates from earlier periods from *Philips-Radio* (1931, Netherlands, 36) to *Mein Kind* (*My Child*, Vladimir Pozner and Alfons Machalz, 1955, DDR, 22). This gap is a symptom of much more than the apparent tendency of lazy critical cabals to stay within familiar territory and favour those approaching the hybrid from the art cinema or experimental side of the equation rather than from the documentary side (it is only on the fourth rung, gathering those who are mentioned by only one contributor to the literature, that filmmakers who made their mark on the nonfiction side of the three-pronged spectrum make their appearance in significant numbers within the network).⁵

Also to be challenged is the ostentatious political bias in most though not all of the literature. Such a bias in this subfield requires a fundamental disconnect: the five EU immortals all belong to the European radical left (even Resnais did so throughout the fifties and sixties, though he perhaps has a softer image than his four fellows), but you'd never know it from the literature in general, excepting a few nuances and references. Can we really discuss Marker and his generation of *rive gauche* collaborators in the 1950s and 1960s without situating them explicitly in relation to *engagé* iconographies and discourses, to PCF Cold War activism?⁶ Can we do justice to the nine-years-younger Godard without reference to his revolt *against* the PCF – *from further on the left*? Many of the bountiful analyses that concentrate on formal and discursive aspects of these works overlook explicit ideological claims and alliances. Corrigan's (2011, 53) treatment of Godard's *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, 1966, France, 87) as

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an epistemological project about ideas and knowing [...] the ironic awareness that modern knowledge is shaped and frustrated by fragmented and reified subjects within a landscape of acquisition, enumeration, and accumulation [...] explicitly about the difficulty of trying to express oneself and to think through this modern, always mediated, world

rather than as a materialist dissection of sex work as figure and as social practice within this urban environment of 'accumulation', is a flagrant case in point. This bias alone might explain why Ivens is unaccountably excluded from the essay canon, but of course generational factors (he is 30 years older than Marker and the essay is apparently no country for old men) and dynamics of the marketplace and distribution also bear on the situation. Plurivocality and indeterminacy notwithstanding, a Marxist perspective and a materialist questioning are, in fact, at the core of the eclectic and diverse transcultural essay heritage, as Paul Arthur (2005) at least allows, almost alone within the essay literature.

The essay film subfield has another intrinsic problem however, and that arises from its periodisation, and the basic tunnel vision of the experts in relation to the unexplored richnesses of film history. I have no problem with accepting the essay phenomenon as belonging historically to a post-war sensibility and infrastructure, provided discussion of the form's so-called precursors in the silent period and the first two decades of the classical sound documentary reflect the richness and diversity of the proto-essayists who paved the way. The post-war essay cannot be understood textually only, without reference to the historical span of each constituent element, of art cinema and experimental cinema of course, but most importantly of the history of documentary. Documentary's three decades of struggle with subjectivity and authorial voice through a double-system sound-image set-up (finally appeased and sidelined by synch-sound direct cinema in 1960) bears directly on the essay's evolution. Other than Ivens, and in addition to the interwar filmmakers who are evoked here and there as precursors who anticipate certain later essayistic tendencies – Christensen, Eisenstein, Jennings, Richter, Ruttmann, Vertov, and Vigo – where are the other obvious forebears from Shub to Dudow to Wright, as well as quite a lineup of Ivens collaborators including Storck, Cavalcanti, Harry Watt, Stuart Legg, and the authorial collective that formed Workers Film and Photo League and later Frontier Films?

Of course my argument is premised on a more open and inclusive sense of filmic taxonomy, the sense that not all of the above characteristics must be present fully in every essay film. For example, a range of degrees of first-person enunciations is possible within the essayistic landscape – and this applies especially to Ivens. And why should subjectivity not also incorporate a range of emotions, including political emotions from outrage to mourning, epistemological stances from doubt to certainty to dogmatism, and discourses articulating analytic theses about capitalism and the world? Ivens's sensibility was perhaps more conservative, less heart-on-sleeve than his junior, Marker, less inclined to speak in the first person except implicitly, more inclined to facilitate collective and collaborative modes of subjectivity, and less inclined to nurture the postmodern stances of indeterminacy and doubt in his essay films. But his basic hesitation to embrace postmodern ambivalence is complicated by his being solidly in step, as usual, with the other tendencies of the day, with the hybrid experimentalism of the essay style – the trying out of alternative modes from diary to aestheticism to dramatisation to the literary commentary that reached its furthest point in this period with *Mistral* (and later with *Histoire*) – and by his exploratory spatial analysis of the post-war, postcolonial world.

One final point arises from the occasional discussion in the literature on direct cinema and whether or not the use of the emergent idiom of on-loc-

tion mobile or handheld camera and synch-sound disqualifies a film for an essay label (for example *Chronique d'un été*, Rouch's excursion into handheld synch-sound territory, is excluded as an example of interactive direct cinema by Corrigan [2011, 163] from belonging to the category). Part of the excitement around documentary in Paris during the post-war years was purely technological. In sync with all the excitement about the essay in the *rive gauche* milieu, Ivens's friends and fellow essayists Rouch and Marker both participated in the euphoric scouting of the possibilities for the new lightweight equipment. Ivens was skeptical of this euphoria, as we shall explore (astonishingly, Ivens would not direct a 16mm film until *Demain à Nanguila* [*Nanguila Tomorrow*, Mali/France, 50] in 1960, although the medium had been on his radar since at least the Dutch East Indies project). His distrust arose partly from what had always been Ivens's instinctive formal conservatism, his preference for reaching audiences through the fully understood language of a given period over innovative effects which might have startled his public or drawn attention away from his subject itself. His friend Sadoul, however, inadvertently revealed the complexity of the muddy waters, as we shall see, by acclaiming Ivens's first film of the period *La Seine* as 'cinéma vérité' and as strides forward in the footsteps of Vertov. In general, the essay cycles stood aside from this technological push, preferring to innovate within the non-synch classical idioms, and Ivens and Marker, *Le Joli Mai* (*The Lovely Month of May*, 1963, France, 165) aside, were exemplary of this trend.

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LA SEINE A RENCONTRÉ PARIS

Before settling in Paris and tackling his new film on the Seine, Ivens visited Beijing with Fiszer at the very end of 1956 for a few months. Here the filmmaker finally was able to accept a longstanding invitation from his Chinese friends, eighteen years after his first Chinese film and seven years after the Revolution, and Fiszer translated a poem by Mao into Polish for the occasion. A deal was made for Ivens to come back soon in order to teach and develop some short film projects, and the pair soon returned to Europe and plunged into the new documentary that had already been percolating.

La Seine is the prizewinning 'lyrical' essay that re-established Ivens on the Western scene – as we have seen from the *Sight and Sound* poisoned rave (Grenier, 1958) – and consolidated his Paris foothold. Its development and production were a triumph of networking within a conducive time and place. Since 1938, Ivens had nurtured his friendship with the influential Parisian communist film critic and historian, Georges Sadoul (who also had a Polish wife), and who in turn offered extravagant evaluations of Ivens's work for his

left-wing French readers, especially of *Das Lied der Ströme* (*Song of the Rivers*, 1954, DDR, 90) (Sadoul 1963). The 53-year-old Sadoul was behind the basic idea for *La Seine*, inspired by captions he had written for Parisian photos by Henri Cartier-Bresson and not surprisingly by Ivens's own work on rivers in *Lied* itself. Ivens requested the chance to develop the stalled treatment, and the two of them fleshed it out in long walks on the riverbank where they discovered they were both observing the same aspects of urban life along the famous river:

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As soon as the production was confirmed, I went back to the riverbanks, but with Joris Ivens. And I found with him the same communion as earlier with Henri Cartier-Bresson, for our reportages for *Regards*. No need to squeeze his elbow when a child appeared, playing at the end of a barge, or a boss's dog, ceremoniously walked by a servant. He noticed them the same second as me, and we had together the same thoughts. [...] In agreement with Ivens, I therefore established what Vertov called, not a script, but a 'shooting plan' established by a 'kinok-scout'. My work did not take the form of a mimeographed manuscript, with indications of dolly shots or close-ups, but a sheet of paper, in the format of a 'métro' map, that followed the curve of the Seine, with all the bridges of Paris. And arrows from a hundred spots pointed to handwritten notes, constituting a little guide for the 'stroller of the two banks'. And they said for example 'pont Royal, secretaries' lunch; pont Neuf, students who come to dance and play music; pont Saint-Michel, lovers from the Quartier latin; pont de Bercy, wine barrels and tanker boats; Quai de la Gare, long tubes that suck up grain from the barges; pont d'Austerlitz, scrap metal, the blowtorches that cut it up, the sound of clanging on the paving stones, etc.' [...] I would have liked to follow the film shoot. But 1957 was a year of travel for me. I wasn't able to be present at more than eight or ten hours of his work, to learn how he was applying the 'cine-eye' method (or if you like, '*cinéma vérité*'). (Sadoul, 1963, 14)

Meanwhile, three PCF-affiliated arts personalities had come together to form a new production company, Garance Film: the stage and screen actor Roger Pigaut; his girlfriend the expatriate American actress and HUAC refugee Betsy Blair; and the movie star/balladeer Serge Reggiani. Garance was following in the footsteps of other production companies, such as Argos Films, famous since 1949 for bold, high quality ventures within the thriving state-supported short-film '*art et essai*' industry like Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard*. Argos and Garance were the tip of the iceberg, as Lagny (1999) tells us: about 3000 short films targeting subsidised theatrical slots were made during the 1950s,

of which 160 were about Paris alone! (Argos's inevitable hookup with Ivens would be for another city film *Valparaiso* a few years later). The production of *La Seine*, then, was taken on by this promising new outfit, and the producer trio would remain involved in Ivens's work throughout this period: Pigaut would co-produce Ivens's two Cuban films as well as narrate *Nanguila*, *Valparaiso*, and *Mistral*, while Reggiani would offer movie-star clout as narrator of three films, *La Seine plus Pueblo armado* (*An Armed People*, 1961, Cuba/France, 35) and *Le Ciel, la terre* (*The Threatening Sky*, 1966, France, 28). The other key participant recruited from French left-wing culture was the already canonical poet and scriptwriter, 57-year-old Jacques Prévert. Prévert's commentary-poem would be dashed off in two days in August during a Riviera vacation, after he was shown the rough cut, and this high profile participation by a former collaborator of Renoir and Carné – as well as of Reggiani – gave an additional luster to the project. It would also lay over the film – some would say 'overwhelm it with' – a distinctive melancholy and populist sensibility that many critics would recognise as an echo of the great 'poetic realist' feature films of the 1930s with which Prévert had been associated.⁷

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Sadoul thus left the project in capable hands, and the shoot took place over six weeks in the spring and summer of 1957. Cinematographer André Dumaître came on board, fresh from having shot a short documentary on the Paris Commune with Ivens's *Lied* collaborator Robert Ménégos (young cameraman Philippe Brun was recruited later for some additional shooting). Brazilian-born composer Philippe-Gérard soon joined the team and his status as favourite composer for Yves Montand (and Édith Piaf!)⁸ must have reassured Garance about the work's box office potential. The documentary's topic was, in fact, well in line with Ivens's traditional themes, no stranger either to the city film genre (*Regen* [*Rain*, 1929, Netherlands, 16], *Peace Will Win*), to films about bodies of water (*Zuiderzeewerken* [*Zuiderzee*, 1930-1933, 40-52]) or to river films in particular. *Lied*, whose influence Sadoul (1963, 13) acknowledged, had crystallised its social themes around six major world rivers of course; even earlier in the decade Ivens had been developing an Italian project around the Po; later a film would appear on the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta, *Rotterdam*, the last film in the lyrical essay cycle. Ivens soon decided that *La Seine*'s structure would be built around the geographical and chronological progression through the city from southeast to northwest on its way to the Atlantic, employing furthermore the classic city film narrative arc of dawn-to-dusk. The production plan involved four basic episodes: the countryside; entering Paris; the heart of the city, including the '*beaux quartiers*'; and finally the movement past the Renault factory as the river leaves the city towards the sea (the automobile plant did not end up in the film from what I can see) (Lagny, 1999). The end result would be much less orderly than this plan of course, with its even-

tual narrative meandering, associative logic and spatial bearings that were relaxed to say the least (including the frequent violations of the axis rule that are arguably intrinsic to the river film).

Two aspects of the project must have seemed refreshing to Ivens. First the relatively comfortable budget that would allow a shooting ratio of as much as ten to one (Stufkens, 2008, 323) and the relatively improvisational, observational style thus entailed: one recalls that for *Indonesia Calling* (1946, Australia, 22), the ratio had been as low as one-to-one, and that the classical 16mm observational direct films of the following decade, by Wiseman for example, often capitalised on a seventy-to-one ratio. So Ivens was a long way from having the freedom to jettison his more economical approach of collaborative *mise-en-scène*. Secondly, the small-crew production scale not only left behind the huge bureaucracy he had come to know in the Cold War films, but was also intrinsic to this more spontaneous style. For both Ivens and many critics, it harked back to his artisanal 1920s 'lyrical' style of *Regen*, now redeployed as a kind of celebratory embrace of his new yet familiar home. The affectionate subjectivity of this embrace is at the core of its essayistic fabric, though there may well be nary an 'I-word' or self-reflexive authorial moment in this film. As far as Ivens (quoted in Zalzman, 1963, 89) was concerned, 'I love Paris. Unforgettable years of my development unfolded here. It is a little bit my city'.

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The resonances of the emergent hybrid 'lyricism' Ivens would effect in *La Seine* had much broader implications than his own individual personal aesthetic and career trajectory. It tapped a zeitgeist, and the name of Ivens's old acquaintance Vertov must now be brought back on this account to flesh out this claim. The Soviet pioneer had died in relative obscurity three years earlier in 1954, but the timing of his death hard on the heels of his nemesis Stalin is suggestive. The revival of interest in Vertov's work began immediately in the USSR and soon thereafter even in the Eastern Bloc (Berliners translated and published part of Nikolai Abramov's book on Vertov in 1960 – a trial balloon two years before it saw the light of day in Moscow!). Hicks (2007, 131) provides a vivid account of the rediscovery of the Vertov legacy by Soviet filmmakers and critics/historians of the fifties, both his synch-sound film innovations and his 'life-caught-unawares' style. The persistent stewardship of Vertov's widow Elizaveta Svilova was key of course, but more important were the trickles of thaw slowly manifesting at the same time. A frequent visitor to Moscow, Sadoul was already sharing in this excitement as he developed *La Seine* with Ivens; thereafter he would carry out several research trips to the USSR, and his enthusiasm in turn had an explicit and profound impact on Rouch and Morin as they were beginning to develop their famous and paradigm-shifting *Chronique d'un été* at the end of 1959. Sadoul, who soon began the publication of his Vertov findings in *Cahiers du cinéma* and elsewhere, was probably single-

handedly responsible for sparking the Vertov publication boom that Paris saw over the following decade.⁹

It is not far-fetched, then, to concur with Sadoul about *La Seine* as an homage to Dziga Vertov's 'life-caught-unawares' aesthetic, a revival of the kino-eye sensibility and exploration of the *cinéma vérité* doctrine (Sadoul, 1963; Morin, [1960] 2003). Ivens's tactic of spontaneously, directly, and materially observing public social and economic life, and his film's non-interactive close following of the everyday as it unfolded on the banks of the Parisian river, were a clear ricochet of the Vertov revival.

Zeitgeists are amorphous, but the film seems to signal the culture's not unrelated continued emergence from the trauma of hot and cold war, and a generational need for positive energy that Ivens was clearly tuned into:

I wanted with these lyrical images to show that one could avoid the sentimental cliché. Life is beautiful. It sure is. My social films allow me to affirm this. Certain critics have written that this film marked a regression. [...] They didn't understand. [...] Lyricism today has more than ever its *raison d'être*. It has not become banal or old-fashioned. We need a romantic reaction against the excess of these 'films noirs' that we've abused so much in the last twenty years.¹⁰ We must show young people that they have good reasons to believe in life, despite the dark childhood that we gave them with the war. We have to tell them, as in *La Seine*, that the world is full of beauty, that love is marvelous, that it is important, that it is made for them and that they should love each other. (Zalzman, 1963, 90)

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Ivens's affirmative yet materialist people-watching was perhaps registering emerging social values of contingency, spontaneity, emotion, and authenticity that were percolating around the West, from which he had been partially isolated for a decade, values expressed by the post-war generation everywhere from the proliferating New Wave cinemas (especially in France) to the American Beat phenomenon. Ivens's echo of the infectious energy of the social and aesthetic transformations of the Soviet 1920s and his anticipation of those that would be facilitated by the new *direct* technology within the next years are both part of this broader picture. But of course Ivens was far from a newcomer to the territory, in fact returning to an earlier on-the-ground spirit of spontaneity that years of bureaucracy and war had worn down: he, and those critics who knew his origins, saw echoes of both his original documentary avant-gardism and his original communist-humanist themes of human labour and collective struggle with the natural elements. If it could be argued that during the Cold War decade Ivens had humanised socialist realism with behavioural and sensory detail, now he was consciousness-raising the emerging direct cinema

with his never-abandoned social aesthetic of labour, struggle, and class consciousness.

That the images would be often taken by a camera hidden in a shack on a public works barge, or on land in a baby carriage or delivery truck (Stufkens, 2008, 323), to avoid interrupting 'natural' behaviours through intrusive cinematography bears comment. One manifestation of the rediscovery of Vertov, according to Hicks (2007), had been the sudden interest in hidden camera observation on the part of post-Stalin-era documentarists (one can empathise with their interest in 'natural' rather than prescribed behaviour, but the ominous overtones of the hidden camera could hardly have escaped everyone for too long). Elsewhere too, on an international scale, on the cusp of direct cinema, there was a momentary flurry of experimentation with this technique: this did not mean that zoom lenses or even telephotos were suddenly being deployed, for only expensive prototypes were available at the time and low-tech Ivens was certainly not using them (nor did they surface more than sparingly in work by his contemporaries before the early 1960s), but his recourse to traditional long focal length lenses was adequate to the purpose. It is useful to see *La Seine* in this context, as a fresh exploration of a mid-fifties license to observe life-caught-unawares, a second wind perhaps for the famous British 'mass observation' current of the 1930s as well as for the pioneering Soviet avant-gardists.

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One cannot help but be amazed by the synchrony represented by several other canonical documentaries made or released in 1957 that in their way all made use of a hidden or discreet camera to record social life on the street, endeavouring to access directly the 'truth' of human behaviour through pushing to its limits the available still-preliminary technological infrastructure in this transitional moment: *On the Bowery* (Lionel Rogosin, 1956, USA, 65), *Skid Row* (Allan King, 1956, Canada, 37), *Les Raquetteurs* (Gilles Groulx and Michel Brault, 1958, Quebec, 15), *Nice Time* (Alain Tanner and Claude Goretta, 1957, UK, 17), *Every Day Except Christmas* (Lindsay Anderson, 1957, UK, 37) as well as Varda's aforementioned *L'Opéra-Mouffe*.¹¹ These films reflect an international (i.e. Euro-American) impulse to shoot on the streets, to maintain the discretion of the camera either through camera placement or shieldings of various kinds. A thematic thread of this work in this transitional moment is social abjection, the marginal underbelly of capitalist society – even by cheerful, sentimental Ivens. All of these films blend observational material with the classical tropes of *documentaire organisé* – as Sadoul (1963, 17) described the *mise-en-scène* idiom that Ivens had developed in the 1930s, in fact recycling the very term Ivens had originated to describe his work in *The Spanish Earth* (1937, USA, 53) – ranging from Rogosin's real-life social actors dramatising their own lives, Varda's professional actors and King's studio-based interviews with

real social actors to Anderson's very-Ivens-style workplace *mise-en-scène* and the Quebeckers' almost-newsreel-style public ceremonial and musical performances. All of these directors were a whole quarter-century younger than Ivens, or more, and this generational dynamic, in addition to his isolation in the post-war decade within cinematic cultures where cutting-edge technologies were simply not affordable or accessible, suggests, at least in part, why his aesthetics of the direct were palpably more conservative than theirs.

The hidden camera had never been a major strategy for Ivens, but it seems he saw it in 1957 as an extension of the present but discreet, non-intervening camera that he had always endorsed for his 'spontaneous' mode:

I used certain technical means of *cinéma vérité*. But in any case I've always personally sought the truth. Basically, *cinéma vérité* is not entirely a new school: it corresponds today to the desire we once felt – Flaherty, Vertov, myself and others – to have a living camera, that could go and come like someone without being noticed. That doesn't mean that we did, in our experiments, the same thing: first *cinéma vérité* has sound; and in any case young people have an extra advantage over us: their camera can be totally silent; silence is very important – even if one sees the camera one doesn't know exactly at what moment one is being filmed. (Ivens, 1966a, 19-20)¹²

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On the banks of the Seine the further step of hiding his camera would somehow seem instrumental and indispensable for capturing some of the film's most memorable images. Lying in wait for hours hidden on his barge alongside the little square where Sadoul and he had noticed *clochards*,¹³ often side by side with playing children, finally yielded him exactly those images and led to a complex and dynamic scene that many reviewers referenced as the most memorable (not acknowledging that editing alone had constructed the proximity of the kinetic youthful innocence of noisy pre-teen girls playing circle games and the static despair of the pensive solitary old man, of apparently Maghrebian origin, feeding the sparrows). Like this theme of implied memory and regret, many such scenes had to do with melodrama and emotion, especially of a conjugal nature interestingly (a theme that can hardly be said to have been Ivens's preoccupation in the first three decades of his career). For example, the above vignette is anticipated by an earlier one of a solitary old man staring over the river, and several shots of indigent older men defined primarily by their solitude (read loneliness) and briefly echoing the more indulgent tropes of skid row abjection of King, Rogosin, Varda, and the Londoners. Much more common in *La Seine* are the vignettes of fulfilled conjugality that are nevertheless not all of the spooning-on-the-shore variety (which are admit-

tedly legion): from glimpses of a gallant consort re-hammering the heel of his girlfriend's broken pump and a young woman playfully slapping the face of her fresh boyfriend to a scene around a canvas-seamstress gesticulating in a vain attempt to save face in a marital argument she knows she has lost in her waterside workplace.

69. *La Seine a rencontré Paris* (1957): hidden camera observation catches a seamstress performing a marital argument in her waterside workplace. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



However, the hidden camera moment did not last long in Euro-American non-theatrical documentary (other than the sensationalist more commercial variants that ranged from Jacopetti to Reichenbach). An unspoken consensus seems to have emerged before too long to move past it, no doubt with the gradually dawning realisation that the ethically ambiguous boundary between voyeurism or spying and respectful, insider observation was too easily crossed. (Did the legendary MIPE-TV conference in Lyons in 1963, for which Ivens wrote the above comments, mark the turning point in this attitude? It certainly marked the point at which the Europeans abandoned the too ambiguous and misleading term *vérité* to the Americans who were already using it promiscuously.) Armed with increasingly versatile cameras, documentarists would learn other methods of minimising the disruptive potential of subjects responding to a public camera, and more importantly many learned how to capitalise on such interactions, to integrate interactivity into a new collaborative aesthetics and ethics of direct cinema. Or, to reanimate my theorisation of Ivens's passage from *Zuiderzee* to *Misère au Borinage* (*Borinage*, 1934, Belgium, 34) and *Nieuwe Gronden* (*New Earth*, 1933, Netherlands, 30) two decades later, to integrate indirect address of narrative and exposition with the direct address of spectatorial interpellation and enlistment. Rouch seems to have been one herald in the 1950s of the latter, alternative practice of presentation- and performance-based idioms, even in *Les Maîtres fous*, which appeared

to as much controversy as acclaim as Ivens was premiering *La Seine* in 1957. But Ivens seemingly was too entrenched in his three-decades-old 'don't look at the camera' practice/rule to work through this for now... In *La Seine*, several shots that are cut at the very moment the subject is on the verge of noticing the camera reinforces this impression of a mature artist hesitating to change the rules of his game – although there is one lovely shot of a boy, surrounded by his playmates, looking right into the lens in extreme close-up with excitement that a bicycle has been fished out of the river by a frogman. One can speculate what kind of a conversation that the retention of that shot required in the editing room!

At the same time as *La Seine* can be seen as a tentative harbinger of *vérité*, the film must also be considered an extension of Ivens's commitment to developing well-tested approaches, specifically the collaborative *mise-en-scène* technique that he had developed independently in the 1930s – and even arguably as early as *Regen* and *De Brug* (*The Bridge*, 1928, Netherlands, 16). As we have repeatedly seen, this technique – equivalent to what Ivens and Sadoul were calling *documentaire organisé* – enabled Ivens to closely and authentically record everyday life close up, enabled the intense, studied concentration required to represent manual labour and its practitioners, from the collective effort of earth-moving and construction to children's play. Moreover, as we have also seen, *mise-en-scène* also permitted Ivens to construct vivid characters and extrapolate narrative vignettes. He had taken this approach as far as possible with current technology in the direction of neorealism in *First Years*, but now was scaling back his ambitions to coincide with the new artisanal style. The 20 or so narrative vignettes in *La Seine* are sometimes as short as two shots; others are more fleshed-out narrative threads whose motifs are interwoven through longer, more complex passages – for example a Sunday painter obsessively but indecisively attacking his canvas, reappears three times. These portraits were effective, notwithstanding their conciseness, judging from one reviewer's account: 'Each character seen or glimpsed for a few seconds stops being a stranger to become almost a friend' (Philippe, 1958). The non-professional dramatisation techniques behind many of the vignettes remind us that Ivens had not rushed wholeheartedly all the way into the new spirit of the direct. At Lyons in 1963 he would sum up his reservations about *cinéma vérité*, and hijack the meaning of the term to apply to his own political aesthetic:

In our discussions, we can say anything at all about such a label, that the important thing is to make good films, and these generalities interrupt discussions with a certain demagoguery. But tomorrow when we take off again with our cameras, it will still all the same be the truth that counts for us. Thus the questions appear: what truth? Seen by whom, expressed

for whom? Will it be the whole truth or just a part of the truth? Which part? Ultimately this truth will be put in the service of what? This said, with the possibilities of a fast observation and a great suppleness in movements, one runs the danger of staying only at the surface of the truth, of caressing reality instead of penetrating it, and of contenting oneself with showing it without true force, audacity and creative power. [...] In the course of a shoot, one finds oneself facing multiple traps: one can, for example, confuse the global truth [*d'ensemble*] with authentic detail. This authenticity finds itself formidably reinforced by the new technique of *cinéma vérité*. [...] To speak of *cinéma vérité* in the first sense of the word, there must exist a freedom of expression, not only in the cinema halls, but also on television. (Ivens, 1963)

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In this holding on to *mise-en-scène*, ironically, Ivens was also in step with Vertov, who used collaborative techniques to a far greater extent than many of his new 1950s and 1960s apostles realised – though Sadoul (1963, 18) himself perceptively recognised that he ‘did not always refuse reconstitution and never the organization of documentary’. *La Seine*’s prefatory caveat ‘No actors appear in this film, only men, women and children who love the Seine’ can thus be seen in this light as somewhat disingenuous. When Schoots ([1995] 2000, 252) gleefully reports that Ivens registered some critics’ estimation of his work as ‘old-fashioned’, one wonders whether his reliance on dramatisation was an important factor in this judgment.

Like the river itself, the finished *La Seine* is fluid, inexorable, majestic, vibrant with underwater eddies and kinetic tension. The experience of watching it with the sound turned off is completely different from watching the final sound version, with its commentary and score that can dominate the experience for the susceptible viewer. Speaking purely cinematically, the documentary offers a rich visual canvas of Paris social life, all from the point of view of the river’s paved banks, from its many bridges and, most importantly, from the water’s surface. I use the word ‘canvas’ advisedly, for painterly elements are richly present, with a Brueghel influence documented in Ivens’s shooting notes (Stufkens, 2008, 327) and surfacing in the layered social busy-ness and multiple narratives on the screen throughout. Yet the cinematic quality dominates, for the viewer is literally swept along by an indulgent, even excessive momentum of river-borne travellings – from bow, stern, and sides of moving vessels – often complicated by swivels, panoramic sub-movements and counter-movements, punctuated by the visual refrain of the filmmaker’s wake and compounded within the frame with Ivens’s traditional, well-studied behavioural choreographies of labour and play. Thus, much complex kinetic exhilaration informs the new energy of proto-*vérité* observation that we have already

discussed. The purely physical impact and affect of this style no doubt shaped the critical vocabulary that greeted the film: phrases like ‘one fluid movement’ and ‘one loving gesture’ (Bertina, 1959), and vocabulary like ‘incantation’ appear in every review. This kinetic affect is at the core of the film’s subjective sensibility and the essayistic status that more than one reviewer matter-of-factly declared (Mardore, 1958).

The Paris Ivens discovered was a rich and diverse mosaic. If he substantiated the cinematic cliché that the banks of the Seine are the playground of the idle classes, both the idle rich and the idle poor, he also documented all those in between who repair to this long aquatic parkland and spatio-economic artery for sustenance, sociality, and decompression. Predictably, he also affirmed the Seine as a transportation hub not only for river traffic but also for the buzzing trains and automobiles that move along its shores, and as a workplace – for metal scrap operations, for the importation of wine, grain, and timber, for freight handling and boat management, for salvage, for tourism, for art production, even for the fashion industry – though many of the less glamorous industries seem pushed to the outskirts, including a vestigial *péniche* subculture reminiscent of *L’Atalante* (Jean Vigo, 1934, 89). Importantly, continuing the proto-feminist thread of his work, he also vividly recorded domestic labour and child care along its banks. The mosaic is diverse not only in terms of class and generation, but also in terms of race, ethnicity, and even sexual orientation (as Lagny [1999] pointed out¹⁴), all animated with the rhythms of leisure and work, eating and sleeping, running and dancing, the erotic and the agonistic – even overtones of birth and mortality. Aside from an early glimpse of decrepit housing and another glimpse toward the end of the film of a post-war housing project, its squareness softened by the dusk and its illuminated windows, Ivens and Sadoul did not take in the urban transformations that were beginning to be felt in post-war Paris, urban renewal and demolitions, high-rise construction projects, suburban housing estates soon notorious for alienation and violence – transformations such as Godard would critique less than a decade later in his own essay on the city *Deux ou trois choses*. Perhaps the Seine theme did not allow his elders to do so. On the other hand, what *La Seine* shares with *Deux ou trois choses* is the reflection on sex, though much more discreetly on Ivens’s part of course: his camera’s no doubt unavoidable attention to lovers is not only our adulterer’s slant on the city of afternoon mistresses (one shot includes Fiszer, solitary and sunlit, crouching over a newspaper on the bank), it also both accentuates the hoary Parisian stereotype (three stills illustrating one film magazine review [Mardore, 1958] were of couples or erotic in nature), it also addresses, with some self-reflexivity, the benign problematic of voyeurism (a vignette with an eager photographer soon reveals his unaware subject, an attractive woman sunning on the banks).

70. *La Seine a rencontré Paris* (1957): self-reflexively addressing the benign problematic of voyeurism. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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Other archetypes are also in play, if only discreetly, for example the syndrome of tourism, deftly satirised in one shot, or more profoundly the presumptuous narcissism of imperial metropolises that seem uninflected by the critique that Resnais and Marker brought to bear on the city several times in the same decade. It would take more confidence from Ivens, the immigrant, to let loose his critical eye on the culture that had, after all, most recently traumatically censored his magnum opus *Lied*, and he would do so hardly less gently a decade later in *Mistral*.

Ivens was right to insist however, that this thematic delicacy does not mean that *La Seine* is 'completely apolitical' (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 252-253), but rather that the politics takes a different shape than the Cold War rhetoric of previous years. *La Seine* offers a gentler politics of the everyday, of labour, migration, and cultural shifts, and of subtler observations of connections brought out by the perceptive editing. For example, strenuous adult earth-moving is imitated by the little girl with her hands in the sand barge, accenting the class-based transmission of manual labour; or the pink collar workers' midday sandwiches and fruit along the banks and the *clochards'* simple crusts are suddenly trumped by the tourist industry with its regimented tourist crowds receiving expensive hors d'oeuvres from uniformed waiters on the *bateau-mouche*. This all transpires in the shadow of the same Eiffel Tower that the viewer is also subjected to thrice (Notre-Dame gets even more lavish treatment, a whole mini-sequence and then two out-of-order shots later). This issue is complex: certain passages of the film may well echo the experience the tourists no doubt had on the *bateau-mouche*, and *La Seine* may seem to be not all that far from the *Family of Man* iconography that was touring the world at that very moment, entrenched in its ideological opposition to *Lied* as Musser (2002) has pointed out. At the same time, can we see Ivens's avoidance of crisis analysis and overstated embrace of the sentimental everyday, of

sunlit community and commensality, as expressing an awkwardness around his place within *Humanité* culture? And around his relation to a national communist party in disarray, shamefacedly supporting both colonialism and the Hungarian intervention and grappling with its electoral decline in the face of de Gaulle's imminent Fifth Republic the following year?

If *La Seine*'s placid political complexity is anchored in the slight discordance between the surface aesthetic of 'life-caught-unawares' spontaneity and the *mise-en-scène* material, both modes are sutured by the practices of narrative editing practices and by parallel intercutting that to my mind undermine the ontological integrity of the moments of observational 'truth' of both styles of cinematic apprehension. For example, the first dejected old man caught in low angle through a long focal length lens is given a fictive point of view shot by the editor, a spot of floating debris that he is watching poignantly, and suddenly the perceptual authenticity of this moment is undermined, locked into an explanatory denouement. As for the 'organized' threads, a three-shot scene with Pierre Balmain *haute couture* models may be the clincher of them all, seeming to accentuate the artifice of the mannequins' performances in contrast to the naturalist behaviour all around. One could even read it as humorously self-reflexive in its equally organised topper of a solitary fisherman pulling in his catch just as the *haute couture* group leaves the scene – the fish is patently dead, and this shot is the only hint in an entire film that the absurdist masculine pastime of riverbank fishing that it seems excessively devoted to offers some material dividend!

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Turn on the sound and *La Seine* is another film, its dynamic visual tapestry of truth altered further and arguably suborned. For one thing, the lack of direct sound and the imposition of studio-produced synthetic sound effects that could have been produced in the 1930s mediate our sense of Ivens's *vérité* discoveries, especially for retroactive viewers spoiled by post-1960 direct sound recording. But it is the score by Philippe-Gérard (also an immigrant) that especially lulls the film's observational sharpness. His experiments with folk melodies and amateur instruments are in tune with the film's documentary vocation, granted, but they are also too caught up in the potential picturesqueness of riverbank life, reinforcing the populist politics and aesthetics that are always hovering around the film and smoothing over its gentle contradictions.

The other even more determining factor that mediates visual integrity is the commentary, elegant and elegiac for some, hackneyed for others, intoned lugubriously by Reggiani, but completely transformative of the film, especially for native francophones who are not reading subtitles (and who read Prévert throughout their schooling). The poet's allusive, personal poem endows the film with the literariness intrinsic to the essay mode, as well as its most explic-

it layer of first-person subjectivity, in complementary harmony – or even tense rivalry, according to some analysts – with Ivens's own. It layers on both the anthropomorphisation of the Seine as a volatile female personage ('Risky, dangerous, tumultuous, and dreamy all at once. That's the way she is, malice, caress, romance, tenderness, caprice, bitchiness, idleness') and its metamorphisation as an individual life flow in the shadow of the grave:

And then, when below the Pont Neuf the dying day's wind blows out my candle, when I withdraw from the business of life, when I'm finally at ease in the grand palace of those at rest, at Bagneux, at Père Lachaise, I shall smile and say to myself, once upon a time there was the Seine, once upon a time there was love, there once was misfortune and another time forgetfulness. Once upon a time there was the Seine, and once upon a time there was life.

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Ivens, sentenced to work forever in his second, third, fourth, fifth, and even sixth language, had worked closely in productive counterpoint with writers almost since the dawn of sound. If there is a clear consensus that his collaboration with Hemingway in *Spanish Earth* formed the first apogee of his career, the lyrical essay period offered one collaboration after another in an absolute roll of similar quality, from the Afro-Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen, to the Italian Alberto Moravia, to the prizewinning Dutch poet Gerrit Kouwenaar.¹⁵ Prévert's script on the Seine was the first and arguably the most conspicuous of the literary collaborators who shaped this period's work and clinched its essay status. He would come back for an encore a few years later in the Chilean short *Le Petit Chapiteau* (1963, 6). Whether 'rivalry' or 'productive tension' is the most applicable notion to describe Ivens's relationship with his writer collaborators of this period is a matter no doubt for subjective interpretation – remembering, of course, that for Ivens, an inveterate collaborator, a generous and trusting co-worker, collaboration was an act with artistic, pedagogical, economic, and, yes, political valence.

After the Paris premiere of *La Seine* in November 1957, attended by Ivens fans and a star-studded *Humanité* assembly – Montand and Signoret and others – the film went to Cannes the following May and triumphed, tying with a now-forgotten French fiction *La Joconde: Histoire d'une obsession* (Henri Gruel, 20) for the short film 'Grand prix'. It then went on to five other important Western festivals, London, Bergamo, Cork, San Francisco, and Oberhausen (winning first prizes at the latter two). This public and official validation of the personal and artistic choices Ivens had made and the essayistic direction he was now embracing was a commercial certification as well as ideological, of the kind we saw included above in *Sight and Sound*. Doors would be

opened to producers, festivals, and distributors around the world over the next decade.

The critical reception of the film, on both right and left, was the most enthusiastic Ivens had received since *Spanish Earth*. On the left, Sadoul (1958) maintained his first-person hyperbole, his upfront conflict of interest notwithstanding, 'Joris Ivens shows himself to be a great poet of Paris, a great painter of Paris' while Anne Philipe (1958), Gérard's wife, was more discreet with hers: 'Yes, all that is familiar to us. But when Ivens sees them they are no longer fugitive images they are images as beautiful as a poem of Appollinaire; beautiful by themselves and by what they express, that's to say of a perfect beauty'. *Libération*, with no conflict of interest, maintained the almost hyperbolic tone: 'There are magical encounters. Yesterday, that of the Dutch painter van Gogh and Provence. Today that of the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens and the Seine in Paris. The result: the most beautiful French short film of the year. The most beautiful cinematic poem ever written on Paris. A masterpiece' (Dubreuilh, 1957). Even Dutch critics came on board: 'The film is one fluid movement of images that captures everyone observed by Ivens on the banks of the Seine in one loving gesture, they are the workers, the *clochards*, the lovers, the lonely, the children, the fishermen. Ivens does not only show us his love for Paris but also his undisturbed artistry' (Bertina, 1959). By the mid-sixties Grelier (1965, 100) was speaking a kind of consensus in his definitive monograph: 'one of the most accomplished of Joris Ivens's films, even one of the greatest documentary films of contemporary cinema'.

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La Seine's critical reception was not unanimous, however, and dissent was not long in coming. One influential Parisian critic would, a few years later, tax the film with confusion, 'the déjà-vu', and 'worn out tricks' (Porcile, 1965), but these were by implication attributable to Prévert as much as to Ivens. Meanwhile more than one critic, even amidst the raves, echoed the Grenier theme of a shift away from the political:

Here is a kind of postface to *Chant des fleuves*, but here there is no anger, no polemics, nothing but an incantation, a glorification of a river that seems to bring only happiness and forgetfulness. This halt by Ivens is meaningful (at the evening of one's life, does one feel the need to rest?) but disturbing also, for the combative vigour of this great militant of truth seems to fade as soon as he no longer has weapons in his hands. (Mardore, 1958)

Ivens's East Berlin friends were even more startled by their renegade friend at a 1960 Leipzig Festival screening (nine months before the erection of the Berlin Wall), according to one insider account:

Andrew Thorndike immediately placed Ivens on the other side of the barricades: 'The poetry is beautiful, but nowadays the political and historical moment are in the foreground. And that does not happen in *La Seine*'. Günter Klein, former studio-director and president of the festival, plays the different 'Ivenses' off one another: '*Song of the Rivers* is profound, and *La Seine* [...] is just a babbling brook according to so many people; it is very beautiful, but it is no river'. Karl Gass asked, simply: 'Where is the fist, Joris'? (Jordan, 1999, 100)

And it is hard not to be sympathetic with their perplexity in the face of their friend's very complex orchestration of his materials and his political challenges in his new context.

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Like many popular hits that strike an immediate chord, *La Seine* was perhaps doomed to age less well than other Ivens films: for me its outsider sentimentality sometimes grates, the *haute-couture* product placement makes me also want to ask the fist question,¹⁶ the observational engagement sometimes lapses into prettiness, and the populist score delivers one too many cloying repeats. Parisian film historian Lagny (1999) agrees with Porcile (1965) and positions the film closer to 'stereotypes' and 'clichés' than 1958 audiences, reviewers, and festival juries might have had enough distance to recognise. *La Seine* is dangerously close, she argues, to the dominant mode of expression in the 1950s French documentary: for example, its recycling of iconography from the famous Paris photographers Doisneau as well as Cartier-Bresson, and from the 'poetic realist' cinema of the 1930s.¹⁷ Such reserves are understandable, perhaps because of the filmmaker's eagerness to please his new homeland constituency, his film's unrestrained indulgence in comfortable emotions and iconographies, but *La Seine* is nonetheless an immensely affecting and evocative work. If the consensus has shown a few cracks over the decades, it is more a reflection of volatility of the canon and the market than of the intrinsic qualities of this deeply felt, sharply observed work of re-entry and transition.

CHINA: SECOND EPISODE

Two China films represent the next instalment in the long series of travel essays/lyrical documentaries that take up this period of Ivens's life. The filmmaker relocated to Beijing soon after the *La Seine* premiere. As usual, Ivens managed to be in the right place at the right time, and he began his work there amidst the fallout from Chairman Mao's January 1958 declaration of the Great Leap Forward. This promised teaching gig, inextricable from this political

context, would last intermittently for a year (but Ivens, of course, came home for the 1958 summer festival season and his triumph at Cannes). Of the two China films, *Lettres de Chine (Before Spring, 1958, 38)*¹⁸ shall retain our attention, a lyrical essay whose full-colour pastoral beauty almost distracts from the tumult underway. *Six Hundred Million With You (1958, 12)*, a short, static, and raw teaching exercise about a Beijing demonstration against the Western superpowers' interference in the Middle East, is seldom given more than passing reference in Ivens literature. Nevertheless, this cinematic reminder to the historian that the world was once more on the brink of war thanks to the Suez crisis and its aftermath, shot in luminous black-and-white 35mm, looks much better than 50 years of dismissals would have led us to believe (symptomatic of several of the traps of our discipline).

71. *Six Hundred Million With You (1958)*: placard from a Beijing protest against Western interference in the Middle East pioneers 'global south' solidarity. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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I shall come back in Chapter 8 for further textual and political analysis of the 1950s China work in conjunction with Ivens's later China episodes in the 1970s and 1980s, since its position as a document of the Leap engages comparison and continuity with the later work embroiled, as that work is, in the Cultural Revolution. Suffice it to make a few general points here.

Before Spring continues many of the basic tendencies of *La Seine*, a return to the classical images Ivens relied on in the thirties, a continuing *essayiste* edging around the periphery of the experimentation in the direct cinema that was beginning to take documentary culture and practice in the Western Hemisphere by storm, and the enrichment of the new fashion for social observation with the older perspectives of socialist realism. But this, and many of the other 1960s films – *Carnet de voyage (Travel Notebook, 1961, Cuba/France, 34)*, *Pueblo, Nanguila, Valparaiso, Le Petit Chapiteau*, and *Ciel* – must not only be seen as integral films in their own right but also as pedagogical and technical exercises engaging with an aesthetics that is as instrumental as it is artis-

tic. As teaching films, guided and directed for the most part by Ivens, they may well be inevitably a conscious or unconscious initiative to instil the senior communist cineaste's aesthetic into aspiring filmmakers of these 'third world' countries. They are also an effort to get these filmmakers to see their own countries from fresh angles, not only just Ivens's eyes, and thus to sharpen their perceptions of their national environments. The cinematographer of *Before Spring*, Wang Decheng, would repeat for the rest of his life the value of the lessons he had learned alongside Ivens (Film Archive of China 1983; Wang Decheng, 2008). One measure of Ivens's success in this series of films is their eclecticism and variability when seen as a group, a certain index of his openness to local cultures and geographies but also to ideas and aesthetics proffered by his students, apprentices, crew, and mentees, many of whom went on to be major figures in their respective national cinemas from China to Chile. Teaching is political, and for Schoots ([1995] 2000, 255) to characterise *Before Spring* as 'apolitical' removes politics not only from the solidarity genre but also from the pedagogical vocation, and quite simply boggles the mind. We shall return to Ivens's delicate orchestration around the politics of both the development of the Chinese national film industry and the Great Leap Forward in Chapter 8.

The Chinese and Cuban films, and to a lesser extent Ivens's films from Mali, Italy, and Chile in different ways, must also be seen as latter-day versions of *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, USSR, 50) and *Spanish Earth*, outsider solidarity testimonies by Ivens to the achievements and aspirations of a society in transformation. We have seen how Ivens could be said to have originated this subgenre in the 1930s, and it is certainly one he pursued more systematically than any other filmmaker and did not abandon it during this so-called 'lyrical' phase. The hallmarks of this genre, infused with the worldview and dramaturgical apparatus of socialist realism, are all present in these films, above all the spirit of celebration of socialist achievement, images of new construction, of water irrigating dry land for the first time, of earth being shaped by smiling armies, and above all, of children. Ivens himself referred to the China films as 'an exaltation of China's future through this demonstration of spring' (unidentified French interview). The fact that the pretext of the three-part Chinese film is the arrival of spring in China's northern regions exaggerates and enriches Ivens's already utopian discourse of solidarity.

As globetrotter, Ivens predictably outdistanced even Marker during this period, recognising that for a European filmmaker in the era of 'peaceful coexistence', light years distant from any apparent threshold of revolution, one increasingly important setting for political filmmaking could be found in what was increasing called the 'third world' in the 1960s. We have already seen how he pioneered such a practice, as early as *The 400 Million* (1939, USA, 53)

72. *Lettres de Chine [Before (Early) Spring]* (1958): a Mongolian herder. This teaching film converges socialist realist utopianism with attention to local cultures. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



73. *Lettres de Chine* (1958): emerging direct cinema aesthetics in this attention to a crying child and her toy, within a classical solidarity framework. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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and increasingly in the post-war decade in Indonesia and with his deployment of input from within anti-colonial struggles in *Peace Will Win* and *Lied*. Later, he also saw one Brazilian project aborted by the 1964 coup while another in Venezuela never got off the ground. In a way, the internally colonised Mongolia, the 'exotic' setting for *Before Spring*, aligns with this framework, as does arguably the importance of 'undeveloped' and 'distrustful' Sicily and southern Italy in the Italian film of the next year. The contradiction that Ivens then and later would not openly challenge the centralist, multicultural state apparatus centred in Han-dominated Beijing – any more than he had the multicultural Soviet state in the 1930s or the 'new democracies' of Eastern Europe in the post-war decade – requires at least acknowledgment here and further mention when we return to China in Chapter 8.

Solidarity also means travel, pilgrimage, othering. Both realist and utopian, this work and the other films in this trajectory are travel essays, encounters with the exotic with all the temptations that implies. For such films, though not necessarily directed at the Western audience in the primary instance in these pedagogical contexts, the ultimate extension of their production is their encounter with a western public, the last link in their realisation. For this pub-

lic also, the filmmaker must be a foreigner like themselves so that the codes of the exotic are fully and accessibly inscribed. Critical liabilities attach to the many travel-inspired lyrical essays of Ivens's colleagues in the French documentary in the fifties and early sixties. Most significant is a kind of ideological avoidance, shaped by what I would call this temptation of the exotic. Sometimes the personal subjectivity of the traveller-author served as a means of circumventing in-depth social analysis of his or her chosen landscape, surface impressions being ostensibly more reliable and less presumptuous, as well as less difficult to convey, than any focused analysis – especially for the non-speaker of the indigenous language. The travel essay was also used from time to time as a means of avoiding struggles at home, commitment being much more aesthetic and much less risky abroad. (To be fair, any serious discussion of Algeria was forestalled by French censors.) Godard touches upon the dangers of the exotic – and is in turn touched by them – in his moody, aloof statements of a few years later on Vietnam, *Loin du Vietnam* (*Far from Vietnam*, 1967, France, 115), and Palestine, *Ici et ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*, 1976, France, 53). These liabilities of the travel-essay also threaten to entangle Marker in his various films, despite the fact that the best of them, *Lettre de Sibérie*, is a spoof of the travelogue form and well aware of the limitations of its own subjectivity.

Ivens's travel-essays are a different story, in large part because of their locally focused pedagogical orientation, and because they were very much a pretext for Ivens the teacher to make a contribution to small national cinemas struggling against what Godard would later term Mosfilm-Paramount, the imperialist monopolies. Confronted with the 'third world', Ivens was incapable of issuing a Godardian call to contemplative inaction. He would inevitably plunge right into a given situation, as he did in China, Cuba, and Chile, trustfully and openly transmitting to his world audience the enthusiasm of his local students and associates. Never the skeptic, Ivens would pay each host society a warm and encouraging tribute, offering his services as teacher, publicist, and resource-person with complete modesty and generosity. The Cubans, Chinese, and Chileans in particular reciprocated this trust with feelings of great affection and indebtedness.

L'ITALIA NON È UN PAESE POVERO

The next step on Ivens's global trajectory was Italy. What was to be his sole realised cinematic project there, *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (*Italy Is Not a Poor Country*, 1960, 112), was far from his only engagement with that country and its rich and dynamic political and cinematic cultures. Indeed, Ivens had a

sustained relationship with Italy from the end of the war until his death – not surprisingly since Italy was the major member country of NATO and the incipient European Union, along with Ivens's adopted homeland France, where the Moscow-linked national Communist Party was a major player in the electoral process throughout these decades. In fact, the PCI was the largest communist party in the West. Virgilio Tosi, General Secretary of the Federazione italiana dei circoli del cinema (Italian Federation of Film Societies), an organisation close to the PCI, was Ivens's first host in 1949, when a triumphant tour led to a special personal relationship with Tosi as well as an ardent fan base in the film club network. Such interactions built on Ivens's existing relationship with Italian cinema, whose neorealist breakthrough he had already tuned into with great enthusiasm and personal identification upon his departure from Australia in 1946:

When I saw [Rossellini's *Paisà*] it had seemed to me that it was my own look that found itself behind the camera. His passion for looking and expressing was so strong that even the plot disappeared. [... In de Sica's *Bicycle Thief*] everything was simple: the subject, the story, the facts. [...] The reconstitution of life, of everyday gestures, was perfect. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 248)

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Ivens developed also a taste for Italian culture in general which he found warm and spontaneous in contrast to northern European *froideur*:

In Italy, from the very first days relationships were easy and I felt naturally close to people. Warm and direct, Italians accepted me as I was and not, as often in France, as they wished I was. I had deep friendships in France but almost always weighted down by I don't know what innuendos. In Italy, I discovered lightness, the art of living, spontaneity, immediate friendship, so many things that by nature I had always kept at a distance. I made there solid relationships and lasting friendships. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 248)

Ivens's participation in the September 1949 congress of Italian filmmakers in Perugia launched close relationships in particular with the latest neorealist director sensation Giuseppe de Santis (whose *Riso amaro* [*Bitter Rice*, 1948] opened at the end of the month), neorealist high priest Cesare Zavattini and the Florentine Aristo Ciruzzi as well as committed young novices who were already forming the next generation, Pontecorvo, Solinas, Tinto Brass, and the Taviani brothers Vittorio and Paolo (Jansen, 2002). Ivens's frequent follow-up rounds of the cine club circuit beginning in 1951 were great successes (Jansen,

2002), despite the Cold War intrigues necessary to bring the prints of his works back and forth across the border (Tosi, 2002a). In the coming years, his collaboration with Italian politicians and young filmmakers, especially on *Peace Will Win*, *Freundschaft siegt* (*Friendship Triumphs*, 1952, USSR/DDR, 100) (future Euro-Communist kingpin Enrico Berlinguer has an onscreen cameo), *Lied*, and *Windrose* (where one segment is directed by future prizewinning director Pontecorvo), was to be substantial. A steady stream of projects was initiated and developed throughout the 1950s but never brought to fruition: in 1952, a long personalised script by Umberto Barbaro, left-wing critic and founder of the Centro sperimentale di cinematografia, about the daily struggles of a worker and his family; a project about the struggles of workers in Calabria late that same year, which acquired some art historical motifs comparing 17th-century Italian and Dutch painting;¹⁹ a collaboration with Zavattini and Pontecorvo about 'life in Italy' touching on the historic relationship of northern writers like Goethe and Stendhal with Italy; a concept on the North's major artery the Po River; another on the North-South divide that had been a perennial theme of Italian culture and politics since national unification a century earlier; a later project about the Po in collaboration with Zavattini after the success of his recent river-film hit *La Seine*; and finally a project on Venice, developed in collaboration with future *Italia* collaborator Brass, who had recently been working with another of Ivens's idols Rossellini.

Venice also had a role in the origins of *Italia*, for it was around the time he was on the 1959 film festival jury that the *Italia* project was initiated. According to Paolo Taviani (2002), it was he and his brother who had recommended Ivens to the legendary Enrico Mattei. This charismatic former Resistance fighter had become the powerful CEO of the state petroleum corporation ENI, and his centre-left nationalism (despite his Christian Democrat ties) fueled his confrontation with the international oil cartel. Mattei was looking for the best documentarist in the world to make a promotional film for the state television network RAI about ENI and the prospects for domestic fossil fuel autonomy.²⁰ According to Ivens, Mattei had seen *Nieuwe Gronden* (presumably in one of the film clubs) and loved it (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 251) and, declaring that Ivens's communist affiliations did not matter, sent Valentino Orsini, a Taviani collaborator, to Venice to recruit Ivens, who just happened, as usual, to be looking for work (Taviani, 2002). After various consultations about assurances of artistic freedom, and a check with the CPI's culture commissar Mario Alicata to make sure he had their blessing, Ivens succumbed to the generous conditions and production facilities offered by Mattei. These included an office and a solid production team: Orsini (1927-2001) who would act as a producer, Vittorio and Paolo Taviani (b. 1929, 1931) who would work on the script, and Brass (b. 1933) who would act as technical assistant – for all

four the Ivens collaboration would be a stepping stone towards their future place as pillars of the Italian fictional cinema²¹ – along with the seasoned cinematographer Mario Volpi and the novice Mario Dolci on camera (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 254).

If Ivens had any reserves, whether pragmatic, artistic, or ideological, about working for another state enterprise after a decade of stress within the Eastern European bureaucracy, he set them aside. Aside from the paycheck and the lavish technical set-up, why did he accept? No doubt the persuasiveness of his young Italian friends was a factor but as in the past his material needs trumped any doubts he may have had: 'At the time I was terribly hard up and I had accepted also for crassly materialist reasons. I needed to make my living and from this point of view, it was very agreeable' (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978). No doubt also it was the seductive lure of television that clinched the deal, as he told his East European friend Hans Wegner (1965, 192-193): the calculus offered the dazzling possibility of 14 million spectators in contrast to the 50,000 workers that might be reached through another conventionally distributed film, and even in a poor region where much smaller numbers would access the broadcast those numbers already surpassed a conventional film audience.

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In itself, ideologically speaking, the switch from Soviet-bloc state employment to western state corporate sponsorship was not an issue. I do not disagree with Stufkens's (2008, 23-24) explanation:

One can see that communism, in the form in which it has manifested itself historically, i.e. as capitalism of the state, is a kind of detour towards capitalism. Capitalism and communism share the same Judeo-Christian tradition as their cultural and ideological foundation. To some degree this explains why Ivens could easily move from one side of the Iron Curtain to the other. Ivens represented the same developments in both East and West – a world rushing towards industrialization. Ivens could fulfill commissions from such customers as Shell, Philips, ENI (Italian Gas Company) and the Rotterdam Harbour Lobby, all Western capitalist corporations, as easily as those from trade unions and communist umbrella institutions in the East and West.

Industrialisation aside, Ivens could not have known of course that this ambitious first television project would turn into another distribution debacle that seemed to echo *First Years* in its scale, and that he would eventually regret his eagerness and eschew television for the rest of his career (except as a secondary network for his theatrical films).

By September, less than a month after Venice, Ivens was already research-

ing and scouting locations throughout Italy, accompanied by Orsini and the Tavianis, sometimes even in Mattei's private plane. His orientation was to situate people, from engineers to peasants, within and around the imposing ENI industrial infrastructure that ranged from refineries in Ravenna to natural gas wells in Lucania to offshore foraging rigs near Sicily. Not speaking the language, Ivens deeply appreciated his collaborators' contributions and qualities: 'spontaneity, a sense of initiative, the gift of improvisation, imagination, and above all this innate art of human relations that is perhaps the secret of the Italian cinema's vitality' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 255). It may have been this 'human relations edge' that opened Ivens to the pursuit of the relational cinematic method he had begun experimenting with in *La Seine*, namely direct cinema, which turned out to be a major feature of the new film. The research scouting tour itself dramatically reinforced the already determined thematic binary of the film, north and south (that other Marxist Luchino Visconti's prodigious fiction masterpiece on the same theme, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (*Rocco and His Brothers*, 1960, 177), more tragic than the Dutchman's upbeat variation, started production at exactly the same time as *Italia* was underway). Once installed for several weeks in a suburban Rome hotel to produce the script, Ivens's team was also a buffer against the unfamiliar pressures of television production, everything from the harassment of producers checking up on daily output to the pressure of producing three uniform 45-minute episodes (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 253). The script emerged as a story that could be read like a novel, rather than as a conventional 'découpage'. Throughout the whole process Mattei's presence and support were invaluable, another buffer against the RAI bureaucracy as well as against his own ENI staff. Buffers or not, the pressure must have been daunting to turn around a long three-part film in five major locations in less than eight months and, aside from the eventual censorship mess, it is not surprising that Ivens never returned to television work.

Styles, concepts, and themes gradually emerged for a film that would be both (i) a composite of four distinct episodes, set in different regions, within three main parts, and (ii) a hybrid of many styles that reflected the group's divergent experiences and energies, including: traditional Ivensian 'organized documentary'; an essayistic voice-over commentary with the traditional literary provenance, this time including a contribution by Italy's most famous writer Alberto Moravia; animation, both expository and playful; dramatised personal narratives including a dream sequence featuring a traditional Ivensian boy mediator character; archival compilation; expository scientific discourses; poetic landscape tropes, often aerial; music and song, both diegetic and non-diegetic; and emerging interactive idioms of direct cinema, coloured by a pinch of Brechtian aesthetics (especially in the Lucania episode, accord-

ing to the director's marginal script notes [JIA]). Ivens saw this complexity as a major innovation of the film and wrote Fiszer (1960, JIA) that 'This is not an academic line, conformist [...] rather, it's bursting/hopping, like in a circus program – and the continuity of the numbers has my own secret logic as circus director. [...] This is a form and style entirely new for Italy, even for other countries I think'. It was indeed new, but as a hybrid-composite *Italia* echoed earlier equally ambitious encyclopedic works like *First Years* and *Lied*, and anticipated Ivens's future concepts for *Mistral*, arguably *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, 1976, France, 718), and ultimately *Histoire*. This time, for once, Ivens's technological outlay was state of the art. Moreover the proto-*vérité* triumph of *La Seine* had paved the way for further experimentation with emerging styles of direct cinema, no doubt under the pressure of his youthful collaborators: *Italia* became the first Ivens film to use the emerging interactive synch-sound interview techniques along with fluid and subjective camera handling and sensitive stocks (although the work continued to be in 35mm). All the same Ivens was intent on distinguishing his new film from what he already perceived as the abuses of the direct on television:

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Discuter style. Beaucoup des interv. à la télé ou non. Nous ferons un film.
[Let's discuss style. Lots of TV-style interviews or not. We are making a film.] Interviews slow up the film. And also it is the methods of direct reportage of TV and we should not compete with that. Find our own style of TV interview, *commentaire, dialogue, voix intérieur* [commentary, dialogue, internal voice]. (Ivens n.d., [c.1959], notes, JIA)

The interviews in fact go against the grain of corporate sponsorship with their unflinching exploration of poverty in the shadow of the oil derricks and refinery stacks, especially in the Lucanian episode, where three major synch-sound interview segments itching to move beyond their tripods feel remarkably prophetic for the period. This is not to mention the dramatised journalistic interviewing by a TV journalist performer, a typical Ivensian mediator, that performs mostly scripted exposition throughout the film.

In general Ivens was inspired by the challenge of the new medium of television and recognised that the first episode would determine the audience for the entire package:

First film should be *amusant, intéressant, beaucoup des attraction, pas trop d'histoire sèche, pas trop de théories, de schema, pas trop de propagande ENI. Il faut que le public aime le premier film, pour être intéressé aux 2 autres.*
[amusing, interesting, lots of attraction, not too much dry history, not too

many theories, schemas, not too much ENI propaganda. The public must like the first film, in order to be interested in the two other ones.] – must get attention of audience in first 3 minutes. (Ivens n.d., [c.1959], notes, JIA)

Still, for all of the seduction of TV and the direct, this luminous 35mm black-and-white hybrid essay anthology retained much of the reliance on the proven formulas and time-tested aesthetic sensibility of Ivens's previous work.

Thematically, building from the already confrontational tone of the title – defiantly announcing the advent of Italy's much-vaunted 'economic miracle' against the traditional stereotypes – and continuing in the vein of the 'third world' discourses shaped in Indonesia and China despite its production in a 'developed' country, Ivens shaped *Italia* as another riff on the theme of the dichotomies of the industrial urban north and the rural south – both domestically and globally. The discourse around rural poverty, especially in Southern Italy, was very visible in both sound and image, and is also said to have been a factor in the eventual RAI censorship of the film (Ivens, interview with author, April 1978). The first part *Fuochi della val Padana (Fire in the Po Valley)* would treat the northern, industrialised riverine region that Ivens had twice attempted to develop as a documentary focus, this time exploring the extraction and use of methane. The second part comprised two episodes spanning the north-south divide, the first *Due città (Two Cities)*, devoted to the petroleum industry in another northern region, the adjacent Adriatic ports of Venice and Ravenna, and organised through the eyes and dreams of the above-mentioned boy, and the second *La storia di due alberi (Story of Two Trees)*, focusing on southern Lucania in which poor peasant families depending on a single olive tree recognise their hope for economic benefits embodied in a 'Christmas tree', the fire-breathing metal contraption erected above natural gas outlets. It is in this episode that the synch-sound interviews with peasant subjects left out in the cold by Italy's post-war economic surge come together as a rather effective undermining of the corporate discourse. Part III *Appuntamento a Gela (Meeting in Gela)*, is set in Sicily, and synthesises the north-south theme in a personalised marriage narrative allegorically uniting a northern oilrig worker with a young local woman. The final three-part 'director's version' clocked in at 110 minutes, by far the longest film Ivens had directed to date in his career, and arguably the one where a generous budget is most visible on the screen.

The first section on methane production around the Po evokes many of Ivens's earlier works in its celebration of technology, industrial processes, and landscapes – from his corporate commissions like *Philips-Radio* to his socialist solidarity epics like *First Years*. In keeping with his objective of grabbing and retaining the attention of the tele-spectator, it has a charged magical

atmosphere, accented by night-time cinematography of industrial landscapes à la *Komsomol*, and livened by a festival aura, charming didactic animation featuring dinosaurs and dynamic 3D maps, an archival interlude where the idea of methane exploitation is traced back to the Italian resistance, and a climactic scene where everyone is doused baptismally with black gold (a homage to *Staroye i novoye*'s [*The General Line*, Eisenstein, 1929, USSR, 121] and Bip Parkinson's celebrations of technology in their respective cream separator sequences?).

74. *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (1960):
In 'Fire in the Po Valley,' a magical atmosphere celebrates technology through a child's eyes. DVD frame capture. ENI.
© CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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The two-part next section continues the lyrical night-time glorification of machines and tubes, this time the refining, import, and consumption infrastructure on the northeast coast, considerable local colour around the urban setting of Venice, and a 'surreal' narrative thread. In this a boy dreams of his industrial surroundings and flies through the air, thanks to superimposition, giving the filmmakers the pretext for elegant point-of-view aerial glides over the dreamlike nocturnal landscape of smokestacks and flames. The anchoring of a didactic exposition in the eyes of an 'innocent' outsider can be traced back in Ivens's *oeuvre* to *Komsomol* and would become the basic structural trope in his city film *Rotterdam*: the specific figure of the exemplary prepubescent boy has his ancestors in *Power and the Land* (1940, USA, 33) and *First Years* (the kid even interviews an engineer, just like in the latter film's Bulgarian episode), not to mention of course Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948, USA, 78) from the beginning of the decade.²² The second episode of the second section, 'The Two Trees', relies a little less on well-trodden paths, since it's the place of the assemblage's clearest technical and aesthetic experimentation, most notably with direct-cinema interview techniques (Ivens's Italian research and shoot was happening just slightly before Richard Leacock's cinematography for *Primary* [Robert Drew, 1960, USA, 60] and a few months before *Chronique d'un*

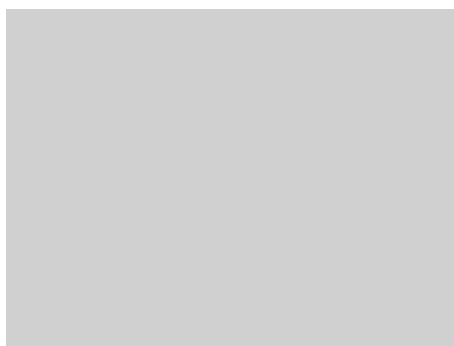
été). Their energy must have in no small way been facilitated by Ivens's younger Italian collaborators' gifts of sociability: the very Ivensian *mise-en-scène* narrative of a community around its symbolic communal olive tree is larded with interviews with the Lucanian village inhabitants, onsite in their crowded and bare homes, in scenes that are poignantly reminiscent of *Borinage*, with the cumulative effect, as in the Belgian film from almost three decades earlier, of denouncing the extreme poverty of their lives. The local peasants are shown as distrustful of the new technology and natural resources, but the team certainly secured their trust in the filming process. The interviews are stiff but interactive and eloquent, addressed to the filmmaker behind the camera and crammed with material data of lives lived, from exorbitant rent payments to communal family meals. Especially vivid is one sequence set in Matera (Basilicata) in a woman's cave dwelling, wherein she feeds her extended family, seconded by the knife-waving theatrics of her bread-slicing mother (-in-law?), and delivers a peripatetic performance about both her inadequate accommodation and her numerous young children eating from their communal bowl on camera. The use of direct sound, however rudimentary, and its minimal outlay of actual lip-sync takes well-disguised by cutaway editing, was no doubt urged by Ivens's young collaborators and enabled by their social talent. It was of course facilitated as well as by ENI equipment outlay, despite the relatively early stage in the emergence of synch-sound portable equipment.²³ It is especially notable in this 35mm work, all the more within a national cinema without any direct sound recording culture to speak of, where even the fiction film industry scarcely ever used synch sound. One can see the film then as a quantum leap past the single-system classicism of *La Seine* and *Before Spring*—although this important issue has scarcely been acknowledged in the Ivens's literature nor even in Ivens's own accounts.

75. *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (1960): in the Lucania episode, corporate discourse is undermined by pioneering synch-sound interviews with cave-dwelling peasants ignored by the 'Economic Miracle'. DVD frame capture. ENI. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The final part of *Italia*, 'Meeting in Gela', takes place in Sicily. The boss had to leave early for Rome for the editing of the earlier segments, so the Tavianis took charge of the remaining cinematography of the script that Ivens had prepared with them. Although the segment includes more interviewing of social actors in the Sicilian fishing community affected by offshore prospecting, the most notable thing about the part is the bucolic neorealist lyricism in the treatment of this community and their lives (reminiscent of, if not explicitly citing, Visconti's similar subject a decade earlier in *La terra trema* [*The Earth Trembles*, 1948, 152]). Concluding the film are the dramatised marriage narrative allegorising the unity of north and south, urban and rural, and, most striking from the point of view of the scarred 21st-century planet, a euphorically prophetic proposal of the development of nuclear energy to move beyond petroleum, delivered through more animation and a Sicilian balladeer, a musical climax.

76. *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (1960): in the 'Two Trees' episode, serial adulterer Ivens provides a conjugal overlay for methane development in the South. DVD frame capture. ENI. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The Tavianis' contribution ensured without a doubt the almost mystical cinematic sensibility of 'Meeting at Gela', infused with neorealist dramatisation, but Ivens (letter to Fiszer, 1960, JIA) sensed their submission to his overall scheme: 'They don't want to influence me, on the contrary they follow me like a guide wire'. And the Tavianis' recollections confirmed both Ivens's overall mentor role and their later departure in their own direction:

[Ivens] asked me and Vittorio to shoot the Sicilian episode while he went back to Rome to do the editing of the first two parts. Obviously, when you film on behalf of someone else, especially if it is somebody as famous as Ivens, you try to work as he does. For instance, I've always been impressed by Rossellini's *Germania anno zero* whose ending was half shot by Carlo Lizzani, but still maintains the same style.

On the contrary, once we arrived in Sicily, the mythical setting of

some much loved films like Visconti's *La terra trema* and Germa's *Il cammino della speranza*, we forgot Ivens's imprinting and got closer to fiction cinema. When we sent our footage to Rome, we got a telegram from Ivens saying, 'This material is great, but it's not a documentary, it is fiction altogether'. Which was true because we had little by little moved away from his shadow. Joris was a very important and useful figure in our lives both personally and professionally. He taught Vittorio and me a certain attitude towards cinema and towards life.

Once, while talking to Ivens about our future, he told us we should opt for fiction, 'because you are definitely not documentarists'. (Paolo Taviani, 2002, 106)

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Mysticism and myth aside, one would like to reproach the Tavianis for the hokey way that the development of petroleum in the south is cemented narratively through the parallel matrimony subplot, but serial adulterer Ivens himself had provided a similar conjugal overlay for 'Two Trees' (a betrothed 30-something peasant couple, who have already played flirt-tag around the eponymous olive tree, grip hands and smile lustily into each other's eyes as the methane well flames). It must be remembered that the trope of parallel allegorical conjugality had become familiar in Ivens's *Power*, was then recapitulated with unapologetic sentimentality in *First Years* and *Windrose*, and would soon resurface in *Nanguila*, and *Valparaiso*.

In any case, the end result of these intense eight months of collective effort was a highly polished and intricately sutured trilogy. But the master's touch did not stop PROA, the production company, and RAI from getting out their hatchets and bringing on one of the most traumatising post-production episodes of Ivens's career. It is said that the state network objected to certain of the film's leftist innuendos, especially in the third Sicilian section, and in an interview in August, Ivens attributed the problems to the incompatibility of the interview material with television standards (Autrusseau, 1960). Mattei is said to have liked the film, proudly terming it a work of art, but the besieged CEO was no longer around to support his star artist employee. RAI in cahoots with PROA producer Federico Valli (credited as producer) had already come up by March with a broadcast version that seriously truncated the film in the director's view and was 'impossible to show'. The Lucania episode was especially disfigured, with the result according to Ivens of an 'agglomeration of scenes and images' that the TV viewer would not understand, with 'sequences dislocated, without proportion, without any logic, relations or rhythm', in short 'without any sense'. Episode III had fared better, with the personal narrative remaining, but still reflected an overload of technical details and a 'limping' visual impact that would distract the viewer from the central theme.

Ivens argued, somewhat naively it seems, that ENI's public image was at stake, futilely offered a revised continuity for the Lucania episode, and concluded with an ultimatum that he was prepared to withdraw his name from the episode (Ivens, letter to Valli, 28 March 1960, JIA). It seems to have been a dialogue of the deaf and, cut off from his patron and packing his bags for Mali, Ivens sought legal advisers who negotiated the credit 'fragments from a film by Joris Ivens' for the broadcast that finally took place in July 1960, late at night, with Ivens already deeply ensconced in Nanguila.

Damage control was the only recourse that remained: he sent Valli the plaintive rejoinder 'I must make other films now, at my age one is in a hurry – the insane behaviour of Mr. F has made me lose time and moreover spoiled my chance in 1960 to realize my greatest artistic dream "Le Mistral" (not to mention my financial losses)' (Ivens, letter to Valli, 1960, JIA). A year later Ivens had still not moved on, with telegrams still circulating about the 'insult' and the last-ditch plea:

I find myself in the position of a writer who gave you a manuscript that you didn't want to publish. It is not successful in its overall version. Now I request, supported by a clause in my contract with you, to give me a full copy of the film, specially developed on Kodak stock, and which I saw in Rome at the end of my work. I am very attached to this film, because I discovered new paths for the development of documentary film and also for the on-site TV-interview – I would like a copy of this film in my private collection. (Ivens, letter to Valli, September 1961, JIA)

But Ivens had perhaps learned his lesson and had already secretly looked after this scenario, with Brass appropriating a print of his full version of the film and sending it in a diplomatic bag to the Cinémathèque française for its preservation and future use in the Ivens collections... alongside *First Years*.

Italia belongs to that category of Ivens works that have little career outside of specialised posthumous screenings organised by the Ivens estate: New York, Italy, etc. Bakker (1999) suggests the mixed impact it had 40 years after its production, with 'some parts forceful, some obsolete' and cryptically suggesting its articulation of the 'dialectic evolution of Ivens's ideology when compared with previous works made in the early fifties in Eastern Europe'. Ivens's other countryman Wim Verstappen (1964, 34) offered a more cinematic appreciation:

Italia: unfocused camera position, & primitively lit scenes, but also fine work with helicopter shots, in one of which from relative cu of face until one sees whole factory (before *Lawrence of Arabia*). These bird's-eye views

are not just an effect but are justified when a little boy dreams of flying over Italy.

Moreover, he identifies 'like elsewhere, [Ivens's] apparent nonchalance hiding a deliberate dramaturgy', perhaps chancing upon the filmmaker's ambivalence about *vérité*. Grelier's (1965) response is more enthusiastic, especially about the Sicilian marriage sequence shot by the Tavianis, but expresses reserves about the dehumanising effect of the electronic score provided by composer Gino Marinuzzi, the pioneer of electronic music and distinguished film composer (a Renoir ex-collaborator) who rounded out the prestige project's high-end team.

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Ultimately, one can judge this anomalous and aesthetically refined work as an honest, fervent, and inventive commission. Anomalous for both its synchronisation and its being out of step with its era at the same time, *Italia* was undercut, as the pattern at this point in the career of our globetrotter increasingly dictated, as much by the absence of authorial follow-up as by the lack of artistic control. This does not prevent its appropriation by Tosi (2002a) and others to the Italian national canon, both the documentary canon and the left-wing or progressive tradition, despite its corporate provenance, if only because of its pedagogical deployment/marshalling of its young interns. Its road-movie north-to-south homage to both vanishing and emerging landscapes, all the while enunciating an eloquent if discreet critique of the 'economic miracle', likewise confirms its interest beyond the museum. Historically speaking, for all its hybridity and eclecticism, the work occupies a prophetic positioning at a transitional moment in the emergence of direct cinema, and offers poignant footnotes to the sagas of state television documentary in Western Europe and America – a way to go and a way not to go. It is also an elder's contribution to alternative canons of 'third world' and Marxist cinematic interventions in the era of new waves and young cinemas. If today, its environmental innocence is perhaps most disturbingly evident, however anachronistic this response must be, its enduring power is couched in fervent humanist construction of everyday lives and livelihoods. It is not clear if Ivens was thinking of these considerations as he was observing the African village or the Cuban human geographies that were next on his agenda, but the wounds were seemingly deep and long-lasting.

MALI: DEMAIN À NANGUILA

The clerk resumed, 'In the agricultural sector, we need to get organized. We have to create schools for rural practices. In this way a generation of enlightened peasants will be born, which will rise up itself against the routine and age-old methods. There are so many things to do, so many things to do'.

– Seydou Badian Kouyaté, *Sous l'orage* (1957)

Nanguila usually gets short shrift in Ivens studies, partly because it is so inaccessible, and partly because, as a brief episode between major adventures in Italy and Cuba, this film could seem to have been a hit-and-run assignment that involved only five weeks on location and reportedly little participation in the final editing.

Still, *Nanguila* is a handsome and ambitious 50-minute semi-documentary, Ivens's first film in 16mm and fourth in colour, and a commission that he plunged into with his usual energy and commitment. What is more, as the only film he made on the African continent, it alone allows us to say that the 'Flying Dutchman' made a film on every inhabited continent. Another socialist realist-shaped narrative of social policy and construction experienced through the story of an exemplary hero who embodies the future of his/her country, the project was caught up in the excitement of the summer of independence for seventeen sub-Saharan countries, in particular in what would be confirmed later that year as the newly independent Republic of Mali. Echoing Ivens's feelings and perceptions from earlier encounters with Indonesia, the new Eastern European 'democracies' and revolutionary China, and anticipating those he would utter later that year in Havana, the ever enthusiastic filmmaker spoke to Paris journalists of 'great changes playing out in people's minds', 'the first stammerings', and a 'great event' (Lachize, 1960) – though he was careful to use the word 'evolution' rather than 'revolution', having noted that the locals retained traditional chief-centered hierarchies and lacked Cuba's class consciousness (Ivens, production notes, JIA).

Nanguila has recently been revived in African festivals, embraced as one of the pioneering films of African cinema, even the first fiction film made with national resources within the future cinematic hotbed of Mali, a country being born even as Ivens was on its soil.²⁴ The production company, Société franco-africaine de cinéma, was an outfit of cultural cooperation, based in Paris and Abidjan, put together by two French sisters' producer Gisèle Rebillon and scriptwriter Catherine Varlin (Winter), a Jewish former Resistance fighter and journalist with *Humanité*.²⁵ Based on the extensive networks Varlin had developed in her *Humanité* days with the African pro-independence activists now

lined up to lead the new countries, the firm organised *Afrique 1960*, a series of eleven short documentaries, each devoted to one of the new nations emerging out of French West, Central, and Equatorial Africa. The series was financed by contributions from the new governments with the support of a French TV network and Air France, and developed from Varlin script contributions. Varlin's deal with the Fédération du Mali for a 16mm Kodachrome medium-length film was negotiated at the initiative of Seydou Badian Kouyaté, a medical doctor, novelist, and newly appointed Minister of the Rural Economy in Bamako, close to the Marxist president Modibo Keita.²⁶ The Federation's contribution of over 65 million African francs approximated the not insubstantial amount of almost \$270,000. Badian Kouyaté (interview with author, January 2013) did not know Ivens's films, surprisingly, but was an admirer of revolutionary China, like Ivens, and his vision of rural renewal clearly echoes Maoist policy of the day.²⁷ Varlin already knew the country well, and the documentary project on agricultural development was developed jointly by Badian Kouyaté and her. As producer, Rebillon²⁸ hired cinematographer Louis Miaille, who was already in West Africa finishing Rouch's docufiction feature *La Pyramide humaine* (*The Human Pyramid*, 1961, 90), and Ivens was recruited just as *Italia* was winding down in March.

Newly arrived a month later, Ivens and a crewmember spotted a young civil servant in the agricultural sector, the eighteen-year-old Moussa Sidibé, engaged in putting up a tin roof, and recruited him for liaison and logistics as well as Bambara-French-Bambara translation. Sidibé quickly became indispensable mediating with participants: 'I had very enriching and instructive contacts with the Africans, and I had to take their suggestions into account. Sidibé, our lead actor, was a marvelous collaborator through the whole filming. He organised and directed all the scenes that we filmed in Bambara' (Baby, 1960). Ivens recognised his potential onscreen as well, offering him first a screen test and then the role of the narrative's protagonist based on his own name (Sidibé, 2010). Beneficiary of this mentorship, Sidibé would soon appear in another semi-documentary short on the same theme *Le Retour de Tiéman* (Djibril Kouyaté, 1970, Mali, 40) and be appointed Assistant Director of Mali's new Centre national de production cinématographique. Confirming Ivens's legendary pedagogical knack for identifying local talent, Sidibé is now recognised as one of the pioneers of Malian cinema.²⁹

While the Ivens Foundation asserts that Ivens was not involved in the editing of the film, there is evidence that he participated both in the editing of Varlin's commentary text, fine-tuning and compressing, and in the Paris studio recording of the voice tracks. There his old associate Roger Pigaut read the commentary, and Sidibé, brought in for the occasion for the three-day session in July, read and improvised non-sync dialogue and further commentary,

backed up by local Malian students for additional voices. All the more reason that this survey of the economic and personal challenges of African independence, boy-meets-irrigation-dam (and girl) variety, must be seen both as an Ivens utterance no less than many others of his works and as a typical collaboration with a local subject – with pride of place within the category of Ivens ‘commissions’ (rather than those films like *Mistral* built on Ivens’s original personal concepts, production, and research development).

Not surprisingly though, the recent recyclers of *Nanguila* have not always cast this archival treasure as an Ivens work, rather see it through new eyes, valuing the way it

shows the efforts of a newly independent African country to construct its development on the basis of agriculture, emphasizing solidarity through human investments. *Demain à Nanguila* denounces the rural exodus following independence and inscribes the brave tendencies of the then authorities to halt the negative impact of the rush of young people towards the urban centres. The film aspires to be the mirror of socio-educative norms, of the formation of young people in the rural milieu, and the efforts of conflict resolution in the traditional setting. Women appear in the film bending under the weight of multiple domestic and agricultural tasks. In the background, one can see in this film [...] the architectural pearls of Bamako. The *Maison des artisans*, the Great Market, the train station, the National Assembly and the Vox Cinema. Through this precursor film, we see Bamako after dark, and the rural populations’ fascination with the itinerant cinema, a powerful means of entertainment and of the awakening of mass awareness. (Africine.org, 2012)

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The basic outlines of these narratives and themes had been hammered out before Ivens came on board and hit the ground running in Bamako in early May. There in cooperation with the Fédération authorities, the director conducted Ivens-style location, casting, and thematic reconnaissance around the capital and its surrounding countryside, observing, taking notes, and shaping the skeletal outline in concert with their new recruit Sidibé. The authorities’ mark may be felt not only in the theme of the reinvigoration of traditional agriculture but also in the presence onscreen of an adult re-education centre, a facility for the migrant rural youth flooding the city: street youth and movie fan Sidibé is an inmate and returns to the Centre at the end of the film after his visit to Nanguila. After Bamako, the filmmakers headed for their intensive three-week shoot in Nanguila, a remote agricultural village on the banks of the Upper Niger 60 kilometres from the capital.

Typically, the final film abounds in a lyrical apperception of the natural

elements of this newly discovered land, in the particular the great river waters, and several aerial views of the village are part of the formula. In Nanguila, the intense heat permitted shooting only in the morning and evening, but the processes of liaison with the local community leaders, scripted scenes shot with Sidibé, and observational scenes depicting everyday life and work, were carried out with great efficiency by the crew of six European technicians and eight Africans. Vivid documentation of both agriculture and fishing took place, including the standard motifs around modernisation as a boon to local economies and a proto-feminist interest in women's labour. Ivens's fascination with traditional work rekindled his early flair for the cinematic capture of work: a stunning sequence showing the sowing of peanuts in the dry earth, a handheld high-angle close-up camera following first a single sower as he stoops to insert one after another a seed in the soil and then tamp down the excavation with his bare foot in a single harmonious and efficient gesture, is as simple as it is typical of the film as a whole. Thereupon the camera draws back and entire choreographed line of sowers in the same posture is shown. This is not the only echo of *Zuiderzee* in the film, for the climax depicts the collective building of an irrigation dam to harness the seasonal waters of the Niger, a frenzied festival-like enterprise that is a symbolic test of Sidibé's commitment to his roots and his chosen future. Sidibé's experience, mostly fictional, was developed as a 'connective thread' to maintain the audience's attention and 'allowed [Ivens] to show the aspects of the village life that were the most striking for him' (Atrousseau, 1960).

77. *Demain à Nanguila* (1960): 18-year-old Sidibé, Ivens's well-chosen exemplary protagonist, flirts with his village innamorata. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © Sofracima (Pascal Winter)/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Ivens was especially interested in the governance of the community, the '*pal-abres*', the long village council discussions through which collective decisions were made and carried out by elders, elaborated through much repetition and oral performance. Following the example of Badian Kouyaté's brilliant

and under-rated pre-Independence novel *Sous l'orage* (*Under the Storm*, 1957), epigraphed above, which also gives unstintingly attention to elders and their deliberations over the traumatising social changes they are facing, the film-makers captured the chiefs performing their own roles in these leisurely and deliberate *palabres* and integrated them twice into the plot. The councils are shown deciding together to re-admit Sidibé to the community after his transgressive exile in the capital and later pronouncing on their community's 'human investment' in the dam. When Ivens's East German friend Hans Wegner (1965, 197) expressed doubts about the pacing in *Nanguila*, he was no doubt befuddled by his friend's commitment to find a cinematic equivalent of the host culture's respect for both its elders and its inherited democratic process – not to mention the culturally shaped expectations around tempo, narrative, and representation belonging to the intended audience, often uninitiated to the cinema, within that culture.

78. *Demain à Nanguila* (1960): Ivens was fascinated by the Mali village's traditional governance through elders' council meetings. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © Sofracima (Pascal Winter)/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



An unexpected marriage ceremony was also filmed and likewise integrated into the backdrop of the narrative, adding to the colourful mosaic of music and dance woven kinetically into the film, both diegetic and laid over.³⁰ Typical of Ivens's films of this period, the cinematography combines the *mise-en-scène* of '*documentaire organisé*' and handheld mobile 'reportage' with a small camera to the extent that it was allowed by the 16mm colour format. Conscious of the colonial legacy of 'lions, crocodiles and elephants, these eternal elements of films on Africa', Ivens's shooting notes (1960, JIA) reflect his intent to avoid the trap of the 'picturesque' and the 'exotic' and to 'show on the contrary what people there want to know about us and what we should seek to know of them: daily life'.

Direct synchronised sound was neither attempted nor even available, though much non-sync wild sound was effectively made use of in the editing,

not only of the vivid singing and dancing that is part of everyday life, but also of the voices of the *palabres*. The whole has laid over it the slightly talky commentary that Ivens finalised with Varlin, not without considerable frank input from the filmmaker into the journalist's output, critical about both form and politics:

too involved, not written for peasant of Sudan,
too much text, too many words
not simple enough – too intellectual, spoils the effect of the image
Does not create unity of style with the music and image and sound

- everything is a bit on its own, lives its own life, without taking into account the image and the montage
- the montage is for a film for them – the text is for the Paris public – and with the thought what will my pals in Paris say [...] too soft on colonialism, too precious. (Ivens, notes to Varlin, 1960, JIA)

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One of the soundtrack's major distinctions was a strategy not uncommon in films from this period on the cusp of direct cinema, ranging from Robert Frank's *Pull My Daisy* (1959, USA, 30) to Rouch's *Moi, un noir* (*I, a Negro*, 1958, 70): the voice of the silently filmed character retroactively performing a combination of commentary and non-sync dramatic dialogue, in alternation with the expository commentary. The latter precedent, released theatrically four months earlier in April 1960, was immediately recognised by contemporary critics of *Nanguila* (*France-Soir* 1960). The following is a typical back-and-forth, both dramatic and didactic, from Pigaut's information to Sidibé's spontaneous 'internal voice':

Sidibé: (about the Centre) They'll be well housed in this building. With stones, it'll be solid. And cool.

Those two friends, they're keeners.

There have always been these guys who are keeners.

When the little white guys said 'one, two, jump', there they went. 'To work, and fast...'

I don't like guys who are keeners. They are just bootlickers for the '*toubabs*'.

Myself, I don't get keen... for anyone.

Commentator: The women of Niénébalé, the village next to the centre, come bringing their grain to grind. The first happy surprise is over: already for three months they know this: you can thresh your millet otherwise than in the mortar.

Sidibé: That's a beautiful machine. If I go back to the village... But I don't

want to go back to the village... And when is it that they'll have a plough over there? There's no way I'm going back to the bush...

Judging from Grelier's (1965, 104) reaction to the commentary track in the early sixties, however, the alternating strategy did not save the soundtrack from the ignominy of 'false literature' nor the film from other liabilities. Grelier found the commentary too long as well, and the story guilty of too much mediation of foreigners and scriptwriters when it could have benefited from more improvisation on the part of Sidibé. Moreover Grelier found two black-and-white intertextual sequences distracting, namely the opening film-within-a-film at the Vox Cinema in Bamako, a black-and-white *noir* shoot-em-up,³¹ and the newsreel shown by an itinerant cinema set up in Nanguila at the end of the film as if to reward them for their dam-building project, a stiff but luminous black-and-white account of the new president Keito dismounting from his motorcade and greeting rural citizens welcoming him to their village. Still *Nanguila's* strengths in documentary materials, landscapes, music, and dance were clear to the critic, though he acknowledged that Africans, not Europeans, were the film's target audience. For his part, Wegner (1965) observed the obvious liability that the filmmakers had not really had enough time to study local conditions. Verstappen (1964) had a cinephile take on the film, justly praising the camerawork and the mastery of colour, and singling out the sequence showing Sidibé hitchhiking from the capital to Nanguila for its deft and agreeably unpredictable *mise-en-scène*. Schoots ([1995] 2000, 263) provides one of his most obtuse and misinformed film appreciations: 'one of Ivens's least successful works: too superficial and not particularly interesting visually'.

The Malian premiere took place in 1961 at the same Vox Cinema in Bamako as is featured in the film, with Badian Bouyaté and President Keito in attendance. Whether *Nanguila's* 1960s local audiences agreed with the European critics cannot be determined, for the film's domestic circulation is not well documented. Nevertheless, it is clear that the new republic did not follow the Bulgarian pattern of shelving the film, for several secondary reports indicate that 'in Mali the film was a big success. It went in a screening van through the country. For many people in the villages it was the first time they could see a film on a big screen' (European Foundation Joris Ivens n.d.). This account is all the more plausible, given the self-reflexive excursus that shows within the film itself a rural screening event in Nanguila, set up out of a roving cinema truck, in apparent anticipation of how the film was intended to be used, detailing the newsreel program and the villager's smiling reactions. According to Sidibé (2010), the production led to subsidies for training film animators and otherwise stimulated Malian cinematic production and culture: the Office

cinématographique national du Mali was founded by the new government in 1962, and Sidibé's career was launched.

As for the film's prospects in France, the heavy-handed scissors of the French censors, nervous about Algeria no doubt, excised from Varlin's commentary a key synthetic reflection intended for the conclusion of the film: 'Africa is no longer in the European shopping bag. They are no longer selling it at the market. They will no longer feed on its substance'. Without this critique, the denouement of Sidibé's return to his friends at the institution ends up more open-ended than intended. The film's career elsewhere is also difficult to pin down. Other than the special screening in Paris that Sofracima organised later in 1960 (Mundell, 2005b), Sidibé (2010) and Wegner (1965, 197) refer to its screening at the Moscow documentary festival the following summer. Of this there is little record other than a Sadoul (1961) review, which praised the film as 'remarkably human and deeply moving', despite an unsatisfactory commentary that was mercifully drowned by the Russian simultaneous translation. The film likely played Leipzig as well, since the East German archives testify to its presence in that country. Otherwise the film is largely absent from Ivens retrospectives over the years, and its revival in the 21st century on its fiftieth anniversary was long overdue. That such a 'minor' film, regrettably not included in the Ivens box set, should be recycled and vindicated almost two decades after Ivens's death augurs well for other neglected 'minor' works that stand by for reclamation in the 21st century. *Action Stations* (1943, Canada, 50) or *Mein Kind* or *Ciel* anyone?

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CUBA: CARNET DE VIAJE, UN PUEBLO ARMADO

This young nation needs a brand new cinema... and it needs it quickly. The cinema for a free people isn't a carnival sideshow. The screen is for laughing and crying... the screen is for singing the sufferings of the past, the struggles of yesterday, and the hopes of today. The Cuban cinema is born... young filmmakers, young cinema, young nation... In Cuba everyone is young.

In the fall of 1960, Ivens's next gig was a teaching-filmmaking visit to Cuba, and this voice-over impression of the new Cuban cinema is the prologue to the first of the two short films – *Carnet* and *Pueblo* – that resulted. The Cuban films extended two of the major thematic currents of his career: *Carnet* surveyed the accomplishments of the Revolution at the end of its second year, and *Pueblo* focused on its defence against continuing external threats.

I would not like to make a claim for Ivens as a major formative influence

on the Cuban cinema any more than he had been on the Canadian, Indonesian, Polish, or Italian cinemas.³² By the fall of 1960, less than two years after the Revolution, the Cuban cinema had already built up its own distinctive momentum under the vigorous leadership of the Instituto cubano del arte y la industria cinematográficos (ICAIC) and Alfredo Guevara, and of such already established directors as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Julio García Espinosa. My intent is merely to shed some light on the two lines of film history intersecting at the point of Ivens's Cuban work – not only to flesh out this unique episode in his career but also to suggest at the same time some of the parameters of the exhilarating creative struggle taken up by Cuban documentarists in the early days of the Revolution as reflected in his two films.

Although *Carnet* and *Pueblo* are very much the product of their Cuban context, it is helpful first of all to locate them as 'Ivens films', as personal works fully consistent with the evolution Ivens had been undergoing since his move to Paris.

Ivens was in Mali when the invitation reached him in early 1960 from Alfredo Guevara, head of the recently formed ICAIC. Ivens took the next few months to finish his ongoing project, and headed immediately for Havana. Once there, Ivens got to work without delay. The evening of his arrival, the entire staff of ICAIC, already 300 strong, turned out for the lecture he had been asked to make. The Cubans were aware of Ivens's prodigious reputation as a political filmmaker but hardly knew his work at all: his East German epic, *Lied*, a film on the world labour movement, had glimpsed a Cuban political prisoner and had some clandestine screenings before the Revolution, and a few Cubans who had recently been to Europe had seen *La Seine*. Not untypically, the lecture was turned into a dialogue by the Cubans' impatience to get to know their mythical visitor.

The next day, Ivens screened a copy of *La Seine*, found at the French embassy, and engaged the ICAIC filmmakers in smaller sessions on the subject of documentary theory and practice. That evening, Guevara took his guest over to a café at the corner of 12th and 23rd Streets, where Fidel Castro had paused on one of his evening rambles and was carrying on animated conversations with 50 fellow Cubans. Castro welcomed Ivens to Cuba, talked over his film project with him, suggested a visit to the new Chaplin Cine-club which was about to open (Ivens followed his advice and used a sequence shot there in *Carnet*), evaluated the quality of a newly arrived shipment of Chinese rice, discussed the idea of charging varying prices for seats in the Cine-club as a means of accommodating the unmanageable crowds anticipated, suggested a second film idea on the volunteer militia for Ivens, and sounded out Guevara on a plan for improving the bus service to the Cine-club location during show times.

The arrangements for Ivens's filmmaking tour with a group of young ICA-

IC filmmakers were finalised immediately and the third morning they set off in a jeep on the tour of the island that is recounted in *Carnet*. Along with Ivens were two camerapersons, two assistant operators, two assistant directors, a business manager, and two portable 35mm cameras. This crew included Jorge Herrera, later one of ICAIC's leading camerapersons and well known abroad for having shot Manuel Octavio Gomez's *La primera carga al machete* (*The First Charge of the Machete*, 1969, 84) and Humberto Solás's *Cantata de Chile* (1973-1976, 119); Jorge Fraga, who went on to become a leading documentarist (*La nueva escuela* [*The New School*, 1973, 89]) and later the programming head for ICAIC; José Massip, who also went on to direct, including some prizewinning documentaries about dance; Ramon Suarez, an operator who had directed a few shorts under the old regime and was to shoot all of Gutierrez Alea's features through *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968, 97) before finally emigrating; and Alberto Roldan, an assistant director and future documentarist. The excursion was coordinated by Saul Yelin, ICAIC's Head of International Relations. The filming was to be silent since Cuba's only sound system at that time was being used in a major feature project already underway. A general outline had been drawn up for *Carnet*, but there was plenty of room for improvisation.

For the second project on the People's Militia, the group waited until they reached the mountainous Escambray region, where they were able to follow a mopping-up offensive against bands of US-armed counter-revolutionaries. After six weeks of filming (during the peak of the rainy season), the crew returned to Havana and Ivens to Paris, the rushes under his arm, leaving Fraga and the others to finish some shooting for both films. The material was processed in Paris, a technically delicate matter Ivens said in a letter back to Yelin, but only two of the shots were out of focus.

Other letters back to Havana requested additional material as the editing progressed, criticised with a firm professorial tone footage that was too abstract, undefined, or lacking in variety and dynamism, and enthusiastically praised the rest. When the Cubans apologised for delays in returning the required shots because of an imminent invasion, Ivens gently reminded them of the crucial propaganda function envisioned for the two films, which were to inform hundreds of millions of spectators of Cuba's strength. The material was finally finished in early 1961, and Fraga came to Paris to help Ivens put the finishing touches on the editing and the sonorisation. Harold Gramatges, the Cuban ambassador to Paris, was persuaded to compose a score for the two films, the one for *Carnet* including a large amount of Cuban folk music.

The French censors swooped down the moment Garance Films' Pigaut tried to release the films that same year, demanding and getting the excision of all unfriendly references to the US. Although denied a commercial distribu-

tion license (Grelier, 1965), the films eventually reached a substantial public in French political and cine-club circles in this censored form and among the domestic Cuban public in their undiluted Spanish versions.

In Europe, they served alongside perhaps better-known auteur films as an introduction to the achievements of the fledgling Revolution. In fact, Ivens, arriving eighteen months after the Revolution in September 1960, was the first of a procession of European and North American filmmakers who came to Cuba to film the transformations happening. Richard Leacock shot his one-hour 'ABC Close-up' special *Yanki, No!* for Robert Drew Associates later that same year, broadcast in December.³³ Marker shot his *Cuba sí!* (1961, France, 53) the next month, the Soviet veteran Mikhail Kalatozov shot his virtuosic docu-fiction *Soy Cuba (I Am Cuba, 1964, 141)* in 1962,³⁴ and Agnès Varda shot her *Salut les Cubains* (30) in January 1963. Marker's and Varda's lively films are alike in principally addressing European audiences, for example countering stereotypes and disinformation, and benefiting from more versatile technical means with their imported equipment, especially sound recording deployed in capturing the vitality of Cuban music. Marker's film, profiting from an in-depth analysis and sustained observation allowed by its 53-minute length, was also distinguished by its long interviews with Castro, its almost voyeuristic fascination with the quirks of popular culture, and its update on the Bay of Pigs invasion that took place in April 1962 – and was suppressed in France for its trouble. Varda's shorter film, very personal and told entirely in stills, has invaluable historical interest as a celebration of Cuban cinema, featuring then unknown director Sara Gomez dancing for the camera.³⁵

Ivens's films *Carnet* and *Pueblo* on the other hand reflect the sobriety, limited means, and urgency of the still fresh revolutionary context. All of the thematic preoccupations of the Cuban cinema in its early years, when ICA-IC production was overwhelmingly dominated by the documentary mode, emerge in the two films. A memorable sequence in the latter film, for example, demonstrates the top priority of promoting the national literacy campaign: an illiterate recruit is learning to write, a close-up catching his rough peasant's hand firmly guided by the hand of his teacher. The early emphasis on housing and cooperatives is also reflected in one of *Carnet's* better sequences, an intense before-and-after treatment of a fishing village literally transformed by the introduction of a cooperative. The same film also echoes the early interest of Cuban documentarists in experimental forms of popular democracy, an interest that had resulted in Gutierrez Alea's film *Asamblea general (General Assembly, 1960, 14)* about a 1960 mass meeting of one million Cubans in Havana. *Carnet* contained footage of the same mass meeting as well as of the popular demonstrations that were an important political forum during the period.

Ivens's two films in general express the concomitant feelings of extreme

urgency and of euphoria which were prevalent in the filmmaking community in the early years. Cuban filmmakers felt very much involved in a race against the inevitable Bay of Pigs; they saw their films as essential to the survival of the Revolution and exulted in this new conception of the role of the filmmaker in Cuban society. *Pueblo* contains angry denunciations of US interference in Latin America, including footage of sugar fields set ablaze by incendiary rockets and close-ups of US labels on captured weapons (shots almost identical to those in *Spanish Earth* 20 years earlier denouncing Nazi arms in Spain). There is also footage of the militant anti-American demonstrations in Havana late in 1960 in which Chase Manhattan, the United Fruit Company and the others are 'buried' in a procession of symbolic coffins. The nationalisation of US companies having been completed, Cubans knew retaliation would not be long in coming.

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79. *Carnet de Viaje* (1961): showing the militant and celebratory anti-American demonstrations (Havana, 1960) in which US corporations are 'buried' in symbolic coffins. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © ICAIC, Havana/CAPF Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



In this context, Ivens revealed in the 1980s that he was more involved in the defence and dissemination of the Revolution than had originally been apparent (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 264-269). In addition to the work he undertook with the young Cuban documentarists, he was engaged in training and supplying guerilla filmmakers from all over Latin America, until Moscow through Havana brought an end to such 'adventurism' in favour of electoral initiatives. Later, Ivens spent some weeks giving emergency instruction in combat cinematography within the Cuban army. Ivens was fond of reminiscing about the spirit and investment of his students in this subject, most of whom were workers and peasants without any formal education. 40 trainees shared a single camera among them, a Bolex-like Payar, and fifteen successfully graduated the first year. Ivens provided them with 25 homemade wooden models of the Eymo camera, weighted with lead so as to have the correct feel. The students would stage mock battles with their fake cameras and guns, practicing their

combat techniques 'under fire' and afterwards telling their fellow students what footage they had obtained. Ivens in return would enchant them with his stories of real combat 20 years earlier on the Madrid front.

Of Ivens's two Cuban films, *Carnet* is the one which follows most closely the travelogue pattern that appealed more to his French contemporaries. Literally tracking Ivens's progress around the country on his tour, the film first shows each stage of the trip on a map sketched in front of the camera. Each new location is used as the pretext for the exploration of yet another aspect of the Revolution: education, culture, health care, defence, agriculture, industry, and political organisation. Perhaps just as important in terms of the non-Cuban public, each stopover also provides glimpses of the quality of life in the abstract, the atmosphere both of normalcy and of preparedness: that Cubans are happy and healthy, hard at work, and still fond of baseball, that children are playing everywhere.

At each stopover, it is an exploration of the physical environment, usually an architectural one, that leads directly into the specific aspect of the Revolution to be highlighted. Panning shots of the skyline of Havana, for example, lead into an analysis of the country's branch-plant economy before the Revolution and then to a dynamic visual depiction of the act of nationalisation itself. The posters and banners of the demonstrators are seen covering up the signs of the US corporations; the procession of coffins announces the demise of each corporation. Ivens intercuts all of this with shots taken from vehicles moving through streets filled with life and energy. The viewer gets the impression of a busy, healthy society retaking possession of its own environment. A similar procedure occurs in the Trinidad segment: a survey of the town's colonial architecture leads to a recognition of the importance of the Cuban artistic heritage and of how it must be preserved in a 'positive' way.

The sequences dealing with the marsh region of Zapata and with the fishing cooperative at Manzanilla, are perhaps the most successful in tying the physical landscape to the political landscape. In both cases, the visuals clearly and simply pursue the basic before-and-after logic of the film. In the Zapata sequence, the camera first moves about the marshes absorbing the landscape and noting the penurious traditional industries of the region, finally moving in on a new sight, a film of workers harvesting the rice which 'there had to be a revolution to plant, yet which was so simple'. There are also some concise but evocative glimpses of the local lumber industry with late afternoon lighting in a mill casting a romantic tinge on workers gathered about the saw. The sequence concludes with the waterborne camera gliding up and down the new canals to demonstrate the metamorphosis of a landscape in the wake of revolution. Ivens always found this theme irresistible, with its potential for great panoramas of earth-moving equipment and cranes. In the final shot, the cam-

era eases out into open water past a tourist city being built on a platform above the marsh, another new industry in view. The newly dredged canals reminded Ivens of Holland. This reflection added to the commentary is one of the frequent personal touches that reinforce the authenticity of this eyewitness account and its essayistic flavour.

Ivens's cross section of the new Cuban society also includes some glimpses of the Cuban cinema, which add considerably to its interest for film historians. The new Chaplin Cine-club that Castro had pointed out to him at the beginning of his visit enters the film as a symbol of the rebirth of the national cinema. Ivens used footage of the conversion of an old movie palace into the club in the introduction and epilogue of the film. He added the detail that it had originally been built for the mistress of a government official under the dictatorship of Batista and addressed a dedication to Chaplin himself, 'who used to sing so often of liberty and justice in your films'.

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80. *Carnet de Viaje* (1961): in Manzanilla, tourist iconographies of poverty are deflated by shots of a new architectural transformation, 'images of hope and joy'. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © ICAIC, Havana/CAPi Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The striking Manzanilla sequence has a typical rhythm, building self-reflexively on the familiar 'before and after' trope of socialist realism. First some fine sunny footage at close range shows the village fishermen unloading their catch. Then Ivens exposes the squalor of their customary living conditions. Naked children roam about through a cluster of fly-ridden huts, apparently on equal terms with the local pigs, and passively drink the milk offered to them in front of the camera. Such scenes, once the picturesque staples of tourist photo albums, the commentary suggests sardonically, are now becoming bad memories. The remark has the effect of deflating the 'exotic' reading inevitably imposed on the scene by a Western public's stereotypes of 'straw huts and naked children under a tropical sky'. (Ivens later recalled how he had urged the crew in this scene to avoid the neutral sentimental eye of observation and to 'attack reality'.) A sudden close-up of a bulldozer blade abruptly interrupts the

scene at this point and shatters the stereotype to usher in a sequence boasting of the new construction transforming the village, another architectural metamorphosis that provides an index of the Revolution's accomplishments. The camera now confronts rows of gleaming prefabricated houses and wanders through their interiors. Topping it all off is a final romantic vista of a new settlement rising up by the sea. For Ivens, the old chronicler of revolutions, social change must be visualised in material terms, as changes in people's everyday lives, their work, and their living conditions – 'that it is good to find your name linked to Cuba, to images of hope and joy'.

Other reflections on the 'brand new cinema' going about its job are scattered throughout the film. After repeating the slogans 'Yankee go home', and then 'Nylon go home', the commentary adds a new one, 'Western go home'. At another point, there is a sequence showing Ivens among ICAIC students in an editing room demonstrating some kind of animation technique. Live-action views of firefighters in burning cane fields are followed by animated depictions of them based on children's paintings. The commentary explains that the cinema is born in the simple job of recounting just such struggles. It adds that the cinema must show how the Revolution was not a spontaneous accident, but that it 'comes from way back, from decades of struggles', at which point the camera moves through the editing-room group (including Gutierrez Alea and Fraga) onto a Moviola screen where archive footage of those struggles then appears. There are pre-revolutionary demonstrations, guerilla groups in 1958 with guitars as well as guns, a shot of Fidel and Che relaxing around a campfire, and then one of them leading a liberation procession on horseback. Later on in the film, we see the Puerto Rican director Oscar Torres shooting for a film about peasant uprisings in the thirties (*Realengo 18* [co-dir. Eduardo Manet, 1962, Cuba, 60]) on location in the colonial city of Trinidad, and the commentary reminds us again that the Cuban cinema must remember and retell this history.

From time to time, other landscapes as well conjure up memories of Cuba's revolutionary past. The streets of Santiago de Cuba reveal traces of past struggles – a plaque, for example, which points out the spot where a revolutionary hero, Frank País, 'the soul of the underground struggle', was assassinated. The Havana section of the film includes a funeral sequence in which six million flowers, one for every Cuban, are sent out to sea in memory of Camilo Cienfuegos, another revolutionary leader, recently dead. It is a passage that communicates in simple but compelling terms the intense collective emotion Ivens witnessed and participated in on this occasion.

It is clear then from this brief description of *Carnet* that Ivens had quickly assimilated all of the concerns of the new Cuban cinema and had incorporated them into this work. As one of Ivens's students recalled later (Massip,

1960), Ivens came to Cuba not so much to make his films but to be of service to Cubans making theirs. In addition to the subjective impressions of an outsider in solidarity, *Carnet* is a summation of Cubans' images of themselves in 1960: an open, passionate tribute to the Revolution, not an 'objective' evaluation. This historical resonance and ideological commitment, together with the personal Ivens touches and inflections throughout, give the film a continuing relevance, despite the occasional evidence of hasty shooting, of the obvious shortage of stock, or of inexperienced camera handling. In fact, these latter aspects of the film increase its impact and vitality in so far as they evoke the learning situation going on behind the camera during every take.

Pueblo has for its subject popular preparations for national defence and thus has a much more concentrated dramatic and topical focus than its companion film. The urgency of the subject comes across clearly in the film, giving it a stronger emotional force. The film was designed to inform Western audiences of the Cuban people's mobilisation and of their unanimous determination to defend their Revolution. In the domestic market, it was intended to reinforce this determination and aid in recruitment for the volunteer militia like a number of ICAIC documentaries on related subjects, such as Gutierrez Alea's *Muerte al invasor* (*Death to the Invader*, 16), a 1961 Bay of Pigs reportage. Ivens's particular slant in his film was the genuinely popular character of the Cuban mobilisation, the fact that the Cuban masses themselves and not just a professional army were participating fully in it. The film commentary constantly hammers home this message:

With 500 million dollars, a fleet, and rockets you can buy a government, but you can't snuff out the will of the people. To retake these oil refineries, you'd need six million mercenaries, one for each Cuban. [...] Only a government that fully answers the aspirations of a people can distribute arms to it. [...] Every factory becomes a fortress, every furrow a trench.

81. *Un Pueblo Armado* (1961): Ivens's relationship with the brigade is reflected in informal scenes of soldiers enjoying downtime. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © ICAIC, Havana/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The recurring images of the film are just that – views of whole crowds of men and women being issued guns or rushing out of a workplace for militia exercises.

Because of this populist inspiration and because the film crew followed a single brigade over an extended period of time, the film has a more intimate feel than *Carnet*. A series of individuals acquires a concise but vivid identity in short close-up confrontations with the camera. The brigade itself apparently grew accustomed to Ivens and the crew and began to relax in front of the camera. There are some fine informal scenes of soldiers lunching, clowning with each other, grouped under plastic tarpaulins in the pouring rain, or boisterously strumming their guns like guitars on the back of a truck. Ivens's relationship with the militia also meant that he was easily able to reconstruct the lengthy combat sequences with the men, filming jungle skirmishes and pursuits that are quite effective within the terms of the *mise-en-scène* used by Ivens.

To emphasise the grass-roots bases of the Cuban mobilisation, Ivens begins the film in a remote mountain village, watching the local men drilling for the first time, echoing *Spanish Earth*. The scene is affectionately comic with its inclusion of the confusion and errors of these peasants, who have never had to march together before, and of their obvious embarrassment at their children running alongside, imitating them and making fun. From this point, the structure of the film is climactic, the militia appearing more and more disciplined and formidable as the film progresses through various early phases of the training, notably the literacy program, and then follows the seasoned brigade in its pursuit of counter-revolutionaries in the last part of the film. The final note is one of confidence, even defiance, a strong 'up' ending being a requirement of agitprop and solidarity filmmaking mastered by Ivens decades earlier. The initial perspective of the single village steadily expands through views of mass militia drills in large urban and industrial settings until an entire nation, editorially synthesised, seems on the march.

The film is more than a conglomeration of marching columns, however. Everywhere are indications of the new life that is to be defended. Aside from the pointed reference to the literacy campaign already mentioned, there are also hints of changing gender roles, of advances in agriculture and health care, low-key scenes of soldiers fraternising with peasants, and once again continually recurring views of children at play. There are also pauses in the sprightly pace of the film for a particularly lyrical perspective of some landscape or other, a waterfowl taking off from a jungle river or mountain mists filtering through waving trees. Every sequence projects the insistence that life goes on in the midst of crisis, as it had in *Spanish Earth* and would in *Le 17^e Parallèle* (*The 17th Parallel*, 1968, France, 113), and, as Ivens had just said in Paris, that it is 'beautiful' (Zalzman, 1963, 90).

82. *Un Pueblo Armado* (1961): counter-revolutionaries re-enacting their capture for the camera, under an off-key version of the Marines' Hymn. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © ICAIC, Havana/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marcelline Loridan-Ivens.



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The commentary for *Pueblo* leaves a somewhat more overbearing impression than *Carnet* does, perhaps because the visuals in the militia film are tighter and need a verbal counterpoint less. Some of the mannerisms of the late classical documentary soundtrack seem unnecessarily distracting – dramatised voice-over dialogue, for instance, to liven up a few silently filmed group scenes, ironic musical phrases (anticipating other musical ‘arrangers’ from later in the sixties, from Jimi Hendrix to Emile de Antonio, an off-key Marine Hymn is heard when the counter-revolutionaries are captured), and the somewhat excessive use of action music and percussion during the semi-dramatised combat scenes. The commentary itself is less personal than the other film’s reflective counterpoint. In short, too often the soundtrack appears to be trying to compensate for the lack of sync recording rather than making a virtue of this necessity like the other film and the best pre-*vérité* essay/travelogues. Otherwise *Pueblo* stands well among Ivens’s other records of the courage of peoples under siege.

One of the most interesting aspects of *Pueblo* is the light it sheds on the problem posed for Ivens and the ‘third world’ as a whole by the ascendancy of direct cinema during the early sixties. On the surface, this film has more of a *vérité* orientation than *Carnet*, not only because of its greater intimacy with its subjects and the spontaneity this implies, but also because of the greater flexibility and mobility of its camera handling. Despite the awkwardness of the 35mm format, the severe limitation of silent shooting, and a low shooting ratio, Ivens and his Cuban crew were clearly responding to the potential of improvisation in the film – in the encounters with the colourful bit-part characters scattered throughout, as well as with the soldiers, and in the pursuit scenes with their opportunities for experimentation with handheld camera and walking movements. In these latter scenes, there are a number of walking shots of considerable agility through the jungle undergrowth and frequent use of swish pans both expressively and as editing devices. In *Carnet* as well,

there is a sequence where the camera literally takes part in a folk dance, moving rhythmically through a double column of dancers.

Massip (1960) later remembered shooting a scene which puts the crew's growing awareness of improvisation into relief. Massip recalled the exhausted men in the patrol resting around in a farmyard pump, some asleep, others drinking or lounging around. An old peasant wandered up carrying a bundle of squawking chickens at each end of a long pole over his shoulder. This opportunity for a colourful scene was unexpected and even unnoticed by the ICA-IC men until they suddenly saw inspiration light up in Ivens's eyes. Ivens got them quickly to move the camera spontaneously in medium and close range about the old man and his indignant load as he chatted with the patrol. The scene is short but works well with its dynamic energy and the internal contrast between the resting soldiers, the frantic birds, and the man's vivid and natural gestures. The students thus saw their usual inclination towards careful planning and setting up challenged by this openness to spur-of-the-moment inspiration.

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For the most part, however, it must be said that the direct/*vérité* sensibility does not dominate the film. Most of it shows the careful precision of a director who is watching the footage meter very carefully (though both films must have looked much more like the real raw thing to contemporary audiences). In fact, as we shall continue to see in this chapter, the factor of economy alone led to cautious use of *vérité* in the Western sense by both Ivens and most postcolonial filmmakers throughout the sixties. They simply couldn't afford the large shooting ratios that Western directors in TV and the state-subsidised National Film Board of Canada took for granted. The most typical shots in unstructured situations in *Pueblo* involve careful set-ups in which subjects pass the camera in close-up one by one on a jungle path. Tripod shots are a staple of the film, as are the long motorised tracks from jeeps and boats (and even a helicopter), which Ivens found an inexpensive but expressive alternative to tripod set-ups at this point in his career and more reliable than handheld improvisation.

There is another consideration as well in Ivens's continuing reliance on classical shooting techniques during the sixties, his instinctive distrust of the more flamboyant uses of *vérité* then becoming common. As we have seen, Ivens had not shot in a country where his native language is spoken since 1933. The European variants of direct cinema, more reliant on interviews and speech, required the director's spontaneous linguistic participation in the event being filmed rather than simply a visual observation of it. Ivens's partnership in the late sixties with Loridan, a trained soundperson, would help him overcome this particular handicap.

Throughout the mid-sixties, however, Ivens continued to express specifically ideological reservations about *vérité* that are worth considering. For one

thing, *vérité* quickly became associated with the auteurist cinema of individualist personal expression, clearly a second priority at that time for the 'third world', and for the same reasons for European radical filmmaking as well. Ivens also felt that *vérité* encouraged filmmakers to avoid taking a political stand. 'In *vérité*', he said, 'people often talk too much and the director not enough'. It furthermore didn't require young directors to think during the shoot and sometimes even afterwards. 'If you know how to swim', Ivens told an interviewer on another occasion, 'it's better to swim towards something rather than to flounder about'. As late as 1965, he would insist that only a commentary 'can express the complete, responsible personal action – the involvement of the author, director or commentator' (Ivens, [1965] 1969, 261).

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By late 1960, Cubans were already feeling the effects of a US embargo that was cultural as well as economic. This is one reason, no doubt, that ICAIC so eagerly welcomed the procession of foreign filmmakers who came to Cuba in the early years to witness and to film the achievements of the Revolution. The foreigners' contributions to the Cuban cinema varied widely. The Italians Zavattini and Armand Gatti actively collaborated on co-productions though the strong debt the Cubans owed to Italian neorealism more likely came from the apprenticeship of several leading Cuban filmmakers, including Gutierrez Alea, García Espinosa, and Torres, in Rome. Moreover Italian films had been a staple of the active cine-club circuit before the Revolution and there were many similarities in the production contexts of post-war Italy and post-Revolution Cuba. Also involved in co-productions were directors from socialist countries such as the Soviets Roman Karmen and Kalatazov and lesser-known figures from East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Of all the visitors, the Cubans themselves felt particularly grateful to Ivens and to the Dane Theodor Christensen, who, like Ivens, taught at ICAIC, but also made a documentary on women in the militias *Ellas!* (34), released in 1964. First arriving in the fall of 1960, Ivens would return twice, including a second teaching sojourn cut short by illness in 1962. Marker would return nine years after *Cuba Si!* in 1970 (*La bataille des dix millions* [*Battle of the Ten Million*, Belgium/France/Cuba, 58]), and both of Marker's witty and perceptive essays are commonly shown. But despite Marker's close interaction with Cuban filmmakers, there was never the sense as with Christensen and Ivens that he had come to put himself completely at the disposal of Cuban filmmakers and that the filming of his own work was secondary to this aim. One filmmaker referred to Ivens's role as that of a 'technical adviser' rather than a 'theoretician' and that his influence was less as the maker of films to be imitated than as a filmmaker whose 'conduct in the face of today's reality' was an inspiration (Canel, [1963] 1965). The impression Ivens made seems to have been out of all proportion to the briefness of his two visits, according

to an interesting 1962 round table of Cuban filmmakers on his contribution (*Cine cubano* 1962).

Undoubtedly it was the period in the jeep with the seven young filmmakers that was most responsible for this impression, each sequence turning out to be a valuable lesson. One sequence with a pedagogical impact was a filmed conversation of two militiamen guarding a bridge. The crew had come across the pair quite by accident, an old peasant animatedly telling stories to his partner, a much younger man. The final version of *Pueblo* retains only a few shots from the incident, a jeep-borne track coming up to the bridge, panning as the camera discovers and picks out the two guards, and then close-up explorations of their faces as they talk. For all the brevity of the scene, the effect is one of concentrated energy. At the time of the shoot, the crew were struck not only by Ivens's instinctual recognition of a good scene and of 'natural actors' but also of the way in which he was able to make the two subjects feel comfortable and trustful with regard to the camera. Aside from absorbing the mechanics of shooting such a scene – the avoidance of a close-up lens and the provision of good covering material – the students watched how Ivens picked out the expressive and typical details of the men's gestures and appearances. His additional secret for bringing out the 'natural actors' in such subjects was his authentic respect for them, his involvement with them as human beings rather than as subjects.

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To this effect, Jorge Fraga remembered a heated argument between Ivens and a peasant that he at first found shocking because of the obvious social disadvantage of the latter. But he suddenly realised that it was rather a total absence of paternalism and sentimentality that was responsible for Ivens's attitude, his assumption of the peasant's equality despite social and cultural barriers (*Cine cubano*, 1962). Ivens's attitude was essential to the active collaboration between artist and subject in his work, which the Cubans greatly admired, a clear challenge for Havana intellectuals such as Fraga and Masip. The triumph of Ivens's approach came when he attempted to persuade captured counter-revolutionaries to re-enact their night-time surrender for *Pueblo*. The prisoners, no doubt bewildered by the Communists' generous treatment, consented and can be seen in the film emerging from the jungle, hands above their heads.

The ICAIC filmmakers drew another lesson from the shooting of the village drilling sequence early in the film where the new recruits are training for the first time. The camera enters a small neighboring house at a given moment where the wife of one of the participants is laundering, and for a few moments the drilling is seen from her point of view framed by her doorway and verandah. Ivens decided to involve the woman more completely in the scene by the simple twist of having the recruit hand her his shirt for washing as he was leav-

ing. The crew were impressed with the importance of involving all elements in a given scene in dynamic interaction to enhance its dramatic value.

(This is not to say that Ivens two Cuban films do not perceive more radical changes in women's roles than what is implied by this anecdote. Although the village recruits and the jungle patrol do not involve women, the scenes depicting industrial and urban militia organisation have women participating fully and the issue is emphasised on the soundtrack in a voice-over conversation between two male militiamen: 'You know that the women in my village have organized a brigade? My wife with a gun? I'd sure like to see that'. The narrator concludes, 'All the same at 30 years of age, it's hard to begin [...] but a people in revolution learn very quickly'.)

Ivens's decision to involve the woman in this simple action has another implication. As in the earlier films in this cycle, his perpetual readiness to intervene and recreate reality through the use of *mise-en-scène* went against the grain of emerging *vérité* orthodoxies. Ivens continued to insist on this right to reconstruct even during the period of the orthodoxy of *vérité*, maintaining that the classical documentarist's use of *mise-en-scène* was in no way outmoded by the new flexibility of camera technology – which ICAIC could not afford in any case. One of his Cuban students even praised the way Ivens reconstructs events, when necessary, 'in the simplest way that most resembles life'. The counter-revolutionary prisoners emerging from the jungle, for example, are in extreme long shot just as they would have been if the actual event had been filmed. 'If you must steal, do it neatly and tidily. Leave no traces at all', was a remark Ivens (quoted in Li Zexiang, 1983, 121) made on the subject in 1967.

It is of course Ivens's own total confidence in the commitment of the artist as the sole index of the authenticity of a film that leads him to this easily distorted position. While he was clearly right that the non-interference of the artist is no guarantee whatsoever of the truth value of a film in itself, it was not until the following decade that Ivens would fully implement a solution to this thorny problem. In *Yukong*, he consolidated the strategy of openly displaying, using, and even celebrating the collaboration of artist and subject as a primary condition of the film. Ivens provided another insight for his crew on *Carnet* when it came to filming the archetypal Cuban activity, sugar cane cutting. Ivens convinced the ICAIC group to get involved themselves in the action of cutting cane so that they would understand directly and subjectively all aspects of this action, the totality of the physical components of the job, including the resistance offered by the cane. Ivens urged them to discover 'the true secret of the rhythm of the mechanical action of cutting cane, the moment at which this rhythm can be interrupted by another action, drying one's sweat, taking a drink of water, resting'. Ivens had evidently never forgotten the Soviet workers in the early thirties who had praised *Zuiderzee* because

of its scrupulous adherence to shot angles, camera placements, and editing rhythms that authentically reflect the physical requirements of the work and the point of view of the workers themselves.

The final essence of what Ivens reinforced in his Cuban co-workers' minds during his visits was that the immediate, urgent task of filming the Revolution was more important than the development of individual techniques or styles or a foreknowledge of the classical principles of film aesthetics. He encouraged them to rely on their own instinctual feelings about a task, to trust in their own innate human sympathies and interactions with their fellow Cubans in a dialectical relation with their own clearly defined ideological aims. Perhaps thinking of his years in the East German film industry of the pre-Thaw period, Ivens's advice was to avoid becoming bureaucrats of the camera and to 'let life into the studios'. This accumulation of immediate, urgent material, this filming directly and quickly of all that was happening, he said, was the major means of achieving a national cinema (*Cine cubano*, 1962). Ivens was uncannily perceptive in pinpointing in this way the formula by which the Cubans were already building one of the most dynamic of all national cinemas of the 1960s.

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Critical response to the Cuban films was positive if muted, though the *Positif* editor would later cast a retroactive slight shadow on two of the solidarity works of this period: 'it seemed to us that *Lettres de Chine [Before Spring]*, and *Cuba peuple armé* denoted a certain hesitation, a certain groping/feeling his way along, that we had the impression of seeing there travel notes, sympathetic and muddled, rather than films with the scope of the Ivens of yore' (Thirard, 1964, 145). Today, the Cuban films are seldom revived except in connection with Ivens retrospectives and are regrettably not included in the official DVD package. They deserve wider exposure. Not only are they fascinating documents on the early days of the Cuban Revolution; they also offer stirring models of the kind of postcolonial film activism that Ivens almost single-handedly pioneered a whole generation before anyone else on the Western Left, an activism that lends solidarity and resources to local initiatives without imposing external models or preconceptions.

CHILE: ...À VALPARAISO

Valparaiso, Ivens's next work, a 27-minute city film,³⁶ although plugged firmly into the sensibility of the early sixties, has held up well over the last half century.³⁷ The project arose from a felicitous and timely convergence: Ivens's knack for parachuting into a new micro-society, in this case urban Chile, observing it closely and instantly distilling its visual/cinematic essence, was energised, enabled and grounded by the contribution of young Santiago apprentice-

es, who welcomed their elder idol to the University of Chile's Instituto Cine Experimental and formed his crew. Ivens's Paris infrastructure allowed him also to consolidate the project as a viable commercial production with 'a high artistic and technical quality' and a 'world public' (Ivens, production notes, JIA) and all was complemented in post-production by Chris Marker's self-reflexively wry and writerly commentary and a strikingly effective music track. It is arguably the most perfected and magical of the entire nine-film lyrical essay cycle, and is along with *Rain* the best of Ivens's half-dozen or so entries in the city film subgenre (Amsterdam, Paris, Sydney, Warsaw, Rotterdam, Hanoi, and Shanghai are his principal urban subjects), a subgenre that is at the centre of cinematic modernity and to which we will return. Moreover, the 'third world' perspective Ivens fine-tuned in Sydney, East Berlin and Vienna, Italy, Mali, and Cuba brought a fresh edge to the film. Though *Valparaiso* may not take the artistic risks of *Mistral* or the political risks of the Cuban films or go as far in its indulgent quirkiness as *Rotterdam* – it is my personal favourite.

Ivens had met Dr. Salvador Allende in Cuba and the perennial Marxist candidate of Chilean electoral politics invited Ivens to come to his country and make what would be his second and last film project below the Equator. Allende's left coalition Frente de Acción Popular (FRAP) had gained almost one third of the popular vote in the 1958 election and had high hopes for the next one in 1964. Allende had represented the historic port city of Valparaiso in Parliament beginning in the 1930s, and when he met Ivens he was Valparaiso's senator, so he was almost certainly involved in the preliminary conversations in Cuba about a cinematic treatment of a unique and vibrant city that would be designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site only four decades later (Panizza, 2011, 22). Ivens received the formal invitation from the University while in Cuba in the fall of 1961, and his first reconnoitering visit took place the following April. His schedule was filled with workshops and screenings with the students grouped around novice filmmaker Sergio Bravo at the Centre. Busy as it was, Ivens's visit also accommodated a reunion with his friend the poet Pablo Neruda in Valparaiso, where he stayed a few days (a shot would be included in his eventual film showing the soon-to-be Nobel laureate exiting his apartment on a spiral staircase with his dogs). Ivens fell 'in love' with this port city as he had with so many others and resolved to return to Paris and set up co-production arrangements to make the Valparaiso film. In September, in the middle of the Cuban missile crisis, Ivens flew back to Santiago from Havana, to make the film as a teaching exercise with the students he had already met, though the co-financing arrangement with Argos Films' Anatole Dauman were finalised only a month later (bringing on board a professional French camera operator Georges Strouvé and a similarly qualified Paris editor Jean Ravel, famous now for his editing of *Chronique d'un été* and *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962, France, 28).

The crucible of Ivens's work had thus shifted from the underfunded and always-on-the-alert Cuban state studio to the more normalised Chilean academic framework, but his Paris-based commercial tie-in would situate the high-production-value outcome within an international theatrical marketplace, as he noted:

aimed at a world public, commercial distribution
– the film will be an impression (far from complete or profound) of Valparaiso. Will be like a visit, by a visitor with an eye for beauty, *the truth* of the city. Naturally the film must have a high artistic and technical quality. (Ivens, project notes, 1962, JIA, emphasis in original)

These objectives notwithstanding, the pedagogical orientation remained a constant through this cycle and the contributions of the Santiago interns are well documented in production stills and in the credits (Bravo's crucial liaison and leadership role is acknowledged in the credits as '*assisté de Sergio Bravo*'). The political context was somewhat volatile in 1962, however. Although Ivens's Chilean students and colleagues were communists or sympathisers (Schoots can't resist tarring Bravo and his cinematic practice fully with the brush of Comintern skullduggery), the hopeful but tense pre-revolutionary context in Chile required a pragmatic discretion on the part of their mentor, not dissimilar to what the very different contexts of Paris, Italy, and Mali had dictated:

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[Our film] will have a personal style. Not orthodox or academic. Not a social document or a militant or revolutionary film or with a message or a solution. Not educational. The film is not commissioned by the unions or by the department of urbanization of the municipality of Valparaiso. On the other hand, the University has chosen me as director and knows my other films and my philosophy. They didn't invite Disney or Reichenbach. Not a film where the poverty side dominates. But poverty is there to see, to show. It's shameful, it's not tolerable. Yes, it's like that, have a good look (Daumier).³⁸ That is indicating things that I am not showing. A kind of secret between the progressive public and myself towards the reality of Valparaiso, irony or social satire enters here (Brecht: the 7 ways to tell the truth)

– closer to *Rain* or *Seine*
– my point of view will be there, but not obvious, not underlined. (Ivens, project notes, 1962, JIA)

The concept of 'truth' surfaces in both of the above entries, and it is clear that Ivens is engaging not only with the early-sixties French debates around the

'*vérité*' in *cinéma vérité* but also with the perennial objective of the committed artist. That Ivens had carefully reflected politically and strategically on this objective is confirmed by the above out-of-the-blue reference to the famous manifesto, written in 1934 in Danish exile, by his former collaborator Bertolt Brecht, dead in 1956:

Nowadays, anyone who wishes to combat lies and ignorance and to write the truth must overcome at least five difficulties. He must have the courage to write the truth when truth is everywhere opposed; the keenness to recognize it, although it is everywhere concealed; the skill to manipulate it as a weapon; the judgment to select those in whose hands it will be effective; and the cunning to spread the truth among such persons. These are formidable problems for writers living under Fascism, but they exist also for those writers who have fled or been exiled; they exist even for writers working in countries where civil liberty prevails. (Brecht, [1934] 1966, 133)³⁹

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Allende had stressed to Ivens the existence of such liberty in Chile (Panizza, 2011, 14), Latin America's most resilient parliamentary democracy at the time, and Ivens clearly calculated that his most effective intervention would be a pedagogical one in which his students could effectively go on themselves to speak the 'truth' in a more direct, more critical way.⁴⁰ He asked them

not to forget that I am a guest of your university, of your country. That is a source of obligations and limitations. My vision will be in the film, but not explicitly, not emphatically. Militant films, with criticisms, with solutions, accusations, are up to you, the young cineastes of Chile itself. It is not up to me to attack the current regime. (Ivens, notes, 11 November 1962, JIA, quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 272)

The research phase of the project consisted of three weeks strolling around the harbour and the upper city, where he immediately found 'an interesting story, amazing, strange, sometimes gleaming with "attractions"'. He had no problem developing the kind of Vertovian shooting plan that he had used in *La Seine*. His cinematic 'ideas' arising out of the city's social challenges and its unique spatial configuration, quickly fell into place: 'the continuous human effort to master life's difficulties', discovering 'simultaneity (vertical), surprise, poverty, kaleidoscope, anarchy, the ordinary and the extraordinary beside each other, labyrinth (stairways)' (Ivens, project notes, 1962, JIA). The kaleidoscope became a significant visual punctuation of the film (Olalla, 1963), notably under the dramatic transition to colour and under the final credits,

while the stairs along with the funiculars (hillside cable railways) became the predominant visual motif of the city, its peoples, and its spaces. Almost every image that would appear in the film was first part of one of Ivens's endlessly revised lists:

ideas:

funiculars: comic, difficulty, accident, social life

- interviews
- fish seller, basket on his head

The human contract

not an encyclopedia

1) details 2) major threads 3) look for sequence themes

note: Brueghel – women eating at the window; man with 1 leg with woman;

2 children play

idea: subjects (major)

the hills, cf. the valley

the city below

the port boats – loading, – unloading

the sea

Valparaiso citizens

dream – history

nature: wind; rain; fog; clouds; night; mountain (distant); waves; landscapes

problems: prices (market); gas; electricity; water; telephone; medical servic-

es – red cross; fires; school; rain; garbage; transport. (Ivens, project notes, 1962, JIA)⁴¹

Panizza (2011, 35) suggests that this detailed shooting plan amounted to 'hyper-planning' but it is likely that Ivens's lesser reliance on improvisation than say in Cuba was a response to the tight stock allowance and short timeline. All the same he did leave some space for the spontaneous style that he referred to his interns as '*style de reportage spontané*' (Ivens, project notes, 1962, JIA).

Always ready to capitalise on a successful formula, Ivens can be said in many ways to have produced a remake of his prizewinner *La Seine* in the Chilean port. Like the 1957 French film, *Valparaiso* is an infectiously lyrical city film full of kinetic energy, acute observation of public life, and humanist emotion, accented by their respective bodies of water, yet touched with the exotic curiosity of the expatriate and the utopian melancholy of the socialist realist. A mix of ingredients almost identical to that in his hit of five years earlier is present:

- Firstly the usually well-researched and scouted out-of-doors social observation in public space took place, yet with even more proto-femi-

nist and proto-‘third-world’-ist touches than in *La Seine*, from shots of banana cargos to the exposé of the bloody colonial history. The ‘shooting plan’ listed images, events, actions, characters, and spaces to re-find or reconstitute in the shoot. Building on this plan, the resort to *mise-en-scène* is standard throughout, most frequently reconstituting moments and gestures observed in real life when no camera was at hand, such as a repeated shot of a man singlehanded and doggedly carrying a bed up the endless stairways. As in *La Seine* before it, *Valparaiso* builds on a balance of improvised public observation and *mise-en-scène* or ‘*documentaire organisé*’. The ‘organized’ material, shot with large tripod-based equipment, focused largely on collective social rituals, notably two dance sequences reconstituted on location in clubs, one showing smart young couples dancing the twist, then the rage in North America, and the next the traditional national dance, the *cueca*, evoking its origins as a mating ritual using handkerchiefs (a critical postcolonial reading of this juxtaposition is of course unavoidable). Another *mise-en-scène*, set in a lively and crowded brothel barroom, is notable for a complex narrative involving a card game, a female sex worker’s sly flirtation with a male player over her compact mirror, and the eruption of a brawl complete with daggers and a bloody kaleidoscopic shattered mirror.

- Ivens’s continued participation in the growing cultural interest in the direct cinema aesthetics/ethics of spontaneity and everyday life can be seen in echoes of *La Seine*’s ‘life-caught-unawares’ observation, especially of life on the hilltops’ stairways and markets, in windows and balconies, or of mothers with their children – thanks to long focal length lenses. Handheld 35mm camerawork, impeccably steady, caught for example the miniature circus discovered by accident during the shoot and lovingly recorded performers and audience off-the-cuff. Still the Chileans could not afford the new lightweight 16mm cameras and portable synch-sound equipment any more than the Cubans (Panizza, 2011). As for Ivens’s exploration of the direct’s engagement with new possibilities for sound recording, this is tentative and symbolic only, localised in a brief sequence presenting a ‘*junta*’ of the hilltop communities, a citizens’ forum verbalising their problems and demands. This gesture seems perfunctory at first sight. The sequence devoted to the ‘*junta*’ is constructed in simulated synch sound rather than direct lip synch speech, and lasts only 45 seconds, but was a quantum leap beyond *La Seine* in its embrace of living speech as the cutting edge in documentary practice of the early sixties. Still, for all their Parisian backing, the Ivens group couldn’t go as far as he had with the better-equipped *Italia* and stopped considerably short of Marker’s achievement the same year in *Le Joli Mai* with its

on-the-street interviews and focused, intimate extended conversations (from Ivens's previous producer Sofracima). The '*junta*' is briefly shown stiffly debating hygiene and water shortages in the neighborhoods, and the participants rail against delays on the part of both government and the private sector, seconded by 'the workers committee'. One of the rare explicit (albeit measured) verbal references to organised class struggle in the film, or left accents in general, this speech together with a housewife's tirade about delays in accessing services interrupt the otherwise tender resignation of the film. The original French subtitles are intended as the primary access to this conversation, since the dialogue volume was turned down in the mix (I assume without having been able to verify my suspicion that the filmmakers had had to resort in the Paris lab to the old *Spanish Earth* technique of dramatised post-dubbing, with local Chileans, in the face of low quality or even nonexistence of wild sound records of the proceedings).

- Marker's aforementioned writerly commentary, assertive but not smothering, coupled with a sentimental and populist musical soundtrack, succeeded this time in a more equitable and dialogic – even dialectical – balance with the image-track. Marker produced the commentary at short notice and at lightning speed, as a favour to Ivens in their first collaboration. In desperation upon the failure of an unacceptable first try by an unknown party, Ivens provided the rough cut and his extensive notes on Valparaiso and asked for help, which came back two days later in time for the mix, 'saving my life' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 273). A vindication of pressure as an artistic inspiration, the result could not be more exquisite. Perhaps the key to its success was its relative restraint: in the 28-minute version it lays over one-third of the film's running time, not quite the standard of discretion achieved a quarter century earlier in *Spanish Earth* (one-fifth) nor in *La Seine* (one-sixth) and *Mistral* (one-fifth), but still notable in comparison to much of Marker's other work of the period, that ranged from almost three-quarters in *Lettre de Sibérie* and two-fifths in *¡Cuba sí!*⁴² The match is perfect, a tense and resonant visual-verbal counterpoint: Ivens's sentimentality cut by Marker's archness, his certainty qualified by Marker's interrogative doubt, his materialism glossed by Marker's existential meditation. Moreover, Ivens faux-naïf awe as newcomer to the urban kaleidoscope exists in unresolved tension with what Brunson (2012, 223-224) would call the 'classic response of the city wise-guy [...] the voice of the [*Oliver Twist*'s] Artful Dodger', referring to a perennial stock character of the city film. At one point an Ivensian sequence on laundry, showing housewives hanging up clothing and bedding on sunny balconies and stairways, culminates in a philosophical

twist that recalls Marker's *Le Joli Mai* (whose production and release history overlapped chronologically with the Chilean film almost exactly):

So once again the cable railways, very picturesque the cable railways...
But the life of the people up above depends on them
And not everything goes up with them.
Water for example which is lacking.
And yet the wash is done and girls wear white blouses. What price the
white blouses, the clean faces when the water arrives in barrels? What
price the most simple things, bathing, cooking?
What price the desire to live? What price happiness?

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At the same time, this disavowal of the picturesque is a moment when the sensibilities of the two artists come together. Pigaut's uninflected voice-over reading of the commentary jibes well with Ivens's own materialist undercutting of Valparaiso's postcard perfection, and his stern voice is accompanied by a lively effects track, featuring seagull cries and sea lion snorts along with the creak of metallic machinery on which the funiculars depend. The music track offers an inventive score by Chile's most famous composer and former Bravo collaborator, Gustavo Becerra (1925-2010). It's basically a riff on the theme song that gives the film its title, 'Nous irons à Valparaiso', sung throatily by Paris cabaret contralto Germaine Montero.⁴³ This lilting children's song of sailors, sailing ships, and the sea, composed in the post-war period by Marcel Achard, was so famous within French popular culture that one account of the film was entitled 'Joris Ivens gives a face to a song' (Marcabru, 1964). Montero's captivating rendition launches the film in the first minutes and then is reprised as a finale, rounding off long after the credits have ended and the screen has become dark.

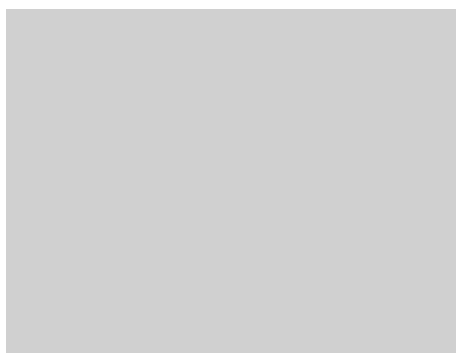
83. ...À *Valparaiso* (1963): a narrative *mise-en-scène* set in a brothel barroom shows a sexworker's flirtation with a card player and then a bloody brawl, a shattered mirror and Ivens's abrupt switch to colour. DVD frame capture. © Universidad de Chile/ARGOS Films.



Like *La Seine*, *Valparaiso* is along with everything else a stylistic tour de force. It exults in its diagonal cinematic indulgence of Valparaiso's hilly terrain, articulated by the city's famous funiculars, just as *La Seine* did in Paris's river-borne horizontality, articulated by barges. The film's verticality also allows breathtaking birds-eye views of the city and its elemental setting. Various kinetic and lyrical impulses are in tension with modernist play with scale and angles and social analysis. That this amalgam is constructed through Ivens's unmistakable 'personal style', 'vision' and 'point of view', as his project notes for his students declared, confirms its belonging to the subjective essay current. As in *La Seine*, first-person enunciations are discernible not so much in narration but in a range of familiar personal motifs: closely watched vignettes of children playing, their parents working strenuously to load cargo or hang laundry; populist celebrations of the inventiveness of their struggles in the face of hardship; buzzing canvases of a rich social urban space, both familiar and unfamiliar, from markets to work and play spaces. In short, they celebrate what his notes called the '*pacte humaine*': 'Everything is missing, but all the same one sleeps and wants to live'. Likewise, as with *La Seine*, authorial self-referentiality underlies the literary level of the commentary, confined mostly to Marker's recognisable self-reflexive wryness (as opposed to Prévert's 'I' statements). But recurring humorous accents in the image-track, allowed by the film's light-hearted surreal-flavoured mood, also participate in this articulation of subjectivity: a bourgeois lady takes her domesticated penguin for a walk; children are so overloaded with groceries and packages as they board the funiculars that they seem headless commuters through the point of view of the oblivious ticket taker at the turnstile; a lurking sea lion surfaces noisily in the harbour at unexpected moments. The essayistic level also negotiates Ivens's restrained social analysis: although the poverty that Ivens takes stock of seems relatively benign (that the level of the Chileans' immiseration palpable on screen seems mild compared to that in *Italia* or *Borinage*, can perhaps be accounted for by the filmmakers' shyness about shooting interiors), the commentary draws the spectator's attention to it by self-reflexively assuring us that 'with sun, poverty no longer seems poverty'. All the same, alongside the heroic quotidian struggles and such nuanced musing, social inequities are matter-of-factly evident, most notably in the sequence where the city's elite are shown cheering on their purebreds at the racetrack⁴⁴, indifferent to the fate not only of their fellow citizens but also even of their horses who are condemned to forced labour as pack animals and then the abattoir as soon as their short and glamorous career windows are closed. More succinct is the inclusion of a bold graffiti 'Cuba' in one shot, a backdrop to a moment of arduous physical effort on the stairs. Even for the non-auteurist, non-aficionado spectator, this affection-

ately subjective mix of perception, curiosity, whimsy, and critique, as in *La Seine*, constitutes the film's essayistic élan.

84. ...À *Valparaiso* (1963): a stylistic *tour de force* exulting in the port city's funiculars, full of breathtaking birds-eye tracking shots of the hilly terrain and its elemental setting. DVD frame capture. © Universidad de Chile/ARGOS Films.



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To this reliable mix, Ivens added an important element of historical analysis, present but underdeveloped in the Italian and Cuban projects, reinforcing the postcolonial critique of the present order and exercising his already much-demonstrated flair for compilation. The raw materials were still images only, many supplied by Neruda from his collection: period engravings, paintings, and above all a cartoon of Uncle Sam sabotaging the region's economy through the construction of the Panama Canal a half-century earlier. These visual documents were supplemented elsewhere by Ivens's delectation of the city's public visual culture (popular murals, frescos, and statuary, often of the other privileged motif of mermaids), and vernacular architecture. His always ethnographic eye tuned into the dialectic of history and the present, old and new, the exotic and the everyday, through the filmic image.

The overall organisation is not chronological as in *La Seine* and *Mistral* (dawn-to-dusk and seasonal, respectively), but rather loosely geographical, a movement up from the port towards the hilltops, with many a segue, distraction, and digression along the way of course (the ascending movement would seem not completely dissimilar to that pursued in *Mistral* with its mountain-top climax – and, as Verstappen [1964] noted, in *Brug* as well). This coherence, however, is fractured by a formal innovation two-thirds of the way through the film, startling viewers just at the moment they are least expecting it – the switch from black and white to colour. This device would soon become a hallmark of 1960s New Wave aesthetics, from Godard and Anderson to Wexler and Lefebvre, but in 1962 it had been visible chiefly in two other French essay documentaries on the festival and art film circuit – interestingly also from Argos – both from the 1950s, Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* and Marker's *Let-*

tre de Sibérie.⁴⁵ Resnais's Holocaust essay on history and memory is famous for confronting the lush colour images of an abandoned, grassy present-day Auschwitz with black-and-white archival footage of the genocide, but studies on Marker seldom acknowledge his less provocative but equally interesting use of a black-and-white hypothetical documentary-within-a-documentary, in the conditional tense, within his self-reflexive Eastmancolour travelogue.

Ivens's abrupt modulation from classical black and white to the same lurid stock is a different operation altogether from those of his *rive gauche* friends. Here the switch specifically performs Ivens's perennial thematics of the elements, an auteur motif now reaching cliché status in the abundant French critical literature that was accumulating around him. Approaching its subject at first from the sea through moody and misty manoeuvres at dawn, amid vessels and workers, the film ascends the slopes of the city's famous hills, propelled by the funiculars. But far from losing its engagement with the element of water, Ivens shifts from sea water as the city's maritime economic infrastructure to fresh water as the precious life-giving commodity so hard to access in the poor hilltop neighborhoods, as spelled out in the above excerpt from the commentary. The film now also confronts air and fire and earth, all elaborated as profoundly social rather than as abstract poetic elements (for example the wind may be pure and fresh but damages the lungs of the children of the poor, sentenced to play on the windy hilltops). Both the editorial structure and the commentary's guiding arrows enforce this elemental thematic. The sudden brawl in the dramatised bar-brothel scene in black and white leads to a smashed mirror, and the screen is abruptly covered by bright red blood, the sanguine humour becoming a nontraditional fourth element in the exegesis. Again eschewing elemental abstraction, Ivens sets up blood as the element of history, namely the port's violent colonial past, told compellingly like a sudden 'dream' through a compilation of vivid archival images (as he conceived of the historical segue in his notes, cited above). However, the colour sequences soon revert from historical analysis back to the present-day social-lyrical, allowing a re-vision of familiar images, as the funicular cars are revealed to be brightly painted in blue and yellow and the earlier tender themes of social continuity, work and play, family and marriage, are now restored in sunlit vividness. This time they are embodied in a stiffly staged marriage procession with the bridal veil floating out the funicular window, perhaps the film's most famous image, or shots of children playing with kites, set against a lustrous blue sky. No wonder critics found Ivens and his film ultimately 'optimistic'.

Although Schoots ([1995] 2000) delights in painting a picture of *Valparaiso* as an old-fashioned work barely acknowledged by refractory critics (he emphasises its rejection from Cannes⁴⁶), the documentary fared well in terms

of critical reception, garnering the jury's award of honour at Leipzig, and the prestigious and perhaps less stacked FIPRESCI (International Federation of Film Critics) award at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival as well as the gold medal for the most original subject at the Bergamo Internazionale del Film d'Arte e sull'Arte. In this decade of cinephilia and sprouting festivals, a multiple festival launch and theatrical career for a documentary short was no small achievement – especially for the seasoned trouper who hadn't had a film successfully distributed in Western Europe since *La Seine* – and prior to that not since 1939!

Thanks to a theatrical career twinned with Marker's sci-fi hit *La Jetée*, *Valparaiso* had a strong impact on Paris film culture. It was reviewed favourably everywhere, and no less than two Paris film magazines published the full découpage (Gauthier, 1965; *L'Avant-Scène du cinéma*, 1967). While a British reviewer carelessly, if not obtusely, treated *Valparaiso* as a Marker film (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1967, 159), closer to home perhaps the highest compliment came from one reviewer who identified Ivens's eye as a native one, uncontaminated by the picturesque, in contrast to Marker's indelibly Parisian sensibility:

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Ivens holds on to similarities where another would trace differences.

The picturesque is in the bag and doesn't get out. Nothing surprises, but everything touches us. We are born in Valparaiso. In contrast, there's no doubt that the commentator Chris Marker was born between rue Jacob and rue Sébastien-Bottin. He wants to surprise us. Ivens wants friendship. (Marcabru, 1964)

Indeed, most continental critics saw the documentary as an affirmation of the 58-year-old Ivens's ascension to the rank of 'auteur', a status to be consolidated five months later by the publication of the first Ivens monograph in French by Abraham Zalzman in 1963.

Panizza (2011) offers a long overdue summary of the film's reception in its host culture, which was delayed at first for three years by the lack of an exhibition infrastructure, and then as can be well imagined by two decades of murderous politics in which many of the players had been forced into exile or worse.⁴⁷ A few reviewers of the 1960s offered predictable outrage at the film's matter-of-fact revelation of 'seamy' sides of the city, no doubt a drunk sprawled on the downtown sidewalk and the brothel, and a Chilean consul in London reportedly recommended a ban on the film for 'denigrating Chile and the Chilean people' (Panizza, 2011, 68, citing unidentified diplomat).⁴⁸ However, another magazine reviewer (quoted in Panizza, 2011, 67-68) defended the work from those who 'would have preferred the city's urban progress and more prosperous areas', and championed its 'personal view'. Others com-

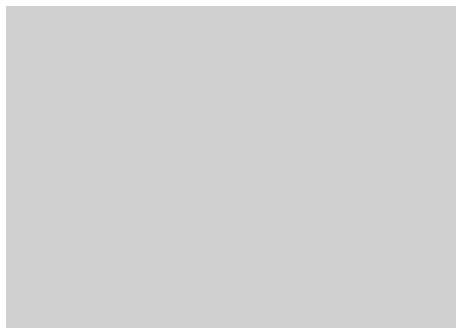
mented on rare screenings addressed the academic community: one uttered a few reserves about certain details of local veracity, or more substantively about the 'loss of pace' and 'falsity' of the water sequence, and the film's 'hybrid mix of styles', while another was in tune with certain Europeans' reticence about Ivens's lacking the cutting edge in documentary aesthetics, as emphasised by Schoots:

We would have loved a more direct cinematic technique for *Valparaiso*. Ivens remains faithful to his cinematographic training and attached a certain visual discretion. But using his own means, which have made him famous, he manages to beautifully express what he wants: the intimate drama of a city, its history, its place names, its distractions, the needs and business of its inhabitants (Valdés, 1964, quoted in Panizza, 2011, 69).

Ultimately however, *Valparaiso* joined so many other Ivens films in not reaching intended audiences in the here and now of its host society, in this case 1960s Chile. Regarding those audiences he did reach, whether there or in France and on the international festival circuit, whether then or in the intervening half century, it seems that his intention of allowing multiple readings through 'a kind of secret between the progressive public and myself towards the reality of Valparaiso' bore fruit. The 2009 Australian reading placed it 'outside of [the] parameters [of Ivens's] explicitly leftist political and social allegiances and beliefs' (Danks, 2009) as do 1970s American screening notes (unidentified screening notes, n.d., Chicago, JIA), while Marcel Martin (1972) recognised therein the 'critical reflections of a social pamphlet'. Along with auteur status, came the usual redbaiting: one French critic detected suspect political ideas in the film and decried their vehicle, 'The Joris Ivens paradox is that of a certain left that conjoins the most revolutionary ideas with a rear-guard aesthetics. À Valparaiso is a little like having Fidel Castro talking like Sully Prudhomme' (Trémois, 1964, quoted in Marsolais, 1974, 184).⁴⁹ In retrospect, Bravo (2007, quoted in Panizza, 2011) ironically if not uncharitably voiced similar reserves about his mentor's accomplishments: unable to escape the picturesque or a European's vantage point, *Valparaiso* is for him an inescapably 'fake film'.

All the same, two *Valparaiso* spin-offs were not long in coming. *Le Petit Chapiteau* is a six-minute gem built out of footage on the hillside miniature circus that could not be used in *Valparaiso*. Its account of the modest entertainment is continually distracted by cutaways to children in turn enchanted by the showmen and contortionists. This miniature work is beautifully accompanied by another Prévert poetic commentary, this time mercifully compressed.

85. *Le petit chapiteau* (1963): a six-minute gem built from *Valparaiso* out takes offers clowns, showmen and contortionists to fascinated working-class kids. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © Universidad de Chile/ARGOS Films.



86. *Le Train de la victoire* (1964): the 16mm election film follows communist Salvador Allende's presidential campaign, registering an optimistic political project, its charismatic leader and his constituents. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © FRAP



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Le Train de la victoire (*The Victory Train*, 9), Ivens's second 16mm work (after *Nanguila*), was filmed on a return visit the year after the *Valparaiso* premiere during Allende's next FRAP campaign in September 1964. Initially sponsored by a French television channel but then left stranded, *Train* was eventually produced by FRAP and not surprisingly registers the ebullience of an optimistic political project and its charismatic leader. It's a jubilant rail movie, following for a week the candidate's whistle-stop trajectory down the coast toward Santiago, bursting with the enthusiasm of his constituents, and livened by a piano and guitar score by Becerra again. The film's chief appeal now is as a treasure horde of stock footage that prophetically portends Allende's imminent martyrdom.⁵⁰

FRANCE: POUR LE MISTRAL

Ivens's two final European essay films of this cycle, shot and finished in mid-decade, were both released in 1966: first the Dutch city film *Rotterdam* in April and then in late summer at the Venice festival the French *Mistral*, an essay film on the famous, unpredictable Provence wind of the same name.

I shall consider the latter film first since this personal project – perhaps the most personally rooted of the entire lyrical essay cycle – had been conceived almost a decade earlier and shot between 1963 and 1965, while the Dutch film, a commission, had been shot in September of 1965. The interpolated completion of several films in the mid-sixties, including the last instalments of the essay cycle and the beginning of the Indochina cycle, happened around the same time within an intensifying spiral of Ivens's divided interests. This moment was astonishingly productive for a man approaching 70 yet seemingly spreading himself ever thinner and increasing his pace rather than slowing down, but its success was arguably uneven.

If the modest project for *Valparaiso* had expanded outwards to include its two satellite shorts and surpassed its original artistic conception, *Mistral*, once referred to by Ivens (letter to Valli, 1960, JIA) as 'my greatest artistic dream', emerged less as the most ambitious and longest-nurtured production plan of his career than as the barely recognisable residue of this dream. This encyclopedic project on the epic struggle between humankind and the elements of nature in the tradition of *Zuiderzee* and *Lied*, is notable in its final version as a shrunken compromise, a 'castrated film' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 284) that was his most bitterly disappointing personal defeat since *Italia* or even arguably *First Years*. The concept first emerged in 1957 (at the very beginning of the 1950s according to a later less reliable recollection [Destanque and Ivens, 1982, 282]), and was pushed back and forth between front and back burner as the entire lyrical essay cycle and Ivens's pedagogical, political, and artistic commitments around the planet kept drawing him away. Did a project about the perennial cycles and struggles of the natural world, of which human civilisation is an inextricable part, provide a salutary anchor for the 'Flying Dutchman' no matter how accustomed he was to the stresses of remote airports and Cold War skirmishes? And was this in a way complementary to his new relationship with Marceline Loridan that was consolidated by his move into her homey *rive gauche* apartment in 1965, the year the *Mistral* project came to an end? With two decades retrospect he thought as much:

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Why *Pour le Mistral* and why at that moment? I sometimes still ask myself this question. I believe that I was ripe to plunge myself into an experiment like that and I see a stage, a kind of transition in my life and in my work. A symbol perhaps? I don't know at all. Before *Pour le Mistral*, it was Cuba and Valparaiso, and right after was the sky and the earth of Vietnam. Perhaps this film on the wind was not so crazy as one could believe? I like to think that it has its place and its logic and it came at a moment in my life where I felt the need to stop in order to film the battle of the wind and the clouds in the sky of Provence, at St-Rémy. This peacetime sky

would be succeeded by another sky, a sky of sound and fury, where the star would no longer be the wind, but death. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 286)

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The Mistral concept would have produced a two-and-a-half-hour compendium that matched the state-financed *Lied* and *Italia*, or even what can be considered its eventual remake *Histoire*, in its artistic and thematic scale and scope. But the thriving private film industry for shorts and nonfiction in France at the peak of the New Wave somehow could not pull it off. Ivens seemed lined up to become the new Flaherty with this never-ending shoot, and his exasperated producer, whom Ivens had once cast as a risk-taking and sympathetic young saviour, would be pushed to his limits by delays, interruptions, and overruns, finally forced to pull the plug and to edit the unfinished material already assembled. The increasing urgency of the geopolitical situation, especially around Indochina, summoning Ivens to intervene, did not help the situation any more than the shortage of time, money, and cooperation from the unpredictable Aeolian star of the film. Ivens secretly went to Hanoi in June of 1964, at the invitation of a North Vietnamese government then faced with the inevitable escalation of American aggression (US bombing of the North began two months later), and reconnoitred both the North's defences and its cinematic infrastructure, establishing the relationships that would bring him back to Indochina the following year and lead to four films in the region. The overextended director's protracted absences, hush-hush or not (June in Hanoi, September in Santiago, November in Leipzig), and the resultant on-again-off-again status of the production, could not have reassured an inexperienced producer who had clearly overextended himself as much as Ivens had. The outcome was inevitable, not only Ivens's cries of frustration and an outburst of personal vituperation against the hapless producer, but also most importantly the shortcomings of a flawed, 32-minute lyrical essay salvaged from this mess that barely exceeded the other less personal essays of this cycle in its scale. Nevertheless, *Mistral*, once detached in retrospect from Ivens's smashed dreams, ended up strong enough to garner a Golden Lion at Venice and to assume pride of place in that festival's lifetime retrospective of his work; it also has maintained its bold and anomalous cinematic interest a half-century later.

The meridional French state of Provence is home to the legendarily fierce wind that unexpectedly sweeps down from the Alps across the state's distinctive craggy yet fertile terrain towards the Mediterranean, shaping its entire economy and culture. Provence was also Ivens's occasional holiday refuge in the post-war years, as he increasingly put down roots in Paris. It is hard to picture the restless, diehard communist at home and relaxing amid the decadent

tourists whom Vigo had castigated once and for all in *À propos de Nice* (1930, France, 45). But there were also pockets of Parisian *rive gauche* literati settled along the Riviera and just inland, from Prévert to Picasso, not to mention the cinema people congregating in Cannes each May with whom Ivens apparently felt at home. He became a regular as the fifties and sixties wore on, usually staying at the house offered the penniless filmmaker by his Parisian medical specialist Dr. Raymond Leibovici.

Ivens experienced his first epiphanic discovery of the Mistral in 1958, lying on his back looking at the sky in St-Tropez, and seeing the wind clear the sky of its clouds:

I had just been present at the battle of the god of the wind against the world of the clouds, and that had been so sudden, so obvious, at the same time so simple and so unbounded that my breath was cut off and my heart was on alert. I was sorry that I did not have a camera with me to record the images of this fleeting spectacle and share my feeling. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 282)

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Although some producers mocked the idea of a film on an invisible entity, Ivens's first Paris producer Garance Film offered the initial contract in 1959, the year after their hit with *La Seine*, but nothing came of this amid all the back-and-forth between Italy, Africa, and Latin America. Another distraction was Ivens's completion in the summer of 1960 of the montage for Cinémathèque française founder Henri Langlois's documentary project on Marc Chagall, a compilation of the Russian-Jewish artist's images deployed as a biography, which had been in the works for more than two years and was doomed to be one of Ivens's rare lost works.⁵¹ Once the Cuban and Valparaiso projects were completed by the spring of 1963, Ivens managed to obtain another contract for *Mistral*, this time with the young New Wave producer Claude Nedjar, a 'theatre man' 40 years his junior, who was willing to come on board with a project that was very risky indeed.

An ambitious plan had been developed in collaboration with two writers whom Ivens, ever averse to producing proposals and treatments himself, especially in his new adopted second language, had brought into the project. They were predictably from *rive gauche* cultural circles, Armand Gatti, yet another former Marker collaborator, and René Guyonnet. The proposal was entitled *Sang de ciel* ('Sky Blood'), and offered a narrative of the capricious and potent natural force, even more anthropomorphising than Ivens's conception of the Mississippi and the Nile had been a decade earlier. Ivens and Nedjar were so excited about the proposal that they were even discussing a spin-off record and book (yet another *Lied* retreat). *Lied* and *Italia* were not the only templates for this

composite hybrid, but also the likewise ambitious omnibus and anthology formats that were in the heady air of the New Wave cinemas of the 1950s and 1960s, ranging from the thematic *Ro.Go.Pa.G.* (Godard et al., 1963, Italy/France, 111) to the city compilation *Paris vu par...* (*Six in Paris*, Godard et al., 1965, 95), rounded off by the early 1970s American variations *Visions of Eight* (Milos Forman et al., 1973, 110) and de Antonio's *Underground* (1975, 87). Perhaps the films that come closest to Ivens's model, in the sense that different authors and different artistic forms are incorporated, are not surprisingly also associated with Ivens, *Loin du Vietnam* and *Histoire*.⁵² In fact, as Stufkens (2008, 402) has convincingly demonstrated, the original plan for *Loin* was based on a proposal for a six-part feature-length composite Vietnam film proposed by Ivens to the Conseil mondial de la paix in July 1966, during the final edit of *Mistral* (which by then had heartbreakingly been stripped of its original encyclopedic scale). Marker and others had been recruited to this proposal several months before Marker brought together the new *Loin* collective in December of that year. Such encyclopedic hybrids by and large were not always commercially successful in their theatrical aspirations, and in a way epitomised the hubris of certain commercial-minded convergences of documentary cultures and New Wave cinephilia. It was an era where things were arguably going in another direction and direct cinema was re-establishing documentary's place less in the theatres than within parallel exhibition infrastructures, audiences, and social vocations.

The film was to be an eclectic composite essay composed like a symphony in five movements, with terms like theme, variation, and finale, and tempos like scherzo and appassionato in the conversation, along with a whole range of styles, 'lyric, satiric, humorous, scientific, fantastic, social, cultural and adventure'. The key elements were to be:

- 1) A six-minute abstract animated film that Ivens's old acquaintance from his days at the National Film Board of Canada, Norman McLaren, had agreed to develop.⁵³
- 2) A 20-minute 'Lettre de Provence', a selection of scenes and spontaneous shots filmed by amateur filmmakers from Provence, capturing their lives under the Mistral, a repeat of *Lied*'s successful recruitment strategy, facilitated by a thriving regional cine-club network.
- 3) A three-minute 'social relations' art film on the Paris-Nice express train in service at the time called 'Le Mistral'.
- 4) The 40-minute documentary to be made by Ivens.
- 5) A 20-minute short fiction film on the Mistral theme, a heterosexual romance to be directed by a young director (a retread of *Windrose?*). Stufkens (2008, 365) has deduced that Loridan, who had lived in Bellène, Provence at a traumatic moment in her youth just prior to her deportation, was the candidate for this final segment.

Calls for the amateur contributions to the *Mistral* compendium went out in *Cinéma pratique* in the spring of 1964 and several interesting responses were received though none followed through (Stufkens, 2008, 368-369). There is no record of any advances in any of the other three proposed segments except Ivens's own. In all, three shooting periods were eventually organised and carried out in Provence, in the fall of 1963, in the winter of 1964-1965, and a final five weeks in early spring of 1965. The cinematographers were Claude Dumaitre, the veteran of *La Seine*, credited with the material from Haute Provence, and Pierre Lhomme, rising star of the New Wave who had distinguished himself on Marker's *Le Joli Mai* (Ivens had personally defended this film to none other than East German President Walter Ulbricht in November 1963 to ensure its Leipzig festival prize, and just prior to the *Mistral* premiere he was to say '[Marker] is without a doubt the best French filmmaker, he made *Le Joli Mai*' (Ivens, 1966a, 20).

One of the particular aspects of the project was its attention to sound, to which the spin-off record fantasy clearly testifies. The influence of direct cinema was evident in this emphasis, though interviewing with 'farmers, fishers, lumberjacks, weathermen, hunters. and also poets' affected by the wind never materialised as elements of the final product, to Ivens's great regret. Although 16mm sync cinematography was part of the technical layout, alongside 35mm, there is no synchronised speech of any kind in the film. Rather, the direct aesthetic seems to have shaped the obsessive drive by Ivens and his sound consultant, the avant-garde composer Luc Ferrari, to record the sounds of a subject that everyone said was invisible but never inaudible – as that post-war avant-garde genre, concrete music (Stufkens, 2008, 365-366). Much creative energy went into the recording of the wind, notably in a 'wind cage' that Ferrari had designed for the purpose – in the face of the impracticality of his earlier idea of planting microphones in human ears to replicate the sound:

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During the shoot, the sound man had become as crazy about the wind as I was. For the first time of his life he had no wind against him. On the contrary, instead of fleeing it he had to capture all its nuances. He had recorded the wind with its different musics and we'd be able to make an original record out of it. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 285)

Ivens's notes for the sound recording offered much specific detail as to what was to be recorded:

- poplars, a group of people (talking while walking); cypresses, dead trees (cracks and pops branches), fever, wind in the grasses

Sheep – shepherds, hills with various sounds, dogs, voices from far off, a gunshot, etc.

Church interior (normal, and if possible abandoned church), bells (in the wind), tractor that is ploughing, windmill, weathervane (creaking)

– deserted house (everything that creaks: doors, windows, etc.), stones falling, walking on tiles and stones, birds, forest (wind)

Rocks at Sisteron, wind on the bridge with river (Verdon), organ rocks (Méés, electric wires, echo (St-Geneiz towards Sisteron).

Sheets that flap, bamboos, conservation roof in tree, microphone in pebbles + junipers (roof), electric pylons, ocher tunnel. (Ivens, production notes, JIA)

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It is easy to imagine what happened to the grandiose concrete music proposals in the last phase of production after the April 1965 plug-pulling. The sound effects that ended up in the finished scaled-back product often prosaically perpetuate 1930s synthetic studio effects, just like in *La Seine* and the other films. Just as often however, they reflect Ivens's original instructions geared toward sensory immersion and experimentation, vividly and dramatically constructing a pantheistic universe of struggle with the wind god. The crew's creative microphone placement clearly bore fruit, but I doubt that such effects are synchronised given the Provençal flora's lack of lips and Ivens's traditional indifference to the ontological principle involved. Whatever the case, Ferrari and his ambitious sound design are not acknowledged in the final credits of the film, and one can only conclude that he was another expensive casualty of the plug-pulling. The sound is attributed to a commonly encountered sound technician of the *nouvelle vague*, Bernard Ortion, and the orchestral score, effectively modernist and commanding but far from the experimental 'concrete music' once envisaged, is credited to Antoine Duhamel, now known for the score for Godard's *Pierrot le fou* (110), also of 1965.

Much of Ivens's research was also focused on artistic heritage, the visual and literary mythologies of the Mistral, and their translation into cinematic form. It was as if the increasingly self-reflexive senior filmmaker was out to exceed those critics who had endlessly praised for decades the cultural references through his work and to push the work's encyclopedic vocation to include visual culture:

I studied Dutch painters who, with their techniques, had tried to grasp the terrible wind from the Northwest that weighs down the sky and brings the storm. In Florence, I observed Botticelli's wind in Venus's hair. I read and reread the poems of Shelley, Lorca, Saint-John Perse and Frédéric Mistral. I resaw films where the wind becomes a dramatic ele-

ment like the admirable *The Wind* of Sjöstrom or the moving *Steamboat Will Junior* of Buster Keaton. I collected stories and legends on the wind and, little by little, I acquired the certainty that I could gather together all the elements in a great filmic poem. But the most important was my encounter with van Gogh. Looking at his paintings, those that he painted in Provence, I discovered that he had brushed all of them in the light of the Mistral, above the cypresses, the presence of this implacable sun that is like the herald of a danger, the premonitory sign of his madness. Ordinarily, the cypress is the tree of solemnity. Compact and slender, it punctuates the landscape, borders lots, adorns cemeteries, and testifies to a civilization. Its pride is obvious, it is there to break the wind and, when the mistral starts to blow, it becomes a completely different tree. The cypress changes the position of its leaves and, from dark to calm, its mass transforms into a green torch that reaches to the sky. It's thus that Van Gogh had painted it and it's thus that I too wanted to grasp it, in its colour of the wind. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 283-284)

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This research was more palpable in the final film than the experimental sound research, and the film can be seen on one level as an homage to Ivens's compatriot, though not overloaded with exact quotations from van Gogh's painterly *oeuvre*.⁵⁴ Rather, his visual concept went beyond a conservative and literal-minded approach to painterly adaptation. Lhomme provided a strong tactile and dynamic sense of nature caught up in the wind, dizzy with spectacular pans, vertiginous tilts and giddy travelling shots, frames bursting with swaying cypresses, breathtaking enunciations of colour (a startling field of yellow mustard), landscapes often caught classically at a 'sublime' distance but its textures caught especially in close-up, caught in snowy meadows, frenzied foliage and whipped branches. All is lit with volatile intensity and acute colouration and often animated with close-up, embodied and gestural camerawork (had Lhomme seen Brakhage? was he self-consciously replicating van Gogh's brushstrokes?) that pushes some of the imagery sometimes toward pantheistic subjectivism and sometimes to the point of abstraction, all offering the evocative equivalent of van Gogh's sensory and psychic disturbance in the face of the Mistral. Ivens must have been gratified when eventual reviewers would emphasise the film's sensory effect: 'Instinctively the spectator raises the collar of his/her coat' (Vidal, 1964); 'One can feel the breath that the Mistral spreads over land and water like a blanket' (Fortuin, 1968).

On a macro level Ivens continued the Valparaiso practice of shooting in both black and white and colour and planned a structural passage from the former to the latter that repeated the earlier film's tectonic emulsion shift. Moreover, he had other tricks up his sleeve, an even more dramatic shift from

classical aspect ratio to widescreen, to embody through the shape of the frame the sudden and unpredictable assault of the wind suddenly swooping horizontally across the landscape. And to further convey the power of the wind, aerial shots were provided for, echoing similar strategies in earlier epic nature battle films, in *Zuiderzee* (his first usage of aerial views) as well as *Lied*. But this time the filmmakers were developing the point of view of the roving, robustly anthropomorphised wind – much less gentle than its incarnations as the blowing Zephyrs Ivens had seen ruffling Venus’s hair in the Botticelli. He also ensured that the latest in the emerging family of zoom lenses, the PanCinor, was at his disposal, and *Mistral* can be considered the first of Ivens’s works to systematically deploy this quintessentially 1960s tool. These expensive technologies no doubt heightened Nedjar’s budgetary skittishness from early in the production, but Ivens’s concept bore fruit, especially the spectacular aerial travelling shots that provide the climax of the film, the anthropomorphised point-of-view sequence originating in the Alps, culminating in the final 20-second dive across coastal dunes out into the Mediterranean.

Nedjar cut short the cinematography at the end of April 1965, despite Ivens’s frustrated plea that the three shoots had obtained the cooperation of the recalcitrant wind for a total of only eight days. Relationships soured and the director and crew, who had financed much of the shoot in its final sprint through their savings and unremunerated labour respectively, made gestures towards a withholding of the rushes from the producer. After several months, catching his breath and determined to realise his investment, Nedjar set the project back on track the following spring with view towards a Venice 1966 premiere, apparently with Ivens’s begrudging cooperation, together with a familiar editor Jean Ravel (who would get major credit along with cinematographer Pierre Lhomme, as ‘collaborator’) and an unfamiliar commentary writer, Provençal poet André Verdet. 20 years later Ivens was forthright about his still vivid disappointment, uncharacteristically blunt about the work of collaborators still living at the time:

Everything collapsed like a house of cards. I was present powerlessly at this flop, my beautiful dream on the Mistral diluted in the abandonments and pettinesses of a production that no longer had the means to live up to its commitments. The film reflected this seepage. The commentary was mediocre, the music half-finished, the passage from black and white to colour, that I had imagined nuanced and rich in meanings [including through dissolves], was reduced to a lab effect without subtlety and, above all, all the lived anecdotes that I had selected, all the little stories of which the wind was the star and that were supposed to give the film its true shape, were never shot. Caught between a failing production and a

wind that had never stopped imposing its will, my illusions had melted like snow in the sun. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 286)

While the finished film does not offer for the innocent viewer concrete evidence of most of these melted illusions, the effect of the commentary, despite Verdet's credentials as a distinguished poet and multidisciplinary artist, is justly summed up by the director in his words 'mediocre' – and a few days after the premiere 'pompous' (Ivens, letter to Michelle, quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 286). Mercifully, it lays over only one-fifth of the soundtrack (compared to *Valparaiso's* one-third). And that one-fifth was read by Pigaut at breakneck speed, somewhat of a challenge for non-native speakers dependent on subtitles and not able to access its intensely incantatory thrust in the original French – literary, figurative, descriptive, highly allusive as if Verdet had read too much of Ivens's notes about Shelley and Saint-John Perse. At best it is dysfunctional and at worse seriously migrainogenic. Even one French critic would call it 'unbearable' (Haudiquet, 1967)!

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This problem aside, the final version of *Mistral* is a fine nature and landscape essay that well deserved its Golden Lion. This despite this genre's dissidence with other documentary trends of 1965-1966. For these the urgent aesthetic challenge was lip sync encounters with individuals whether as portraits or as conduits to social or geopolitical or historical issues: portraits of composers from Stravinsky (*Stravinsky* [Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor, 1965, Canada, 45]; *A Stravinsky Portrait* [Richard Leacock, 1966, USA, 55]) to Bob Dylan (*Don't Look Back* [D.A. Pennebaker, 1967, USA, 96]), jostled with interview encounters with ordinary but cinematic individuals, from Warhol's *Chelsea Girls* (1966, USA, 210) to Marker's *Le mystère Koumiko* (1967, France, 46), especially those caught up in the century's geopolitical violence, from *Memorandum* (Donald Brittain, 1967, Canada, 58) to *The Mills of the Gods: Vietnam* (Beryl Fox, 1965, Canada, 56). Films about nature were simply not cutting edge in 1965, nor throughout the entire decade, and *Mistral* seems old-fashioned and prophetic at the same time.

The 33-minute definitive version, apparently finalised after Venice, is organised very generally around the passage of the seasons, and around the cycles of the wind, loosely retaining without making explicit the musical architecture Ivens had envisaged for his 'poem' – undoubtedly more sonata-form than symphonic. Built through the visual and aural nature tropes, indeed themes and variations, and the citational practice outlined above, the discourse of the wind is interspersed with narrative clusters arising out of the human society in its path, consisting of Ivens's three traditional elements:

87. *Pour le Mistral* (1966): a Marseilles vista shows shantytown residents struggling against the wind to carry water. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

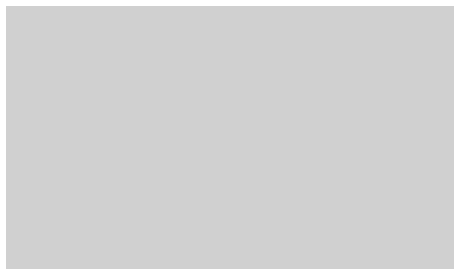


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- Firstly, *documentaire organisé*: sequences most often following everyday work, that of shepherds guarding their charges on windswept plateaus, fieldworkers, landholders and housewives working within and setting up barriers to the ferocity of the wind, women and children carrying out everyday subsistence in an exposed hillside Marseilles shantytown; village elders playing cards in a streetfront café in Avignon.
- Secondly, more outright dramatisation: notably a scripted Christmas midnight mass sequence, often referred-to because it was suggested by Ivens's famous friend Prévert, in which a *grande dame* arriving at the church in her limousine has her pearls ripped off by the wind – the Mistral's revenge on her pride? She abandons her scattered pearls and attends the mass, the only interior in the film, but soon her devotion is distracted by the pearls on the priest's chasuble. Also memorable is a cryptic choreographed sequence organised around a young dance-theatre troupe rehearsing *Romeo and Juliet* out of doors on a gusty square. Perhaps this linkage of the Shakespearean social, erotic, and emotive turbulence to the tempestuous meteorological stage – wind-crossed rather than star-crossed – was a nod to the narrative romance never pursued beyond the drawing board.
- Finally, Ivens's spontaneous 'life-caught-unawares' observational impulse, reinvigorated with *La Seine*, resurfaces in *Mistral*, thanks at least in part to the new zoom and long focal distance lenses, but becomes a minor current, engaging most strikingly a comic sensibility for which Ivens is not especially famous. Here Ivens's other cinematic muse, Keaton – or perhaps Keaton-meets-Jacques-Tati – comes into play, if we look again at the comic intervals capturing the pride of human enterprise flouted by the elements, the wind toying with women's skirts, etc. A series of urban street shots, caught at the fullest moment of the Mistral's power, shows city dwellers struggling to carry out their mundane tasks, and then frozen at their moment of humiliation – citizens losing control of their bicycles, seniors seeing their letters snatched just as they are being

mailed. This lighthearted observation speaks to the wind as a naughty imp rather than a titan, a countercurrent to the epic struggles that are at the centre of the film.

88. A freeze frame showing the Mistral as a naughty imp harassing cyclists and other urban citizens, a countercurrent to epic struggles. DVD frame capture. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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Throughout *Mistral*, familiar social themes from class difference to the struggle for survival through labour are kept in view, inextricably embellished by the sensuous apperception of the volatile natural environment. In sum, as he had intended, Ivens had successfully tapped, as so often before, a synthesis of epic and lyric scale, maintaining a dialectical presence of panoramic views of pregnant horizons and skylines alive with hurtling clouds (using in one stance accelerated motion, it seems) together with the minutest of details of everyday manual labour or the vibrating shimmer of an insect on a petal.

Verdet's commentary attempts this same dialectic, but Ivens is correct that this 'mediocre' gloss falls short of its mark. Aside from the issue of trans-linguistic accessibility that I raised earlier, it is hard to imagine that Ivens would have accepted the current definitive version of this text had he not been on a collision course toward Venice and pulled sideways at the same time by his growing involvement in the Vietnam cause and concomitant estrangement with the Soviet bloc, not to mention both the *Rotterdam* release and the *Ciel* premiere that spring. Hyperbolically literary and extremely dense, the commentary is offered largely in rhyming quatrains or other complex rhyming schemes, and fails most of the principles about commentary writing that Ivens had developed since *Spanish Earth*, distracting in its allusiveness and redundant in its detailed descriptions of what is seen on screen. Even in a passage more effective than most, the eloquent treatment/vista of the Marseilles shantytown residents struggling against the gusts to access water, the text's evocative switch to the interrogative mode and plaintively Marxian utopian, 'if only' image of work as a 'coral to polish' and life as a 'festive state' where justice prevails, is undermined by its excessive verbiage and a piled-up figurativeness of language laid over the figurativeness of the imagery:

La misère n'est pas encore reléguée dans les archives de l'histoire. À notre table pourrons-nous encore nous orchestrer, et notre lit sera-t-il encore parfois comme une barque sur le lac ou la mer belle dans la magie de la saison? La porte, l'escalier, la rue, les perspectives nettes, l'espace et l'azur comme une conjonction heureuse, le travail comme une proie facile, un corail à polir. Et la justice à l'état de fête? [Misery has still to be relegated to the archives of history. Will we still be able to gather at our table? and our bed, will it still be at times like a boat on the lake, or the sea beautiful in the magic of the season? The door, the stair, the street, neat perspectives, space and the blueness like a happy conjunction. Work is an easy prey/quarry, a coral to polish. And justice in this festive state?]

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Politically speaking, Ivens's essay on a turbulent natural universe cannot be said to be prophetically ecological in the same sense as Ivens's stressed pro-development films, read against the grain, from *Zuiderzee* and *Komsomol to Lied* and *Italia*. However, since Provençal civilisation clearly exists in harmony with the capricious wind, Ivens's agrarian fantasy, especially seen within the macro pattern of the career-long back-and-forth between urban and pastoral, can certainly be seen as a last enunciation of the utopian vision of nature in harmony with mankind's struggle to labour and reproduce. This last vision is especially poignant in the light of Ivens's imminent rediscovery of the other sky that he remembered for Destanque in 1982 as the technologically determinist sky of capitalist war rather than the sky of nature's 'sound and fury' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 286). Not surprisingly, *Mistral* has been occasionally revived in the 21st century, alongside *Valparaiso*, as an environmental film (for example the Ecocinema festival, Greece 2006).

No theatrical career would be in store for *Mistral*, no doubt due to its being out-of-sync with the increasing mood of the decade's documentary work and Ivens's preoccupations elsewhere, quickly moving on as usual after a 'flop' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 286). Restricted to a path as a festival film, and sentenced moreover to short film ignominy in the lower antechamber of hell, critics rarely discussed this film at any length. After its Venice premiere, where it was largely ignored despite its prize, it played in East Germany as part of the yearlong Ivens's 70th birthday celebrations and in the left-wing Florence documentary event Festival dei Popoli in February 1967, and had a triumphant exposure in the Netherlands in the fall of 1968 along with the 70th birthday celebrations there. J.C.A. Fortuin (1968) admired the precision of the cinematography but praised especially the 'eloquent' montage, 'ascribing poetry to the violence of the storm and drama to what would otherwise have been nothing more than an interesting reportage about a natural phenomenon'. In similar vein, the *Nieuwsblad van het Zuiden* (1968) praised its 'enormous dramatic energy' coming principally out

of the editing: 'one of the strongest films that Ivens has ever made, fashioned in a style one recognizes immediately, a craftsmanly style that others will reject as conventional, but a style that evokes such tension within and between the images that it can only be the work of a master'. 20-something cinephile-critic-turned-director Verstappen (1968), however, embarking on his own career as a feature film director the same year and epitomising the hip youth New Wave culture of the 1960s, recognises his kinship with an artist 40 years his senior and emphasised the 'welcome back native son' angle:

The photography in *Mistral*, for example, is dazzlingly beautiful, every frame an impeccable composition, with overcast skies and landscapes that haven't been seen since Brueghel. In a certain sense, *Mistral* appears to be a film from the Dutch documentary school. [...] *Mistral* is more powerful, however, its photography more classical, its montage more inventive than the work of the Low Countries.

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The Dutch had reawakened to the work of their best known expatriate filmmaker, with the final two films in this cycle *Mistral* and *Rotterdam*, and Verstappen's generation, immersed in New Wave cinephilia and New Left politics, who remembered neither the War nor the Dutch East Indies, were now primed to constitute one of Ivens's most attentive audiences over the Asian peregrinations of the next quarter century.

The French audience was more blasé about *Mistral* and the critics hardly noticed it – its festival prize notwithstanding. Only Haudiquet (1967) focused momentarily on the two final essays, which he called film poems, and saw in *Mistral* a confirmation of Ivens's stature as 'the great poet of the documentary'. The critics in Florence were equally appreciative: Frosali (1967) wondered whether a poetic nature documentary belonged in a festival of social cinema but praised the film's 'beautiful images, great humanist sense of nature, wonder and tenderness, [that] enliven the documentary, unique in the genre', while his colleague (Novelli, 1967) had no doubts whatever that 'the splendor of the images, the intensity of the colour and the poetry of the Ivens's film are among the most beautiful sights in this Festival'.

NETHERLANDS: ROTTERDAM EUROPOORT

Rotterdam, the last film made in the lyrical essay cycle of the 1950s-60s, imposed in 1965-1966 a certain symmetrical shape upon this phase of Ivens's career. For one thing, this 20-minute city film was an occasion for the eternal expatriate to work again in the homeland from which he had been exiled

30 years before to make a 'come-home-all-is-forgiven' commission. Moreover this urban essay on Europe's largest port comes at the end of the systole-diastole pattern of the essay film cycle – its oscillation between rural and urban worlds, between nature and civilisation. In fact the pattern is encapsulated in both the relationships of each film to each other and those within each film itself (the latter most dramatically within *Italia*). Ivens rounds this pattern off with a gentle cinematic questioning of a turbulent and congested metropolis with '800,000 faces' that complements *Mistral's* contemporaneous essay on epic struggles within the natural universe. Finally, as many commentators have emphasised, *Rotterdam's* glimpse of the iron vertical lift bridge over the Maas was a symmetrical return to the very monument that had inspired Ivens's first major film *Brug* almost 40 years earlier, that is, the symbolic centre of Rotterdam's life.

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Rotterdam can most productively be compared to the other two 'pure' city films in this cycle, *La Seine* and *Valparaiso* (though most of the other essay films of the cycle contain a city-film fragment or element, *Italia* its Ravenna, *Carnet* its Havana, *Nanguila* its Bamako, *Mistral* its Marseilles). *Rotterdam* is also unique, for the native son no longer needs to suppress his cultural curiosity toward the 'other', can luxuriate in his mother tongue, and can fully banish the temptation of the exotic and the picturesque from his palette. The result arguably comes closest among his films to capturing the rhythms and spaces of 20th-century urban civilisation in the global north, those beneath the aestheticised surfaces of *Regen* and the sentimental affect of *Valparaiso*. The project, no less messy in its production process than *Italia* or *Mistral*, survived despite heavy odds against it (another good-intentioned, tight-pursed producer who ended up having to say enough is enough), and is arguably one of the enduring works of the cycle, ripe like Ivens himself for rehabilitation.

Discussions of a new Ivens Dutch film began to proliferate after the successful screening of *La Seine* in Arnhem in 1957, and especially after Ivens's 65th birthday blowout in Amsterdam in February 1964, organised by Jan de Vaal, Ivens's friend, fan and defender, future head of the Ivens archive, and leading impresario of the rehabilitation process. The unforgiving government opposed any state funding for such a film, but the Rotterdam entrepreneur Joop Landré came to the rescue. He happened to be an old Ivens acquaintance and budding film producer who was making a contribution to Holland's emerging post-war film New Wave as well as its revolution in private broadcasting. Most importantly he was fortunately well connected to the Harbour commission for the country's largest port. Landré began to solicit ideas from Ivens, and, in the midst of *Mistral* preparations, Ivens naturally suggested a clouds film, then a Venice-Amsterdam project pulled out of his ideas drawer from a decade earlier, and finally another recycled project based on the 'Flying Dutchman' perso-

na that had fascinated him since the 1920s. This persona was derived from an 18th-century legend and canonised by Heine and later Wagner in the 19th century as a tale of a punished nautical hero doomed to sail the globe and make land only every seven years (Ivens would use a 100-year variant of the story), yet who is eligible for redemption through a woman's love. Ivens's revived interest was an index of his growing self-reflexivity as he aged and basked increasingly in self-fulfilling critical spins. This last idea, implicitly autobiographical, got incorporated into Landré's own proposal for a documentary on the Rotterdam port accompanied by Ravel's *Bolero* (Stufkens, 2008) and by December 1964 the deal was set, with a handsome budget of 121,600 guilders (Paalman, 2011, 424), fortunately bereft of the suggested score. Ivens's friends at Argos, happy with the success of *Valparaiso*, came on as co-producers alongside Landré and the municipality, and secured Paris as the post-production headquarters.

Why would Ivens have taken on one more project at a time when he was already being torn apart by conflicting loyalties to both the Mistral and Vietnam? No doubt the warm glow around Dutch rehabilitation was clinched by the continuing need to earn a living. In the climate of scarcity within the documentary industry, one lined up future projects then as now by never saying no. It would be almost a year before the shoot in Rotterdam got underway in September 1965, and as it turned out the premieres of *Rotterdam*, *Ciel*, and *Mistral* all took place in rapid succession in 1966.

Developing the concept at the same time as the *Mistral* cinematography and the *Ciel* startup in Hanoi, Ivens chose a 'semi-documentary' format and leaned toward the element of fantasy and dramatisation to an extent not reached since *Italia*. The Dutchman would be a mediator persona, whose wide-eyed gaze would serve as a conduit upon the city for the spectator. His point of view and his voice would be incorporated into the film, a variation on the perennial trope utilised in city films from *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (*Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov, 1929, USSR, 68) and *Rien que les heures* (*Nothing But Time*, Cavalcanti, 1926, France, 45) to *My Winnipeg* (Guy Maddin, 2007, Canada, 80) and *La mémoire des anges* (*The Memories of Angels*, Luc Bourdon, 2008, Canada, 80). Perhaps as a reaction against the increasing 'naturalist' dogma of direct cinema, which Ivens continued to critique in 1965 and 1966, as we have seen, the emerging Dutchman character was closer to pure fiction than any of his other films since *Till Eulenspiegel*. It even went so far as to pastiche some imagery from the 'other side', namely the glamorous aura and aquatic prowess of the James Bond movie hero, whose huge success had had three hit incarnations thus far in the sixties, and whose fourth, *Thunderball* (Terence Young, 1965, UK, 130), was imminent at the end of 1965.

The fantasy element, as striking as it would be, was not intended to overwhelm the social thesis of the film. Ivens's hitherto classic Marxist analysis

of labour – work as dignified, strenuous, and alienated yet potentially liberated by technology – was to segue into a more postmodern critique of an urban existence dominated by technology that does not liberate but alienates and depersonalises. In his notes he confronted the irony that the biggest port in the world deployed an ‘empty’ technology:

Social system out of date the human side neglected – only profit counts. The ‘barons of the port’, bullies [*brutalistes*] with noise and their song of the masses. [... The Dutchman’s] insistent dream: at sea he thought that mankind would have evolved more quickly to a higher level, to its youth. (Ivens, production notes, n.d., JIA)

Ivens, moreover, anticipated that as usual these social themes would create friction with the sponsors:

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What is important above all, these are the problems of the country in which you are filming. *The Return of the Flying Dutchman* is a film commissioned by the city of Rotterdam: but in Rotterdam also people have problems and necessarily I will have a hard time showing them. In France, it would be the same with certain subjects that are taboo: wages, housing. (Ivens, 1966a)

For the team Landré and Ivens assembled a hard core of proven Dutch technicians, namely cinematographer Eddy van der Enden, whose already existing footage of the petrochemical installations of the port impressed Ivens and was incorporated into the final film (Paalman, 2011, 425), and sound specialist Tom Tholen, responsible for the ‘*brutaliste*’ urban soundscape Ivens had pointed to.⁵⁵ Ivens recruited as assistant his new girlfriend Lorida, whose censored 1962 documentary *Algérie, année zéro* (co-dir. Jean-Pierre Sergent, 35), was finally surfacing and about to win the Leipzig festival Grand Prize in November. Also from Paris came cinematographer Étienne Becker, yet another veteran from Marker’s *Le Joli Mai*, who had established himself as an expert on his new 16mm Éclair camera, the privileged instrument of the new direct cinema, which Ivens wanted to use for handheld and synch-sound on-the-street shooting (predictably, as it turned out, not a single moment of improvised direct lip-synch-sound would be retained in the film, but the handheld camerawork is indeed virtuoso). To cast the Dutchman, the Amsterdam experimental sculptor Carel Kneulman was recruited halfway through the shoot to replace an acrophobic performer who had already been cast, and future leading lady of the Dutch film industry, Willeke van Ammelrooy, was signed to play his romantic interest Senta.⁵⁶ Finally, one of the Netherlands’ most famous

poets, Gerrit Kouwenaar, a prizewinning and socially critical experimentalist and former Resistance activist, came on board to write what turned out to be one of the best handful of commentaries in the Ivens *oeuvre*. Argos recruited Montand to read Marker's French version of the narration.

Despite everything falling so well into place, the shoot turned out to be no less stressed than that for *Mistral*. Ivens skimmed on the preparation and research time he normally reserved, and the shoot began in late September five days after his arrival, without a script or even shooting plan in place, leading to much anxiety within the crew. To make matters worse Loridan, and no doubt the other Parisians, did not speak Dutch. One of the Paris assistants, Miroslav Sebestik (quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 349), put a positive spin on the uncertainty: 'The film is evolving as we shoot. The scenario, the idea for the film, is developing with every passing day. This allows us to maintain an improvisational dimension, a freedom. Filming this way is seeking'. But this did not reassure budget-conscious Landré, who soon instructed Ivens to cancel his idea to extend the Cinemascope experimentation he had begun the previous year in *Mistral*. Kneulman arrived only in the third week of the shoot, at which point a scenario was finally solidified. Ivens himself disappeared to the *Ciel* post-production in Paris at the start of November and the shoot continued two weeks without him under Loridan's linguistically challenged supervision before wrapping up (Stufkens, 2008, 347). Tensions continued during an accelerated postproduction – the 24-to-1 ratio was one challenge (albeit a luxurious one), the distance between Rotterdam and Paris was another, and Ivens's request for additional cinematography was also turned down by Landré. The film was completed with the addition of Kouwenaar's text, trimmed by Ivens to a still prolix 36% of the running time, and of Tholen's soundtrack, just a month before the official premiere at the end of April 1966. The Rotterdam municipal brass was in full, proud – if slightly puzzled – attendance.

The definitive version of *Rotterdam* that emerged at that moment opens just like his other port city essays *Regen*, *Seine*, *Valparaiso*, and *Shanghai* with an introit into the city through its harbour and aquatic thoroughfares, brooding and nocturnal. But in this case the dominant point of view belongs to the mysterious frogman-attired seafarer on board his jetfoil, hurtling over the waves past the smoky and noisy tugs, freighters, and cranes towards the city. *Rotterdam* adds a twist to the *Valparaiso/Mistral* aesthetic template of colour displacing black and white in the course of the documentary: here the black and white is given a bluish aura throughout and is interpolated with green and red-tinted sequences, alongside those in conventional colour. The port city discovered by the time-travelling intermediary is captured through the usual mix of spontaneous observation, documentary *mise-en-scène*, and outright dramatisation. The latter is especially central because of the narrative

premise around the Dutchman, especially in two scenes requiring dialogue, a scrape with boys who threaten him with 20th-century plastic toy guns, and an encounter in the opera house green room with the soprano who can redeem him, Senta. A tall and gangly figure whose erratic and stiff choreography is out of sync with the century and the space, not unlike Jacques Tati's, the Dutchman's point of view is mostly implied: there are no literal point-of-view shots, but much of the cinematic wanderings through the city seem to be through his eyes, for example, a motif of women looking out through windows onto the outside world and at the camera, mostly thoughtful and sad as if awaiting a sailor's return. The commentary also incorporates his implied voice. Kouwenaar's text is a poetic collage of his subjectivity as outside observer ('The past is beautiful but the present is alive. Bliss is a word but a city is a machine. This city I saw burning. This city I saw building. The past weighs on but the present weighs heavier.'). mingled with those of 20th-century inhabitants of the city ('Last night on the Lijnbaan I saw a very peculiar old-fashioned sailor as if looking for something, as if being looked for'), with only a little exposition, always oblique. Eloquent sonata-like passages ponder such themes as: the alienation of apartment tower housing; public rituals from funerals to weddings (not one but two!⁵⁷) to teenage collective movie-going and motorcycling; urban landscapes complete with traffic and laconic commuters on motorised bicycles; much window-shopping and street *flânerie*. The frustrated romantic subplot involves more pursuits and missed encounters than sparks, including only one shot of the two figures together. The Dutchman finally takes his leave from this unreceptive city as a paraglider, emerging from under the *De Hef* bridge and disappearing out to sea framed by the massive hulks of ships silhouetted against the grey northern sky.

89. *Rotterdam Europoort* (1966): a melancholy city film essay pondering the alienation of apartment blocks and public rituals like weddings. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © ARGOS Films/CAPF Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Given Ivens's social objectives, how does his construction of work manifest itself in this post-industrial city film? On the one hand, he vigorously retains his classical sense of the heroism and agency of manual labour with his stedevores and especially his crane operators, perched high above the harbour and the robust Ivensian ballets of girders and cargo they direct. On the other hand, the most emphatic moment is perhaps a glimpse of the boredom. An older man's sole activity is to remove plastic bales of bananas one after another from a conveyor belt, an image that sparks from the time-traveller an open-ended but acute reflection: 'What does a man think of when he's working? ...of another man's money? of freedom? of nothing at all? of himself? of his son? Sunday morning? of his own working hand? that does and by doing changes? ['the world' in another version]?' This faint concluding nuance of *Lied*-era socialist realism is virtually unique in the film.

As with all of Ivens's essays, *Rotterdam* relies on intertext, notably citation and compilation. The post-war rebuilders of Rotterdam's filled the city core with public sculpture and Ivens offers a diegetic canvas of public art that actually seems more inspired than dutiful. Rotterdam's outdoor statues are encountered dynamically by Ivens's camera: the Renaissance native son Erasmus, who originally had been supposed to play a larger role in the film;⁵⁸ the stout and impassive bourgeois observer *Monsieur Jacques*, somehow epitomising 1950s smug prosperity; finally two less complacent – in fact tormented – modernist monuments to the century's traumas, Ossip Zadkine's *The Destroyed City* evoking the Blitz that launched the Nazi occupation of the city in 1940, and Wessel Couzijn's *Corporate Entity*, a huge writhing assemblage of abstract metal shapes with a anguished humanoid figure at the core. The last of these is as ambiguous a statement about its capitalist patron as Ivens's film is about his.... As for archival imagery, the mainstay of *Valparaiso*, Ivens was brilliantly restrained and there are only three sequences of extra-diegetic inserts. Two are of 1940 Nazi footage of the razing of Rotterdam, amounting to only four haunting shots of bird's-eye aerial bombardment and firestorms on the ground, reminding us of how weighty the past really was in post-war Europe, a traumatic memory flash for an economic system in denial. A second visual citation, this time four centuries old rather than mere decades, is Pieter Brueghel's iconic 16th-century painting *Babel*, of the unfinished tower from *Genesis*, inserted towards the climax of the documentary as a mirror image of the chaos of contemporary urban life. Two vivid pans of the spiral tower suffice, linked to the giant football stadium Ivens has just shown us, at first bursting with fans and then eerily deserted, plus an inspired close-up detail showing how the doomed, crumbling edifice rises beside a miniature busy port not unlike Rotterdam. Compared to the rich visual and musical hybridity of *Valparaiso* and the lavish painterly citationality of *Mistral*, *Rotterdam*'s dis-

90. *Rotterdam Europort* (1966): the eerily deserted giant stadium is linked by Ivens to Brueghel's 'Babel'. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © ARGOS Films/CAPL Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



creet compilation work is a disciplined and spare confirmation of the principle of less is more.

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Upon its premiere in Rotterdam in April 1966 alongside the original *Brug, Rotterdam* was circulated in capitals on five continents by Dutch information agencies, reportedly with a consensus that the film was 'quite interesting artistically but a useless publicity film' (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 289). Aside from whether diplomats were actually oblivious to the promotional impact of artistic ambassadors, one American harbour industry insider actually demonstrated the film's publicity value, in a published review in a trade journal: this reviewer describes a favourable audience of New York port officials despite the Rotterdam mayor's having 'apologetically' flagged the film as 'controversial':

This view of Rotterdam in strikingly vivid colour, strove to capture not only the day-to-day functionings of a great port, but the faces, moods, and aspirations of the people who make it function. [...] What Mr. Ivens did for Rotterdam was give the port its proper due as a viable economic institution and then wreath it with something more. There was, as I say, the human touch [...] always either in the foreground or in the immediate background is the sense of this great port imbued both with a sense of history and a sense of forward purpose. (Ridder 1967)

As for Dutch reviewers, their astute enthusiasm cemented Ivens's rehabilitation process:

Almost everything Joris Ivens does and undertakes in his 20-minute-long film runs counter to the traditions that have evolved around the city documentary. [...] A monumental film evocation of an international harbour, a film that will continue to be a benchmark in the evaluation of the genre for a long time to come. (Boost, 1966)

The filmmaker reveals something you didn't expect: something more, something less, in any case something different. (Huizinga, 1966)
Associations between ideas and emotions, the visual rendering of a shock, are what the filmmaker has given to Rotterdam. Emotion, not things in themselves, life and not objects. (Steggerda, 1966)

Other than this immediate reception on native turf, there are oddly enough few other archival traces of *Rotterdam's* career in either Dutch or French versions – was the tension between the Paris and Dutch producers enough to keep the film even out of the usual festivals? Ivens and Destanque themselves omit it from the 1982 autobiography. No doubt the provincialism of the Paris and New York gatekeepers of film culture, with regard to both Dutch cinema, short films, and documentaries not participating in the era's rush of direct cinema, were also a factor, and the sole French critic writing on the French version suggested that the fantasy element problematised the film's status as documentary (though this did not prevent him from calling *Rotterdam* 'one of his best films' [Haudiquet, 1967]). Nevertheless, *Rotterdam* did receive the honour of the published transcript/découpage of the French version in *L'Avant-scène du cinéma* (1970), which assured its circulation in the French cine-club market, and it went on to appear in Ivens's retrospectives over the years (though pointedly not the 2002 American tour). Revived occasionally in recent festivals, its inclusion in the 2008 DVD box set ensures its perennial presence in the cycles of forgetfulness, fashion, and rediscovery.

Many discussions of this film point to its implied autobiographical discourse – all the more so that its working title was *Return of the Flying Dutchman* (Stufkens, 2008, 351-352). This discourse, always implicit, adds a layer of complexity to the film's already rich hybridity: its encounter of geographical/spatial, economic, ethnographic, historical, and architectural tropes of the city film documentary genre are already layered with the imaginary and subjective discourses that cement *Rotterdam's* status as an essay film. Stufkens (2008, 355), in discussion with Loridan, sees the aborted redemption of the Dutchmen through his failed romance with Senta as a riff on the filmmaker's final rupture with Loridan's predecessor Fiszer. But my own preference would be to gloss the last shots of the film, depicting the hero paragliding under the old bridge and past the shipping and then out to sea, otherwise. Is this coda a kind of symbolic send-off for the final phases of the 68-year-old Ivens's career? Though *Rotterdam* is far from Schoots's ([1995] 2000, 289) absurd dismissal as 'little more than a distraction', as I have shown and no intelligent cinephile could doubt, the context and text of this rich and ambiguous city film essay vibrate with the itch to return to the kind of frontline engagement of Ivens's earlier years. Now wrapping up a decade of 'lyrical essays' in which subjective

explorations of a spectrum of new voices, spaces, histories, and struggles constitute a specific and distinct artistic and political practice, now rooted permanently in Paris rather than his homeland, and now inseparable from his final artistic and conjugal consort, the Dutchman's career nevertheless now veers back out to sea. It heads for East Asia, first to Indochina and then to China for the last two prolific decades of a filmography articulated in modes of documentary expression and political intervention, both old and new but completely different.



91. *Le Ciel, la terre* (1966): poster for Italian Communist Party-sponsored screening in Venice in 1966. Original in colour. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen

Southeast Asia 1966-1970: Reinventing the Solidarity Film

Silence in the face of the war in Vietnam is impossible.
– Loin du Vietnam

The very evening the victorious army of the Viet Minh entered Hanoi in 1954, the Vietnamese organisation of trade unions had organised as part of the victory celebrations a showing of Joris Ivens's latest film, *Das Lied der Ströme* (*Song of the Rivers*, 1954, DDR, 90). Eleven years later, in the spring of 1965, the event was to be repeated; only this time, Joris Ivens himself was in attendance as guest of honour.

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1964 had been a year of frustration for Ivens: not only was the *Mistral* project still in question, but another project in Chile, sponsored by French television, had been abandoned at the last minute by its sponsor. As we have seen, Ivens went to Chile anyway and shot a ten-minute short on the September elections of that year, *Le Train de la victoire* (*The Victory Train*, 9), especially focusing on Salvador Allende. But Ivens's disappointment was profound. It was not the first time that his planned debut on the small screen had been sabotaged by skittish bureaucrats.

It seemed in 1964, just as it had seemed in 1956 that Ivens's career was in crisis. For one thing, the retrospectives had started: in Leipzig the previous November and at the Amsterdam Filmmuseum that February. And the Mannheim festival in October had enshrined him in its all-time pantheon of documentary filmmakers, second only to Flaherty in votes accrued, and had in addition voted *The Spanish Earth* (1937, USA, 53) among the twelve greatest documentaries of all time. Even the Dutch had forgiven him, and this above all posed the question of how a militant could still remain subversive under all those accolades. The 66-year-old wandering combatant, after nearly a decade of visits to every continent, including shooting in seven different countries in as many years, was spending less time behind the camera than he would have liked, and, moreover, was furious at the repeated critical comments about his having left active politics behind. During his many festival appearances in those years of the mid-sixties –



92. *Le 17° Parallèle* (1968): Production photo of Loridan, Ivens and helmeted crew members on the ground, 1967. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © ARGOS Films/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

in 1964, he officiated at four, Florence, Mannheim, Venice, and Leipzig – Ivens often met delegations of Vietnamese filmmakers who regularly but unsuccessfully pressed him to visit their country. The invitations did not go entirely unheeded.

In February 1965, now that the US elections were over, the conflict in Vietnam escalated to a new stage. North Vietnamese territory was bombed by American planes for the first time. The following month, Ivens completed the third and final round of shooting for the *Mistral* film, and once again the project bogged down in seemingly insurmountable production difficulties. Ivens wired the Association of Filmmakers of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that he wanted to come, and by June he was filming air raid alerts in the streets of Hanoi. He had entered, together with Loridan, as usual almost by chance, a new and vital phase of his career.

The Indochinese period was to result in four major documentaries, two features, two shorts, plus his participation in the French collective feature, *Loin du Vietnam* and a short interview film with Ho Chi Minh. These are all films of extraordinary power in themselves and both summations of many of the achievements of his career to that point and at the same time departures in entirely new directions.

The four films from Vietnam and the single one from Laos hark back in terms of their forms and their energies – not to mention their subject matter – to the works of Ivens's greatest period, the thirties. Once more a people's war enlists the anger, compassion and solidarity of the roving troubleshooter, and once more the struggle of a peasant population to make a living amid the smoking rubble of their homes and fields inspires the homage of his camera. Again, the political struggle – the effort towards productivity, literacy, and community – is cast as the crucial base of the military struggle.

At the same time, the Indochina films seemed fresh and original, as they appeared one by one through the late sixties. Up to this point, the technological revolution of direct cinema/*vérité* had touched Ivens's work only intermittently and superficially; as we have seen he had serious reservations about the new enthusiasm of young filmmakers for a truth which he considered always to have been at the root of his own art and which no new equipment could achieve without a certain perspective and commitment behind the camera. Just as the technical and stylistic innovations were gradually absorbed into the mainstream documentary lexicon and thus increasingly defused of any radical import, they finally surfaced in the work of Ivens himself, but in his case providing the major tool for a renewed militancy, and making possible a stirring (if awkward at first) model for the direct/*vérité* generation of the potential use of the new film idiom in the service of a revolution other than merely aesthetic.

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Thus with *Le Ciel, la terre* (*The Threatening Sky*, 1966, 28), *Loin du Vietnam* (*Far from Vietnam*, 1967, 115), *Le 17^e Parallèle* (*The 17th Parallel*, 1968, 113), *Le Peuple et ses fusils* (*The People and their Guns*, 1970, 97), and the short *Rencontre avec le président Ho Chi Minh* (*Meeting with President Ho Chi Minh*, 1970, 8), Ivens not only startled his detractors with a fresh and energetic rediscovery of the themes that had animated his greatest films, but moved definitively towards a solution to the thorny problem of applying the new aesthetics of documentary to the perennial task of militant filmmaking.

LE CIEL, LA TERRE

Jean-Pierre Sergent, Ivens's collaborator in the later Indochina period, has distinguished among the three major Indochina films in the following way: for him, *Ciel* is a poster, *Parallèle* is a story (*récit*), and *Peuple* is a theoretical essay (Hennebelle, 1970, 81). Such a designation is ultimately too schematic of course, but is useful in pointing to the distinct rhetorical modes at the base of each film: *Ciel* is indeed exclamatory and hortatory in its emphasis, *Parallèle* is primarily narrative, and *Peuple* is explicitly analytical in its intent and form. The three films taken together constitute a telling progression, each one

implying a critique of the mode of discourse of the previous film. However, Sergeant's categorisation should not obscure our attention to the rich mixture of modes and styles that makes up each of the films in a different way. Certainly the notion of 'poster' rhetoric is not in itself sufficient to describe the complex formal and thematic mix to which *Ciel* owes its singular appeal. In fact, if the dominant rhetorical mode of the film is indeed composed of elements of direct poster-like address, its chief formal modes are collage and compilation. As such, it must be seen alongside *Nieuwe Gronden* (*New Earth*, 1933, Netherlands, 30) and *Lied*, as well as its more exact contemporaries, the essays *Pour le Mistral* (*For the Mistral*, 1965, France, 33) and *Rotterdam Europoort* (1966, Netherlands, 20), as an admirable contribution to that particular subgenre of documentary.

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Ivens's first response to the escalating Vietnamese situation was one of great urgency. As with the Spanish Civil War 30 years earlier, his first impulse was to rush into circulation a short reportage film to compensate for what he saw as a vacuum of information about the war in the West. He had in mind a kind of television film like that of Wilfred Burchett, the Australian communist journalist, whose reportage film in collaboration with *Humanité* journalist Madeleine Riffaud, *Vivre sous les bombes* (1966, 25), had created quite an impression in Paris theatres just prior to Iven's involvement in the situation (Some of Burchett's footage of South Vietnam was to find its way into *Ciel* and later into *Loin*). The film would be produced by the Hanoi documentary film studio together with Dovidis, a small Paris production company.¹

Ivens, however, was not content with limiting the project to a compilation of existing material, like the short-term Spanish project edited in haste by Van Dongen while Ivens and Ferno were shooting *Spanish Earth*. Ivens was eager to make a quick trip to North Vietnam himself and to bring back an impressionistic short film on the model of the Cuban *Carnet de viaje* (*Travel Notebook*, 1961, Cuba/France, 34) that he had made in another besieged nation several years earlier. Once in Hanoi, Ivens realised that this model as well was inadequate, even for the short-term project that he had in mind. Something more profound was needed in spite of the necessary brevity of his visit. However, it was not until the montage stage back in Paris later that summer that the final conception of the film was finally hammered out, that is the theme of the two fronts, the earth and the sky, and the resulting binary structure that shaped the film. The 35-minute film would sometimes show under an English title that lost this binary, *The Threatening Sky*.

The final collage construction of the film, then, seems to have been conceived in the haphazard fashion that often shapes political filmmaking undertaken in emergency situations with low budgets. The collagist orientation of the film was apparently determined by the convergence of a number of factors:

the urgency which Ivens felt about the project, which led him to include existing newsreel material in the film despite his earlier intention to the contrary; the original 'travel notebook' conception, still visible in the film; the instinctual desire for 'profundity' which animated Ivens as usual once he got behind the camera in Hanoi and felt the limitations of street-scene impressionism; budgetary restrictions of course; and ultimately the challenge of creating a finished film in the editing room from a range of disparate resources without obvious internal coherence. Yet despite this lack of conscious design in the production of the film, the finished product offers a worthy model for the various collage films that were to follow, those by Emile de Antonio, Marcel Ophuls, and 'Newsreel' among others, films constructed on a more conscious theoretical basis to be sure. Like these films, *Ciel* must be seen as a reaction to the tide of direct cinema (despite its tentative probe in that direction that we shall examine). At a time when the gospel of spontaneity and 'objectivity' was an orthodoxy with very few dissenters, *Ciel* appears as a link in that small but important chain of political films that embraced collage and compilation as a strategy more suited than direct cinema to their specific political and artistic goals.

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The skeletal base of Ivens's collage in *Ciel* is the standard linear diegesis, proceeding chiefly by means of narrative logic, that animated Ivens's other films about people's wars, namely *Spanish Earth*, *The 400 Million* (1939, USA, 53), *Our Russian Front* (1941, USA, 38), and *Pueblo armado* (*An Armed People*, 1961, Cuba/France, 35). This pattern was to achieve its ultimate refinement in *Parallèle*, before being challenged and superseded in *Peuple*. As we have seen, the classic articulation of this structure in *Spanish Earth* was built upon an alternation of focus between Madrid and Fuentidueña, the military struggle and the civilian struggle for production. In *Ciel*, the same alternating focus is achieved without such a rigidly dichotomised locale. A classic narrative line of various agricultural activities in the fields – ploughing, irrigation, earth-moving, and rice transplantation, elaborated leisurely with the customary modulations between epic sweep and lyric-analytic detail, is interrupted sharply by as many as eight tightly edited crisis-tropes, depicting aerial attacks or alerts, or ground-to-air battles, plus several other interjections portraying some aspect of civil defence or munitions manufacture. This is not to mention an additional major sequence surveying the toll of a bombing raid on a village. This interpolated dramatic current depicting the military front is ultimately given a climactic shape in that the final section elaborates the shooting down and capture of an American pilot.

This dual thematic of the film, stated by the title and developed by means of the alternating exposition of the two fronts, each with its own graphic and rhythmic character, is of course the expression of that political principle

underlying Ivens's work since the 1930s, simply the importance of the labour of individual ordinary people to the macrocosmic political (and by extension military) dynamic.

The crisis-tropes, which punctuate *Ciel*, are just as skilfully wrought as their prototypes in *Spanish Earth*, although here they are more frequent and more numbingly predictable. They primarily consist of editorially synthesised arrangements of close-up and medium-shot anti-aircraft crews, heroically calm, in shot/countershot with the tiny swooping bombers. The inevitable explosions are as often fabricated by means of the sound mix and montage as they are visible within the verifiable integrity of the shot, though on the whole they remain at one remove from the minutely exact snippet illusionism of *Spanish Earth*. One particular attack has a nightmarish quality rare in Ivens's *oeuvre* – a terrified woman, presented in low-angle medium shots tries frantically to row her skiff away from a danger vividly suggested by screaming motors on the soundtrack and a particularly hyperbolic intercutting of diving bombers. The sequence seems prolonged with a dreamlike logic to suggest the futility of her effort. As Grelier (1965, 115) states with Gallic finality, the film oscillates between two poles, life and death. The elements of collage, attached to this underlying diegetic pattern of alternating stasis and crisis, serve both to heighten its dramatic and rhetorical impact, and to add an entirely new analytic dimension.

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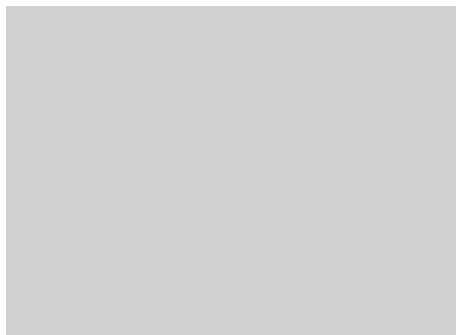
A fundamental structural principle of this collage is the overlap of sound and image. As we have seen, Ivens had always insisted, more or less, on commentaries in his films that were not so much a simple accompaniment to the image-track as a poetic counterpoint to it. Fresh on the heels of the evocative poem-commentaries read over the lyrical essays, Ivens clung stubbornly to that increasingly rare genre of literary creation, the commentary film, the privileged use of speech directly addressed to the viewer. The script for *Ciel* is a dexterous blend of poetic inspiration and the informational material demanded by this particular film's goals and is written by Jean-Claude Ulrich, whom Schoots ([1995] 2000, 409) discovered to be none other than Chris Marker. The decision to have the script read by two distinct voices turned out to be an appropriate one. The voice of Serge Reggiani, delivering those factual parts of the commentary, alternates with the less professional voice of Ivens himself, offering material of a more personal flavour, largely recollections of his own experiences and impressions in Vietnam. In addition, the presence of Ivens's voice adds an aura of authenticity and emotion to his personal testimony, a statement of personal outrage and solidarity. The voice, flavoured by an irrepressible Dutch accent (and asthma as well), rings with the conviction of the old militant and his admiration for the courageous society he had visited. He had not forgotten the lessons of Flaherty's *The Land* (1942, USA,

43), of Huston's *The Battle of San Pietro* (1945, USA, 32), and of course of Hemingway's last-minute reading of his own commentary for *Spanish Earth*, where the untrained voice of the artist has imparted a powerful resonance to the soundtrack of a film.

Early in the film we see fast tracking shots (through a windshield) gliding through the streets of Hanoi, as the city prepares its defences. The camera moves past groups of civilians digging shelters, lines of workers moving earth (in bucket-brigade fashion naturally), past a crowd of young women gathered around a poster display, and then through the outskirts into the countryside, through villages, past groups of peasants at work in the fields or carrying their tools or produce alongside the road, and finally pausing as a ferry unloads its crowd of passengers where a bridge has been bombed out. Meanwhile Ivens's voice reminisces about the other beleaguered cities he has known, Madrid in 1937 and Havana in 1960, and 'many other cities where the people were preparing for battle',² and as the camera continues to glide past the preparation of shelters, he adds that 'not one was as calm as Hanoi, that morning of June 14th, 1965', and that 'the calm of Hanoi was its first victory'. The allusions to the other cities not only locates the Vietnamese struggles in its larger international political context but celebrates it as well by allusion to heroism of the past. (This particular resonance is compounded elsewhere at least for viewers familiar with Ivens's work, by echoes of his classical anti-fascist films, not only in scenes that recall the fortifications and smoking rubble in cities as diverse as Madrid, Moscow, and Shanghai, but also in more particularised instances such as the image of the barrel of a gun concluding the film, a reminder of the close-up of the sole rifleman at the end of *Spanish Earth*, or a sequence in which ancient statuary survey bombing damage with the same stoicism of their counterparts in *Spanish Earth* and *400 Million*.) Furthermore the mention of the exact date balances the passage's larger view with the dramatic specificity of personal witness. The sequence concludes with its flowing movements, and finally over a shot of Ivens himself surrounded by children, smiling more sheepishly than any of them, he testifies to their 'incredible moral resistance'.

At another point, we see classical Ivensian footage of irrigation work in rice paddies, peasants moving water with baskets in a steady unison rocking motion, while the artist's voice-over recalls being present at harvest time, a time of unending work, and ends with this movingly concise line: 'I heard songs of the work, poems of the rice'. Near the end of the film, Ivens's voice recapitulates the film's basic theme, his reflection on the other peoples at war he had witnessed in the last 40 years, in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. 'But today', he adds, 'there are no longer two adversaries which fight each other, there are two worlds entirely unknown to each other. The enemy is no longer of this earth, to discover him you must raise your head'. One long sequence

93. *Le Ciel, la terre* (1966): With Vietnamese kids on location in 1965: one of Joris Ivens's few appearances in any of his films. DVD frame capture. © Dovidis, Paris/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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details the manufacture of various spikes, booby traps, and snares, including a chilling panorama of an entire paddy field being installed with huge bamboo spikes just below the water level. Alongside this passage, Ivens recollects his meeting with Ho Chi Minh, who observed that for 25 years all of Vietnam has been one single snare and that the Americans are like a fox with his hind legs caught in a trap, pawing the air in its attempts to disengage and getting further ensnared as a result.

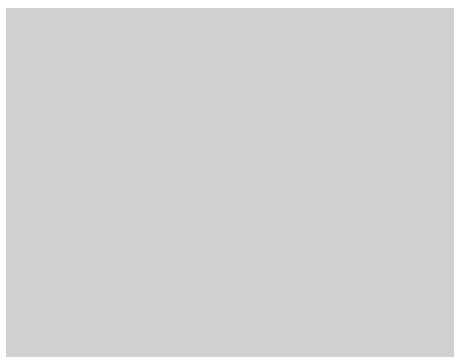
As for the other current of commentary read by Reggiani, it repeatedly expands its purely factual material with an allusiveness or irony. For example, alongside a sequence devoted to various civil defence preparations, primarily the camouflaging of boats, anti-aircraft installations and even bicycles, the commentary tells the story of Macbeth and his fatal confidence in the Birnam Wood prophecy, with the conclusion, suggestively terse, that 'the forest now has changed its name'. At other times, this strategy takes a more ironic form: a starting montage of newsreel material, mostly Saigon disturbances and atrocities committed by the South Vietnamese army, is set off by stinging sarcasm:

Saigon, first stage of the escalation. American specialists came to reorganize the police. Other specialists modernized the nightclubs in the rue Catinat. It's the time of advisers. Soldiers with degrees in psychology come to explain to people that the students are communists, that the French are communists, that the Buddhist monks are communists. Having thus demonstrated that everybody is communist except themselves, the Americans stop advising and start operating.

In addition to both their reportorial and contemplative functions, each of the two narrative voices relies on a kind of indirect discourse, to heighten the presence of the Vietnamese people who are the subjects of the film. In the absence of direct recording, the voices of the subjects of the film, alive but silent on the

screen, become real for the spectator in this way. For example, there is Ivens repeating what Ho told him, or, in the coda of the commentary, his report of what the Vietnamese had told him is used as a summarisation of the film's thematic: 'When I left, the Vietnamese said to me, "The Americans can wage their science-fiction war. Their planes fly over our country with the speed of sound. But we are already there, on the spot, we are where we live"'. Another effect of such indirect discourse is the verbal evocation of the poster-style rhetoric of many of the visuals, the text's embodiment of the colour and vigour of the Vietnamese catchphrases and mottos that dramatise the popular inspiration of the war effort. Without succumbing to the rhetoric of Cold War sloganeering, the commentary echoes the vivid but simple metaphors of the popular experience of resistance: 'A field of rice is a battlefield', 'The sky is the enemy', 'All of Vietnam is a trap'. Ivens also includes non-verbal expressions of the same popular mythology of struggle. A notable example is a choreographic re-enactment of an anti-aircraft battle performed by teenaged boys in white, intercut with snippets of real battle, as Ivens's voice explains that 'peacetime does not belong to this generation's memory'. This breathtakingly lovely sequence would be incorporated immediately into Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas's *La hora de los hornos* (*Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968, Argentina, 260) – including many scratches incurred through endless underground screenings no doubt.

94. *La hora des los hornos* [*The Hour of the Furnaces*] (1968): Argentine underground filmmakers Solanas and Getino excerpted this boy-bomber choreography from *Le Ciel, la terre* in one of the 1960s' most famous documentaries, but it's a rare Ivens film that the estate has left inaccessible in the vault. DVD frame capture.



Ivens's sensitivity to the simple eloquence of popular rhetoric, both verbal and cultural, is even more fully manifest in the subsequent Indochina films without the restrictions of the short-film format.

This, then, is the basic double-layered structure of the film. At the base, the image-track is developed with the standard Ivensian narrative momentum, pulsating with the rhythmic alternation of life and death, earth and sky,

largo mise-en-scène and *subito* montage. Upon this is attached the verbal layer, at times in unison with the image layer but more often expanding it or diverging from it, informed with its own oscillatory rhythms, the alternation of the two voices, fact and feeling, event and meditation, exposition and allusion.

Upon this basic structure are grafted numerous other components, both visual and aural, which enrich and embellish the mosaic. We have recognised no doubt that the film's primary visual diegesis is composed fundamentally of the four familiar modes of visual discourse that Ivens has relied on in his films of this genre throughout his career: the semi-documentary *mise-en-scène* presentation of everyday life; the intricate montage-cluster tropes by which a narrative crisis is evoked; the static 'newsreel' mode, here limited to a few sequences in which a number of Vietnamese leaders are introduced; and finally the 'travel notebook' spontaneous style composed of random and candid views of environmental impressions, here apparently shot in 16mm (the bulk of the film was shot in 35mm, about 2000 metres [73 min.], while about 1200 metres [110 min.] were in 16mm). Certainly, the richness of the blend of styles and textures in this particular film is enhanced by Ivens's use of two operators, one, Duc Hoa, a war correspondent who was no doubt responsible for the smooth and efficient battle footage, and the other a young woman who was apparently a novice, Thu Van, probably responsible for much of the spontaneous 'travel notebook' footage.

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Scattered within these four fundamental visual modes are a number of distinct others, each contributing to the overall effect. Most prominent of these is the extensive use of newsreel material and other stock footage. As early as the credit sequences, the viewer is bombarded with stock shots of the American forces, especially a shot of bombers taking off from the deck of an aircraft carrier, repeated a number of times in shot/countershot with a staccato series of shots of anti-aircraft militia, largely in iconic close-up and punctuated by abrupt black spaces. The sharp rhythm of the cutting is accentuated by muffled roaring of aircraft engines on the sound track. The first sequence of the film proper continues in the same vein, confronting newsreel footage of the invaders as well as glib US television reportage and official Washington propaganda with a fierce flesh-and-blood anti-aircraft crew. The bombers return again and again during the film in similar synthetic confrontations, including many shot by Ivens himself in the midst of real air-ground battles, but their constant repetition hammers in the aura of the anonymous enemy in the sky. The sharp contrast in image quality between the stock material, usually in extreme long shot in any case, and the higher-definition actuality shooting is very suggestive of Ivens's theme of the impersonal, sanitised war. A sharper-focus close-up vision of this stark reality is an approach that American anti-war documentarists took up in subsequent years (in *In the Year of the Pig*

[Emile de Antonio, 1968, 103] for example). Ivens himself had experimented with the relationship of television and film in *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (*Italy Is Not a Poor Country*, 1960, Italy, 112) five years earlier—now was the chance to pursue this experiment.

The later sequence in *Ciel* composed of newsreel material from South Vietnam and built on a different principle has already been mentioned. It contains, among other things, the famous shots of the self-immolating monk, an assortment of atrocity footage dealing with the South Vietnamese army and police, and culminates in footage of American troops destroying Vietnamese villages with flame throwers and bulldozers, no doubt for Ivens the most poignant images of all. This visual litany of horrors, once more set in vivid contrast to the peaceful and orderly vision of society in the North, again emphasises the cruel irrationality of the war, and the two alien universes of sky and earth. Reggiani's voice underlines the brutal irony and the impersonality of the aggression: 'a far-reaching strategic plan develops it, computers think it, radar stations control it, and cybernetics coordinate it'. Meanwhile the South Vietnamese soldiers appear on the screen with their American arms, exposed as pawns of the American computers. Over the movement of the montage, the voice-over abruptly halts, and the footage unrolls in brutal silence.

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Silence thus enters the collage as another important constituent. It is as if the humiliation of 'suspected guerillas' and the razing of villages were beyond the power of verbal description to explain. Then comes a transition that stands out in a film built upon abrupt montage-assaults for its haunting languor and the elegiac shading of its modulations. This transition begins with a silent close-up of raindrops spotting the surface of a pool of water, which a tilt up soon reveals the location as a temple court surrounded by statues of horses and elephants, scarred by both time and war; a cut to a view of some ancient graves then follows. These quotations from the legacy of traditional sculpture naturally add their own element to the already eclectic mosaic of visual modes. At this point, a short commentary by Ivens recalls 'four thousand years of legend, two thousand years of history' and connects the aura of Vietnamese tradition to the contemporary power of the Vietnamese resistance 'which electronic brains cannot decipher'. The total effect is an echo of the famous passage in *400 Million* where ancient ceremonial sculptures seem witness to the marauding invaders.

Soon another sequence of horror follows, this time captured in the vividness of Ivens's own idiom, a survey of damage and casualties in a village after a bombing raid. Much of this sequence also depends for its impact on the presence of total silence, again the only possible comment on the havoc depicted on the screen. As we have seen, the strategy of using silence originated as early as *Spanish Earth*. In that film, speechless moments after a similar

bombardment stood out in a decade in love with sound as perhaps the most chilling effect of the film. In *Ciel* the effect is similar. The opening impulse of the film is to describe its subject its subject fully in words, and the soundtrack seems saturated, not only with the voices of the narrators but also with the heavily rhetorical use of concrete noise that is of aircraft engines and sirens, relieved only by the few soundless intervals already mentioned. Gradually the pauses among the talk and noise become more spacious, and the spectrum of non-verbal sound becomes more diverse, more subtle, and less strident. In the final movements of the film this spectrum includes not only the noises of war but also the equally dramatic noises of civilisation, the ripple of water as peasants transplant the young rice seedlings. Also introduced at this point is a variety of musical accompaniments: including muted electronic music over silent footage of peasant demonstrators surrounding a downed pilot; traditional Vietnamese vocal music, a haunting melody over a classic rice-transplantation sequence in the finale; and a more contemporary piece, an elegiac-sounding, presumably patriotic, song, sung by an unforgettably plaintive alto voice supported by a chorus, set over that long scene of irrigation and earth-moving activities already mentioned – as epic as any Ivens scene since *Zuiderzeewerken* (*Zuiderzee*, 1930-1933, Netherlands, 40-52), and heightened immeasurably by the music. In short, these musical elements in the final section of the collage greatly add to the rich variety and expressiveness of the aural layer of the film. The finale is accompanied by only two short passages of verbal commentary, both by Ivens, both terse but evocative, personal statements of summary.

One additional visual mode used as a raw material in the collage is animation, a technique Ivens had not incorporated into a work since *Italia* and *Carnet*, although it had certainly figured as part of the larger *Mistral* conception that had never been fully realised. In *Ciel* the discussion of traps is followed by a cartoon interlude borrowed from public civil defence spots that exuberantly depicts American soldiers first being dispatched by jungle booby-traps, and then being chased by hornets delivered to them in an innocent-looking package by a young and mischievous-looking patriot. It all unfolds to a rollicking score, constructed from tuneful buzzing sounds, which is well suited to the piece's slapstick style but which expresses an eloquent contrast, at least for the Western viewer, to the deadly serious stuff it contains. If the conscious goal of the animated sequence is to emphasise the racist character of the war by playing with the presumptions and responses of Western audiences who had by 1966, like it or not, been already fully conditioned by television saturation of an American 'yellow-peril' perspective of the war, then the sequence is indeed successful in its reversal of the dominant iconography, the white men now being presented as the bungling villains.

The assemblage of this range of eclectic elements is effected with a skil-

ful sense of tempo that gives a wholeness and coherence to the entire work, despite its heterogeneous composition. The various materials are welded together by means of a violent accumulation of montage-assaults that naturally serve rhetorical and affective functions in addition to their purely structural use. The smooth transitions that had been so much a part of lyrical essays, as well as of *Spanish Earth*, often designed to occur within a single shot in those films, have completely disappeared with *Ciel* and have been replaced by abrupt displacements, both auditory and visual. Habitually, a large close-up of hands feverishly at work will suddenly introduce a sequence, or some other detail of an action such as a close-up of a buffalo's legs or the plough it is pulling, instead of the contemplative establishing shots upon which Ivens had relied for several decades of filmmaking. Or conversely, a close-up swing of an artillery muzzle will interrupt an agrarian tableau. The contrast with the preceding shot is always striking in terms of scale, tempo, and visual and auditory texture. If this editorial strategy and the explosive rhythm that results, legitimised by 1960s New Wave editing styles to be sure, are integral to the declamatory rhetoric and poster function that constitute the film's primary motivation, in a more general sense they are in harmony with that ideological orientation that becomes increasingly articulate in the subsequent films: that is, the sudden close-ups continually draw the spectator back to the microcosmic detail of human labour that for Ivens constitutes the key to political theory and practice. As the film proceeds towards the end, the rhythm of the intercutting seems even more emphatic, the sequences become shorter and denser, the commentary having all but disappeared.

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Ciel is clearly a transitional film. It represents at once the culmination of Ivens's interest in collage and the beginning of his film cycle on the people's wars in the Far East. Along with *Mistral* and *Rotterdam*, *Ciel* must be seen as Ivens's final response (for now) to the challenge of what can be called collage or hybridity, a processing of the same formal problems and solutions as these other two films. All three were shot within what must have been a frenetic seven or eight-month period in 1965 (that is, the final shoot for *Mistral* took place at that time), and the montage of all three seems to have been simultaneous thereafter. All three premiered in the spring or summer of the following year. Together the three films present a rich catalogue of filmic modes and rely to no small extent for their effects on the juxtaposition of filmic material. Of the three films, *Ciel* owes its special vitality no doubt to the specificity and urgency of its objectives.

Despite the lingering modernist overtones inherent in Ivens's interest in collage during this period, his goal is not to startle or to deconstruct, but to inform and enlist. The modernist or avant-garde influence lingering throughout this period has been subjugated to the primary goal of communication.

Ivens's variety of militancy has little stake in the interrogative modes of the Godardian project. His public is persistently conceived of as non-specialist, in terms of both politics and aesthetics. Certainly the humanist faith that posed the hand on the rifle and the plough against the computers in the sky could not ignore that audience only accessible through traditional channels of communications and by means of the idiom of mainstream culture. Ivens had at this time no special interest in or relationship with the avant-garde; his public was more likely to read *Humanité-Dimanche* than *Tel Quel*. In this sense, the consistency of his career is apparent: neither a conscious formal innovator nor an aesthetic theorist, he instinctively assimilates whatever stylistic and technical resources are current and uses them in the pursuit of his goals. And at the same time, where current film vogues do not suit his purposes, he unabashedly draws on the legacy of earlier periods of film history. Certainly the insistent commentaries in the sixties, and the continued reliance on various degrees of 're-enactment' right up to the end of the sixties and beyond bear witness to that (Ivens, [1969, 229] even expresses a perverse pride in the 'authentic' look of the re-enactments in *Ciel*, an attitude tantamount to heresy in 1965).

The Ivens of *Ciel*, then, looks both backwards and forward, back in the film's formal affinities to the collage/hybrid films of the Cold War and lyrical essay periods, and forward in its thematic kinship to the films of the people's wars. Ultimately, this convergence of a specific formal project and an acute political problematic seems to have demonstrated for Ivens the inadequacy of the former. If collage offered for Ivens an alternative to a virtuoso direct cinema with its dangers of aestheticism and indulgent subjectivism, *Ciel* at the same time tentatively explores the unrealised potential of that same direct cinema for Ivens's political goals, a potential that collage apparently could not fulfil. Thus if *Ciel* is Ivens's final statement (for now) of the collage/hybrid alternative, it is also an admission of its inadequacy. In this film, the problematic of the direct is confronted in such a way as to make the leap forward with *Parallèle* and indeed the progression all the way to *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, 1976, France, 718) virtually inevitable.

In some ways, the treatment of sound in *Ciel* is quite conventional: the static construction of its few synch sound scenes, for example, hardly different from the approach to similar material in *Spanish Earth*; or the film's reliance on the synthetic, post-synchronised sound effects, a practice that would have seemed gratefully anachronistic even in 1966 if the urgency of the film's political intentions had not provided the author special dispensation from the requirements of the filmic fashion. Yet *Ciel* can also be said to be a special sound project: its diegesis is closely linked to its commentary, both the informational content of Reggiani's voice-over and the personal reflections

of Ivens's, not to mention the small but important role of direct sound itself, however primitive, in the directly recorded speeches of Prime Minister Dong and the leader of Front de libération nationale (FNL). Even the concrete sound effects are crucial to the film's diegesis, the impact of the montage-assaults being to a large extent the result of sound cuts as much as of image cuts, the sudden sirens and aviation noises of the attack tropes, for example. In addition, the rich interplay of voices on the soundtrack, not only those of Reggiani and Ivens, but also that of the US television announcer, of US Defence Secretary MacNamara, of the Prime Minister and the FNL leader, not to mention the singers, suggests in general a pushing forward of the potential of the human voice as a dynamic material of Ivens's art. The use of Ivens's own voice, inspired as it seems, appears no more than a temporary substitute for what was inevitable, that is, the realisation of the voices of his subjects. The film is full of the sense of the inadequacy of the filmmaker's sound technology for the task at hand. The constant use of indirect discourse, for example, is perhaps one aspect of this. A close-up of a weeping and talking man during a survey of his bombed home is cruelly silent. Ivens himself recalls in a 1965 interview the frustrations of a situation in which sound technology had been lacking:

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Cervoni: You weren't ever able to do any synch-sound reporting, taking sound and image at the same time?

Joris Ivens: Often I didn't even have a tape-recorder. The tape-recorders were in the hands of radio reporters. Once during relocation, I heard some extraordinary accounts, among others the testimony of a peasant woman, a woman who had become a 'heroine of the people' for having shot down an enemy plane. I started shooting, getting her gestures, her expression, but I had to record what she said by means of written notes! (Cervoni, 1965)

The peasant woman, no doubt, is the first incarnation of that other woman refugee whose long eloquent testimony opens *Parallèle*, this time recorded in sync. One can only speculate regarding the extent to which the absence of direct sound technology had shaped Ivens's cinematic politics for over 30 years. What is clear is the extent to which the discovery of direct sound was intrinsic to political aesthetics of the subsequent Indochina films and the consolidation in the 1970s of 'cinematic Maoism' in its affirmation of the corporeal specificity of the individual speaking subject and its relation to the collective.

Ciel premiered in March of 1966 at the Second Festival of the Free Cinema in Paris. Not surprisingly it had its most impact in France, where it attracted more attention than *Mistral* and *Rotterdam* combined, warmly received at a time when French intellectuals were slowly mobilising against the war (God-

ard's three films from this period, *Masculin Féminin* [1966, 103], *Made in the USA* [1966, 90], and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* [*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, 1966, 87], all contain 'Paix au Vietnam' motifs). The press exhibited as much interest as could be expected in a 20-minute film, paying rather more attention to Ivens's impressions of Vietnam and dutifully reprinting his appeals for aid to Vietnamese filmmakers. As usual, there was uproar at the censorship of the film (three anti-US references were excised from the commentary, including a comparison of the American tactic of carpet-bombing to Hiroshima). *Positif's* (1966) sympathetic critique of the film, perhaps the most insightful to appear in the journals, contained among other things a recognition of echoes of *Spanish Earth* and the offhand observation that parts of the film seemed reconstructed. This latter observation, which would have been meaningless had it been made ten years earlier, suggests the extent to which the aesthetic premises of direct cinema had been already assimilated by the film community in 1966, and the theoretical climate in which the subsequent Indochina films would be formed. *Ciel* was also distributed in the UK and North America under its English title *The Threatening Sky*, and seemingly from hand to hand in solidifying circuits in the global South. Despite its limited circulation (it is regrettably omitted from the 2008 box set, and surprisingly untapped even by Youtube), *Ciel* lived on if only through our glimpse of it in *La hora de los hornos...*

LOIN DU VIETNAM

Ciel bowed in the spring of 1966 in Paris and elsewhere, followed by *Mistral* at the end of summer, and by the onset of winter Ivens had come on board Chris Marker's adventurous new solidarity feature *Loin*. This composite project, derived as Stufkens has shown from an unrealised set of ideas proposed by Ivens when the similar, encyclopedic version of *Mistral* was finally being shelved, assembled virtually the entire cadre of *rive gauche* political filmmakers for a project designed to intervene in the escalating crisis around the war. Ivens and Loridan arrived in Hanoi in January 1967 and immediately set about producing the only part of the enterprise to be shot in North Vietnam. A miracle of fast-track production, *Loin* was to premiere scarcely eight months later at the Montreal film festival in August 1967. A key moment in several subhistories of the cinema – the solidarity film, films about the Vietnam war, compendium films, the cinematic output of the French Left in the era around May 1968 – this unique but once neglected film (it was restored and re-released in 2013) deserves careful contextualisation within the *oeuvre* of its oldest co-author by far.

Historians of the cinema of the French New Wave of the 1960s have traditionally divided the phenomenon loosely into the *rive droite* current – incorporating filmmakers aspiring to break into the star-studded auteur or commercial cinema, such as Truffaut, Chabrol, and Lelouch – and the *rive gauche* current, whose members blended their cinephilia with left-wing political commitment – such as Marker, Varda, Godard, and Resnais. The feature documentary film *Loin* provides a useful introit into the current sometimes revisionist focus on the *rive gauche*, for it was a key document in trajectory of the *rive gauche* cinema and political culture, synthesising the transformations of the hinge year in which it was produced, 1967. As a cinematic conversation among *rive gauche* committed artists whose political and artistic consensus was being challenged by this historical conjuncture – including the immigrant senior in their midst – this rich film symbolically inaugurated the convergence of left cinema and political upheaval known as May 1968, a reminder forever of Ivens's role as a respected patriarch of that current.

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1967 was marked on the international scale by the escalation of the military conflict in Vietnam, which had involved World War II-scale bombardment of Hanoi since February 1965 – and of course the martyrdom of Che Guevara – and in France momentous industrial strikes at Rhodiaceta (Besançon) and St-Nazaire, echoed by growing student unrest. All these developments hailed *rive gauche* filmmakers, and set the context in which a coalitional cinematic response became possible – and necessary.

The project was instigated as I have indicated by Marker, veteran documentarist and frequent collaborator of other filmmakers on the scene from Ivens to Resnais, the eventual *maître d'oeuvre* and editor of the work, together with Varda and a host of sympathisers within the film milieu.³ *Loin* was the first major production – and test case – of the Société pour le lancement des œuvres nouvelles (Society for Launching New Works, SLON), the French collective production and distribution organisation that Marker and others formed that year to promote political filmmaking in France and that would mark the subsequent decade of French committed cinema. Also on board with the Vietnam project were Varda's husband, Jacques Demy, the Brazilian expatriate Ruy Guerra, the New Wave pillars Resnais and Godard, the newly commercial New Wave hanger-on Lelouch, fresh from his Oscar-winning blockbuster *Un homme et une femme* (*A Man and a Woman*, 1966, 102), plus the US expatriate William Klein, a fashion photographer known for acerbic satire of his homeland. Ivens's *Ciel* had created a strong impression, so his presence in the group seemed indispensable, despite the political difference between the 69-year-old communist and the 30-something unaffiliated-left filmmakers at the peak of their power. Michèle Ray, a French journalist, also joined the effort with her footage of South Vietnam from both sides of the FLN membrane,

complementing Ivens and Loridan's Hanoi testimony. The line-up reflected the spectrum of *rive gauche* allegiances but also constituted a major coalition-achievement for the skilled diplomat Marker, joining together artists with a strong track record of working with communists and the left like Varda and Resnais with hyper-individualist avant-gardists like Godard and Klein. The precariousness of this coalition would become evident as the planned contributions by Demy and Guerra were soon dropped (the collective didn't like Demy's proposed narrative about a Puerto Rican male G.I. and a female Vietnamese prostitute [Varda, 1994, 92]), but problems came to the surface even more dramatically upon the release of the film.

The final two-hour film included eleven fairly distinct parts:

- long episodes on the theme of the anguish and impotent self-interrogation of intellectuals, courtesy Resnais, Godard, and Ray;
- actuality footage from North and South, some of it even then already familiar to Western audiences;
- impressionistic footage of US operations in South Vietnam and pro and anti-war demonstrations in New York, shot by Lelouch and Klein respectively;
- an interview with Fidel Castro;
- a compilation historical backdrop to the Vietnam conflict narrated by Varda;
- an interview with Anne Morrison, widow of Norman Morrison, the Quaker who burned himself in front of the Pentagon in 1965, intercut with a testimony by Ann Uyen, a Vietnamese woman living in exile with a similar young family; and
- a collage refrain of miscellaneous media artifacts of the war and US civilisation in general (newsreel footage, video material, a televised speech by US General Westmoreland alongside testimony by black power advocates, analysed and distorted, stills, comic strips, radio voices, popular music, etc.).

All was assembled with hyperbolic flair and dialectical rigor by Marker, who also provided an eloquent voice-over intro and conclusion, respectively situating the conflict as a war of the rich against the poor, and urging spectators to face the challenge of the war far from Vietnam.

Ivens and Loridan were about to embark on their most important Indochina work, the feature documentary *Parallèle*, when they undertook their contribution to *Loin*. Ivens had met with Marker and Resnais before leaving Paris to discuss the 'theme and direction' of the planned film (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 290). A follow-up list drawn up by Varda (letter to Ivens, 1967, JIA) on behalf of the collective for the couple to take to Hanoi made a number of

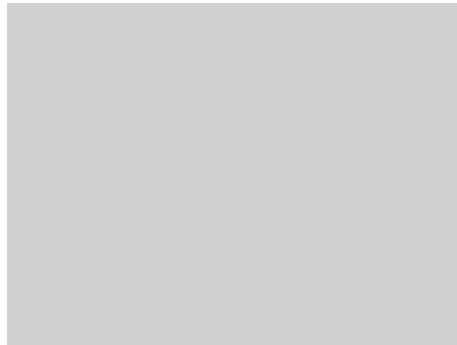
requests for specific shots for the film, e.g. ‘men and women lying and hidden in a rice field (or corn or some kind of bushes) – when they get up they are covered with leaves’.

Varda had clearly been impressed with the allusion to *Macbeth* and the re-animated Birnam Wood in *Ciel*, and given colour stock for the purpose Ivens was happy to oblige. Or rather, taken ill in Hanoi, Ivens happily delegated the half-dozen sets of shots to Loridan who commendably absorbed her partner’s style for the purpose, and exposed eleven cans of stock for the cause.⁴ Varda’s requested shot, prominent in the prologue, shows a brilliantly yellow expanse of waving grain, first coming to life with the choreographed advance of a troop of camouflaged militia and then returning to its former serenity. Similar requests included ‘a shot of soldiers matching three or four abreast, leaves in helmet, and the same thing rear view, and a single man. Also camouflaged with leaves, not marching, standing immobile in extreme close-up, and then the same man lying nude on the road or running through a village’.

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Ivens drew the line at the last detail of the request, apparently in deference to his hosts’ sense of decorum, but the other material was all sent back to Paris. The former shot appears as the penultimate movement of the film, while Marker inserted the close-ups of the soldier, with its heroic poster-like stylisation, in the midst of Godard’s monologue halfway through the film.

95. *Loin du Vietnam* (1967): heroic portrait of Vietnamese soldier produced by Ivens and Loridan on order for Agnès Varda and the collective French solidarity film. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © Sofracima/Icarus Films/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

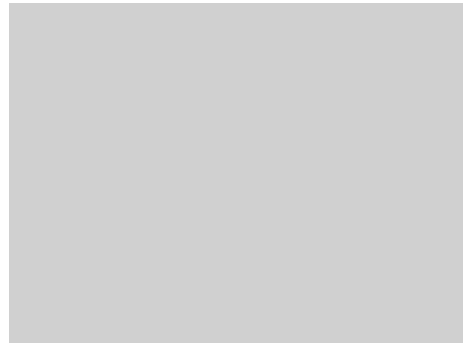


Varda also asked for some atrocity footage, ‘flaming ruins’, etc. that Ivens apparently did not provide; the producers had no shortage of this material in any case, either from North or South.

Ivens’s and Loridan’s finest contribution to the film, however, was conceived in his own style. No preconceptions of Parisian intellectuals were necessary to stimulate four or five concise sequences of calm attention to detail that stand distinctly apart from the other currents in the film. The Ivens

sequences are all silent and all in colour with one exception. This is the first brief scene, in black and white, which shows peasants defusing and collecting small fragmentation bombs filled with tiny ball bearings aimed at chest level, the target of which 'is human flesh'. The camera follows the defusing process in close-up, scans the stockpiles that the workers have accumulated, and records their absorbed expressions and purposeful gestures. The same watchful attitude informs the colour sequences, which record brigades preparing individual concrete air-raid shelters for the streets of Hanoi. The first of these, an attentive record of women filling wooden moulds with concrete, is followed by an actual alert with passers-by running to the shelters we have just witnessed being built as the camera tracks up and down the street from a car, recording rows of faces settling in to or emerging from their individual shelters beneath the street. Detailed subjective information on the future of the war is thus offered in the Ivens/Loridan footage. Their tightly coordinated close attention and panning close-ups of moving workers' faces and hands and the product of their labour seem to encapsulate materialist cinema.

96. *Loin du Vietnam* (1967): more characteristic black-and-white Ivensian footage shows a worker's intense face, hands and her labour as she defuses a US fragmentation bomb. DVD frame capture. © Sofracima/Icarus Films/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



A further sequence records a troupe of agitprop players performing in a village, the camera shifting back and forth between the relaxed and cheerful spectators and the ingenious show, which presents an unrecognisably painted President Johnson lamenting his woebegone US Air Force (a still from the scene became the iconic image of the film). The commentary repeats Ivens's impression of the great calm pervading the atmosphere in Hanoi. However, it is not only Hanoi but Ivens's footage itself that seems an island of calm in this otherwise chaotic film, relying mostly for its impact on sensory and affective discourse, rather than factual exposition. Ivens's footage of concrete activities on the part of both Hanoi civilians and rural peasants offers clear evidentiary support for the range of perspectives and emotions expressed elsewhere in the

film by the collective. As usual with Ivens, the ordinary tasks accomplished with the hands of workers, unassumingly and unremittingly, constitute the most visible and most truthful emblem of the revolution in action.

Ivens's unquestioning faith in the evidence of cluster bombs being defused or bomb shelters being moulded by women's hands, and in the unassailable political relevance of this evidence for Western society, might situate him in apparent sharp contrast to Godard's minimalist self-interrogation that takes place within the same film. Godard's segment searches for the lessons of imperialist war and their application at home, expresses a personal agony at the dilemmas of industrial strikes in his own back yard, and regrets an elitist cinema that cannot speak to the proletariat. Both moments, however divergent they may be, emerge with stark affect from the film as it loses the immediacy of its agitational role almost a half-century later. They have an impact as compellingly parallel testimonies and perceptions with a relevance extending far beyond the issues of 1967. The two presences, Ivens and Godard, superficially separated by a seemingly insurmountable gulf – stylistic, conceptual, cultural, and generational – ironically appear in retrospect to have the most affinity of any two contributors to the film. Both present workers and their means of production: respectively peasants and their tools, and an intellectual/artist and his camera. Both meditate on this evidence as the final authority for and subject of political analysis and revolutionary art.

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Schoots ([1995] 2000, 292) predictably calls *Loin* a 'fretful', 'egocentric', and 'far-from-flattering' 'bizarre mix', and at the time of its release in late 1967 the film sparked strong responses from both French and US critics as well. Such responses are a good indicator of the film's success in intervening in the two milieus – in stirring up infrastructural subcultures of critics and audiences, but in different ways.

The US critical response by and large showed total disarray, at best a primitive stage of political critical culture in that country in 1967, the postwar red scare having completely erased the legacy of political film culture of the Popular Front era. US critics seemed to lack language and criteria for dealing with political cinema of any type, not to mention the resurfacing solidarity work of the 1960s. Moreover, *Loin*'s revelation of apparent anti-Americanism among native son Klein and the idolised leaders of the New Wave was apparently hard to swallow. Andrew Sarris's ([1967] 1971) dismissal of the film as a 'patchwork quilt' unlike anything he had seen since *Mondo Cane* (Gualtierio Jacopetti, 1962, Italy, 108) is arguably apt,⁵ as is his critique of Ivens's indulgent romanticisation of the peasant similar to that in *Spanish Earth*. However, his rating of the entire film as 'zero as art' says more about the confusion of US liberals in 1967 than the worth and interest of the film. His *Village Voice* piece after the New York Film Festival denounced *Loin* as a masterpiece of evasion. He

includes a sermon on the inherent conservatism of all peasants and a veiled attack on French intellectuals for their failure to stop their own Vietnam, Algeria (echoing a similar comment within *Loïe* by Resnais, who along with Marker, Godard, and Loridan had been far from silent on French colonialism in North Africa, as Sarris knew full well but seemed conveniently to forget). While politely applauding Ivens, Godard, and Resnais for at least trying to make a personal statement, Sarris scolds them for yielding their right to edit their own footage, such is his blinkered auteurism's blocking of the concept of collaboration. Sarris's perception of the film as 'lies from Hanoi and Paris' seems embarrassingly defensive in retrospect, but even he is outdone by the incoherent hysteria of the *New York Times*'s Renata Adler (1968) upon theatrical release of the film the following June (I'll come back to Adler), which effectively seems to have killed the film's career – at least in the United States.⁶ Meanwhile, US left film criticism had not found its voice, and *Cineaste*, then in its inaugural year at the outset of a decade of national leadership in New Left film criticism, somehow avoided reviewing the film. Only American Richard Roud (1967), the New Wave devotee and presumably the programmer of the film in the New York festival, came to its defence. Writing as an expatriate for London's *Guardian*, Roud critiques the US schizoid bad conscience around what is undeniably a 'propaganda film', praising it as 'an important film, a beautiful film, a moving film': 'Rare indeed have been the occasions when contemporary art has successfully involved itself with politics. In this film, the cinema at last has its "Guernica"'.

The much greater richness and resilience of the French critical discourse around the film can be encapsulated briefly here simply by a repertory of the terminology deployed to describe the film. In contrast to the Americans' dismissive and inaccurate invective, the Paris responses, unanimously positive across the ideological spectrum, included the following terms, culled from the ten reviews cited in my list of sources, as the basis of their criticism:

1. meditation; reflection – beyond testimony and fiction
2. [filmed political] essay
3. *dossier* ('file')
4. *film engagé* ('committed film')
5. *film utile* ('useful film')
6. collective testimony
7. demonstration; a manifesto (the French *manifestation* has the ring of both English concepts, though normally means the former)
8. didactic

To this list, the filmmakers themselves in their interviews and public discussions of the film, external or internal, added the simple terms: 'a banner', '*un*

cri' (a cry or a shout) and the useful 'cinematic roundtable/meeting'. Having the conceptual equipment to define and describe a film, its form and its objectives, is arguably the most basic tool of film criticism: the French had it, the Americans were still working on theirs (although the *New York Times'* Adler at least had the critical equipment to describe [accurately] *Loin* as a 'collage').

The word 'solidarity' is a key concept for understanding *Loin*, for summing up the film's significance artistically as well as historically. Although the word is less prominent as a defining genre in the critical reception to *Loin*, in the discourse around the production of this film and within the narration of the film itself, it designates both the film's objectives and self-conception as part of a documentary genre (and thus provides an opportunity to sum up the genre arguably invented by Ivens 30 years earlier). The *rive gauche* collective's letter to the North Vietnamese leadership (quoted in Mundell, 2003, 26), carried by Ivens and Loridan to seek permission to film from the Hanoi authorities, was explicit in this respect:

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Words of friendship and solidarity, however sincere they may be, are only words. [...] Silence in the face of the war in Vietnam is impossible. But saying 'solidarity' from afar and without risk, may also be a convenient way of easing one's conscience. Our solidarity occurs in towns that no one bombs, in lives that no one menaces. What does this mean? We know that this war is your war, that the peace, when it becomes possible, will be your peace, and that no one has the right, even with the best of intentions, to put themselves in your place, to speak on your behalf. Where is our place? To answer these questions, we have undertaken to make a film. It is a response that is neither praiseworthy nor heroic, but which has the sole motive of being tangible, within our means and within our limitations. It is with our work, it is within the context of our profession, that we want to bring a little life to this word 'solidarity'.

Marker's narration takes up this theme in both his introduction and conclusion to *Loin*, explicitly in the former: '[58 names] and many other technicians, assistants and friends have made this film during the year 1967 to affirm, by the exercise of their craft, their solidarity with the Vietnamese people in struggle against aggression'.

Could anyone argue that this film failed in Marker's objective to 'bring a little life into this word solidarity'; that he and his colleagues made the political relationship between the *rive gauche* and Vietnam 'tangible'; that they revived through craft the solidarity genre that had been invented in no small part thanks to Ivens in Spain and China? (Waugh, 2009). And that the genre would now launch a whole new reinvigorated chapter in its history as fellow

traveller of the New Left and would still be vigorously kicking against imperialism in the post-9/11 21st century?

It is therefore fitting in conclusion to probe this ‘tangibility’ of this film in the context of this genre a bit further, to cast *Loin* in terms of the perennial generic dynamics of the solidarity film. I have identified these dynamics within Ivens’s founding contributions to the genre from the 1930s, in terms of three factors (Waugh, 2009):

1. *engagement with cultural difference*, even conflict:

Loin offers a vivid depiction of the dialectics of rich vs. poor, calm vs. frenzy, Vietnam vs. France/US... with an emphatic dialectical rhythm throughout. It offers also a vivid depiction of cultural specificity in, for example, everything from low-tech shelter construction to agitprop theatrical performance techniques – but always as in the process of dynamic updating, never as static ‘otherness’.

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2. *engagement with constituency*:

Loin is not only addressed to the *rive gauche* in particular and the West in general – not the Vietnamese – but is also *about* this constituency, not about Vietnam. Marker makes this especially clear in the concluding narration:

This war is not a historical accident, nor the delayed resolution of a colonial problem: it is there, around us, within us. It begins when we begin ourselves to understand that the Vietnamese are fighting for us, and to measure our debt towards them. [...] And the first honest movement that we can make towards them is to try to look at their challenge head-on.

This framework, together with the self-questioning of the Godard, Resnais, and Ray episodes, suggests that the film is not only an important moment in the rediscovery of the solidarity cinema by the New Left, but also one of the founding texts of what we might call meta-solidarity, which both try to look head-on at a distant struggle and, as Godard puts it, endeavour to question our stakes in bringing it home.

3. *engagement with documentary form, craft, language* (however conservative formally solidarity documentary has tended to be):

Loin inevitably grapples with the issue of forms, whether emerging or conventional, and their success in achieving an efficacy of communication and ethics of solidarity. There is no space here to go into the impas-

sioned critical debates over Marker's indulgent inclusion of clashing styles of material, all either loved or hated by critics, from *vérité* reportage of US street politics to the first-person interventions of the *rive gauche* auteurs, to Marker's essayistic collage, praised as productive or decried as incoherent, depending on taste and ideological positioning. It is sufficient to acknowledge here their vigour and pertinence – and their prophetic laying out of the debates about form and technology that would dominate the aftermath of May 1968, both in France and elsewhere.

The coalitional spirit of *Loin* did not last long after its release, but lessons were learned. Launched at the New York Film Festival as *Far from Vietnam* in the fall of 1967 (following its Montreal premiere), Ivens and Lelouch publicly locked horns at the Paris official opening of the film in December (two months after its screening for the striking workers at Besançon). Ivens, just back from harrowing months literally underground filming *Parallèle*, castigated Lelouch's attitude of pity towards the Vietnamese – what the Resnais episode in the film calls '*victimes à la mode*' and what we might now call a 'victim aesthetics' – insisting rather on the necessity of unconditional victory for the besieged people.⁷ Ivens had long been practising what he was preaching in the pragmatic way of supporting Vietnamese filmmakers: while in the country to shoot *Parallèle*, as Stufkens (2008, 403-404) has outlined, he had sparked student efforts halfway around the world to provide assistance to North Vietnamese filmmakers and documentary facilities, with local committees in four different European countries fundraising to send equipment and materials to both the *Libération* and the Hanoi studios. The Lelouch eruption may have harmed the film's lackluster exhibition career, since the distribution of the film had been entrusted to the director's distribution firm. Schoots ([1995] 2000 292) describes a lackluster exhibition for the film in 'many provincial towns' and in four theatres in Paris, boosted by 'a minor sensation when the right-wing extremist organization Occident protested by smashing showcases and slashing seats in one of the Paris theatres'.

Even more serious for exhibition abroad was the hostile reception greeting the film's US opening at the New Yorker Theatre in Manhattan in the spring of 1968, with the *New York Times* critic (Adler, 1968) dismissing it with the pretext that this banal and ugly 'rambling partisan newsreel collage', 'facile and slipshod and stereotyped', had been overtaken by 'events' anyway (meaning the Tet offensive of January 1968 and the subsequent withdrawal of Johnson from the Presidential race that spring). But critic Renata Adler unknowingly touched on the essence – both the virtues and the liabilities – of solidarity itself, its relation to 'events'. No doubt related to this initial failure and this presumption about actuality, *Loin* remained out of circulation in its English version for 40 years, a lamentable absence from the documentary, solidarity, and essay

filmic sub-canons, to which it clearly belongs. It is absent even from today's ardent Marker canonicity on the English-language graduate dissertation market. Still, this exemplary solidarity film remains resonant for all the ephemerality of its hook to 'events', an exemplary study in artistic commitment at a pivotal moment in the trajectory of left politics and neo-imperialism. This film and the community from which it emerged have a transhistorical and transcultural relevance that could not be more acute to the renewal of both engaged documentary and neo-imperial conflict in the first decades of the 21st century. Thankfully, it was restored and revived by the Archives françaises du film du CNC together with Ivens's erstwhile collaborators at Sofracima in 2009, when it was presented at Cannes. This breakthrough in the Left archive was followed finally by the film's American re-premiere four years later, in a brilliantly programmed series 'Cinema of Resistance' at the Film Society of Lincoln Centre, reuniting this epochal film with the other milestones of the 1960s and 1970s from *Parallèle* to *La hora de los hornos*. It could not have been more timely.

LE 17E PARALLÈLE

Ivens was satisfied that *Ciel* had fulfilled its primary short-term function. That is, that it had

[S]hown with the means of the documentary film that the Vietnamese people are resolute and sure of winning. That they are struggling heroically against the criminal aggression of the American, and that their political awareness is giving them an incredible moral power. The film was a 'poster' documentary that corresponded to the needs of the time. (Hennebelle, 1970)

At the same time, Ivens was the film's most exacting critic. However well the film had met the short-term need within his Western public, as he himself explained in the preface to Loridan's published version of *Parallèle*, a new film was required:

To explain thoroughly in a new film what a people's war in 1967 is, we have to go further than *Le Ciel, la terre* and further than the reportage films of other filmmakers: that is to say, we would not be able to stay at the surface of events, but share everything with the people, in a given spot, over a certain period, in order to be able to penetrate better by our shooting into everyday life. (Ivens and Loridan, 1968, 8)

His idea was that a new film would have to be more than a poster, in fact, a weapon 'in the service of the people, that is, of its struggle'. If *Ciel* had vividly proclaimed the 'moral power' of the Vietnamese people, it had not shown the means by which that power was organised into a people's war, nor the source of that power.

On Ivens's original departure from Hanoi in the summer of 1965, the delegation that accompanied him to the airport had invited him to return to teach a course on documentary. It was not until February of 1967 that Ivens finally accepted that invitation, in the meantime having released three films and done another round of festivals. In the intervening period, the priorities of the Vietnamese film industry had changed: upon his arrival, Ivens was asked to make another film instead of teaching the planned course.

Almost immediately, Ivens's decision was to ask permission to shoot his film in Vinh Linh, near the seventeenth parallel, the boundary between the North and the South, a district referred to as the 'line of fire'. This area, facing the enemy across the demilitarised zone, was the site of the most visible escalation at the time, under the fire of both the South Vietnamese army and the Seventh Fleet. It was an ideal location in terms of Ivens's insistence that his new film completely integrate into the people's war rather than register surface impressions of Hanoi. (The fact that Western audiences were marginally familiar with the regions of North Vietnam around Hanoi and Haiphong through various films of reportage already in existence, but never had been exposed to material from this particular front, also entered into the consideration.) The Vietnamese were naturally reluctant to expose their famous guest to so much danger, but were persuaded by Ivens's decision that this film should be based on concrete details of the actual fighting and the organisation of life within the arena of struggle. The story of Ho Chi Minh himself personally allowing the diminutive Loridan to be part of the team after initial hesitation, deciding she was tough enough when he noticed the Auschwitz number tattoo on her forearm, is the stuff of legend (Stufkens, 2008, 387-388). The Hanoi authorities provided Ivens and Loridan with a crew of nine, including a doctor-translator Xuan Phong, a security man, and drivers for the three command-cars assigned for the shooting, an organiser, and a man responsible for arranging transport. Two cameramen were recruited to cover different skills and approaches: Dao Le Binh was skilled in news journalism, 'fast with his hand camera, having an impulsive and active temperament', while Nguyen Quang Tuan's background was in fiction, 'more inclined towards reflection and calm, and very attentive to his cinematography' (Ivens and Loridan, 1968, 10). While the team was being formed in Hanoi to meet Ivens's explicit standards of high political consciousness and professional expertise, Ivens and Loridan spent their time filming their contribution to *Loin*, and screening var-

ious films by Vietnamese filmmakers, including some about the region he was to visit and *Chung mot dong song* (*On the Same River*, Hong Nghi Nguyen and Ky Nam Pham), the prizewinning 1959 melodrama about lovers separated by the Ben-Hai river, the artificial boundary between North and South Vietnam. The habitual interactive pedagogical process between visitor and host was already underway, and Dr. Xuan would later become a filmmaker herself (Stufkens, 2008, 404; see also *Retour à Vinh Linh – 40 ans après* [*Revisiting Vinh Linh – 40 Years Later*, Xuan Phuong, 2007, Vietnam, 50]).

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If Ivens wanted to be thoroughly integrated with the war, his wishes were fully realised. The tortuous and harrowing trip back and forth between Hanoi and Vinh Linh lasted 24 days (Stufkens, 2008, 393). Travelling only by night, and without lights because of the constant bombardment of the road, regularly delayed by craters in the road, the team evenly divided the stock and the equipment among the three vehicles and arranged detailed plans for any emergency, emphasising special plans for each camera in the case of an alert. The actual shooting itself proved to be even more hazardous – the project guides had been clearly instructed to protect their guests at all costs and Ivens alarmed them to no end by refusing a safety helmet except during air raids, and by often shooting from in front of the artillery batteries (Stufkens, 2008, 389). Loridan tells of recording an anti-aircraft battle, in which an American F-105 was shot down, from a foxhole 50 metres away from the battery, of Ivens persuading a reluctant anti-aircraft officer to permit the team to stay with his battery in spite of the certainty of imminent attack, of spending interminable periods in bomb shelters despairing of ever being able to expose a frame. The presence of attack was so real that the cameras had always to be camouflaged with khaki net. Ivens had clearly progressed very little from the days when Hemingway had been convinced that his days were numbered by all of the risks he took.

Team morale during the long hours of waiting in the dark was a serious problem. The lack of air, the constant noise of bombardment, the enforced idleness, and the hazards of subterranean living taxed the patience of even the old veteran. Shooting notes from the period reveal an atmosphere charged with the complaints of the crewmembers, and outline pep talks from the '*vieux combattants*' (as he referred to himself in one) on the necessity of adopting a 'combative attitude' toward 'difficulties, dangers, and problems' (Ivens, production notes, JIA). After several weeks of moving about the district and even an incursion south of the border close to Con-Thien at the time of the strategic battle of the same name against an encircled outpost of Marines, Ivens and the team decided to settle in a single village for an extended period in an effort to observe the concrete reality of the daily lives of participants in the war. No

doubt part of the motivation for this decision was the difficulty the filmmakers had had in getting close to the peasants, who for security reasons inevitably distrusted the Europeans and refused to help them before knowing who they were: it seemed that establishing roots in a village was the only solution to the problem. The village chosen consisted of four hamlets of 500 persons each, 750 families in all, the target for 376 bombing attacks the previous year, seven bombs per inhabitant!

Within that village, it was Ivens's plan to concentrate on one or two individuals and to express the life of the community through those individuals. When Ivens had declared in 1946 that the 'personalised' documentary was the documentary of the future, he meant of course that specific genre of documentary that he had done much to pioneer, his blend of Flahertian individualism and socialist realism (Ivens, 1946). Ivens's prophecy couldn't have been more wrong, judging from the next two decades of his own career and the general trends of documentary history during that period (with several important exceptions). But a revival and an updating of 'personalised documentary' was on the horizon.

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As Ivens zeroed in on the village in Vinh Linh and started searching around for his characters, it seemed that history was repeating itself. The casting process in the Vietnamese village was based on all the principles that had animated Ivens's search for Afanaseyev in Magnitogorsk, for Julian in Spain, and for the host of exemplary – but not too exemplary – icons that had appeared in such films as *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, USSR, 50), *Spanish Earth*, *400 Million*, *Power and the Land* (1940, USA, 33), and *Pierwsze lata* (*The First Years*, 1949, Bulgaria/Czechoslovakia/Poland, 99), and which had been the central figures in such unrealised projects as *New Frontiers* and the original conception of *Action Stations* (1943, Canada, 50). The movement from the iconic generality of *Ciel* to the concrete characterisation of *Parallèle* seemed identical to the shift from *Zuiderzee* to *Komsomol* 30 years previously. Both were motivated by the same Marxist-humanist faith in the revolutionary potential of flesh-and-blood workers and peasants, in the dignity and beauty of actual labour, and most importantly, in the didactic value of the representation of the life and work of a specific exemplary individual, as opposed to the anonymous collective man and woman.

Ivens's shooting notes during his search for his characters in Vinh Linh are even more specific in terms of his conception of the character he needed. She was to be a young woman, 'photogenic', 'with natural grace', who could 'play her own role'. As a woman she could be seen in the context of a family and the role of women in the people's war could be emphasised. This was a particularly important role, as Ivens pointed out in his 1968 preface to Loridan's book, since 70 per cent of the agricultural work in Vinh Linh was done

by women and most of the men had been mobilised in the repair of roads and dams or in the military (Ivens and Loridan, 1968). The filmmakers' intention was not to privilege one person in preference to other villagers, but to focus on one who would represent the largest number of villagers. She was not to be the most beautiful, the most clever, or the most militant – she would not be made into a perfect being, which 'would not seem true'. Around her, other characters would be organised; through her the sense of the true struggle of the people would be expressed. One note expands this idea even further:

To follow her, to tie her explicitly to everything that happens in the village, for example, a crater used for agriculture, not to show it neutral, but with her – not her, but her experience in the middle of the others. The effect on the public [will be] greater. Everything, personal situations that I thought of in Hanoi.

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In fact, two women were eventually chosen to be the foci of the film, Miên, the 23-year-old leader in the local militia and a representative in the district general council, and Thu, 26-year-old chairperson of the village. It is an open question whether Ivens's original stress on the ordinariness of his characters was carried through to the final form of the film. For, as it turned out, in addition to their political roles, both Miên and Thu are strikingly photogenic young women, and, even more important, impressively articulate and gifted in their leadership abilities. The two women are also miraculously spontaneous, though reserved, in front of the camera, a certain index of the Parisians' ability to disarm their hosts during their two-month stay in the village. The shooting notes suggest that Ivens's approach to the incorporation of these two women as characters into his film was, as usual, somewhere between the poles of non-interventionist observation and outright dramatisation. For example, the plans for shooting on 15 June provided for waking at 3:15am, departure at 4:00, arrival at 5:00 (apparently at another part of the village), and shooting at 7:00; according to Ivens's instructions to his advance co-coordinator, a group of the people's militia were to be ready, about 30 to 40 persons, of whom a percentage of men, with guns, etc., around Thu's house. Comrade Miên and Thu were to be there. The entire group was to be there. The action to be filmed was to be a 'military excursus, the way they usually do it'. In the afternoon, the camera was to follow Miên in her activities planned for the day in the village or in the fields. In other words, much of the village material seems to consist of re-enactment in the strict sense, that is, the re-enactment of a customary event by that event's usual participants, a strategy that had always been central to Ivens's technical repertory and one that he saw no need to be apologetic for, even in 1966 (Ivens, 1969, 229). Obviously, given the combat setting for

the shooting, a wide range of degrees of *mise-en-scène* entered into the filming by necessity – Ivens quite rightly would not have entertained for a moment a Leacockian compunction about non-intervention when it came to filming a nocturnal anti-aircraft battle, and approached everyday village activities with the same rationale. The amount of attention given Miên and Thu by the filmmakers, interestingly enough, led to an expression of resentment by other women of the village at one point; however, they were mollified when Ivens and Loridan explained that they were merely being considered typical of the other women in the village. Moreover local party officials instinctively tried to interfere with the shoot, but the Hanoi security person managed to get them to accept the principle of ‘film first, then discuss’ (Stufkens, 2008, 392).

97. *Le 17^e Parallèle* (1968): exemplary protagonists Miên and Thu, articulate and photogenic but ‘typical’, in a *mise-en-scène* during a bombing lull. DVD frame capture. © ARGOS Films/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Notwithstanding such complications, Ivens’s desire for a deeper awareness of the concrete realities of village life was amply rewarded. The risks he and Loridan took, their patience and persistence through almost six months of shooting in North Vietnam, and two months on the road and on location instead of the planned one (Stufkens, 2008, 388) resulted in a film whose richness of contemplative detail, whose intimacy with the rhythms of the lives of the villagers, do indeed make the earlier, short film seem shallow and pale in comparison. Ivens’s genius for close observation of the material details of the lives of ordinary people is expressed to the full. In this film, there are no ‘travel notebook’-style windshield tracks, registering an ambience at random – the rhythms, the nuances, and the material environment of village life are captured vividly with that modest flair and thoroughness that recall the classic Ivens. Perhaps it was his exposure to an agrarian people tied to the cycles of the fields and the seasons, and bathed in unremitting sunlight like the Spanish, Chinese, and Bulgarian peasants of earlier decades, that inspired in Ivens a return to an earlier sensibility. The five-to-one ratio was tight according to

Western standards but eminently feasible in the circumstances for this hybrid of direct cinema and *mise-en-scène* (Stufkens, 2008, 395).

On the surface there are certain similarities between the construction of *Parallèle* and the linear narrative framework that was the structural base of *Ciel*. That is, we have in both films a sequential elaboration of various aspects of village life, interrupted by the dramatically built crises provided by air raid alerts or actual battles. Both films were even given the same rough climactic structure insofar as each one ends with the shooting down of an American plane and the capture of the pilot. But the similarities can be exaggerated. For one thing, the record of the daily life of the villagers and soldiers, so tantalisingly brief in the 40-minute *Ciel*, iconic sketches rather than dramatic expositions, was lavishly extended by Ivens and Loridan in the next film, not only in duration (two hours this time) but in degree as well. Not only do the two main characters, Miên and Thu, become alive in the course of the film as real, recognisable figures, but a whole roster of secondary characters is introduced as well with varying degrees of detail and depth.

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Furthermore, the moments of crisis in *Ciel* punctuated the film regularly and often; their staccato impact, repeated as often as every five minutes during the course of the film, was an integral part of the film's declamatory rhetoric. In *Parallèle*, their function is much less significant (there are only three or four such dramatic peaks in two hours) and they are presented almost offhand as part of the daily routine of people living under bombardment without having any additional rhetorical role.

Also eliminated in Ivens's desire to get closer to the people is the former film's reliance on the strategy and structure of collage. On the whole, *Parallèle* is much less complex formally than the earlier film, in fact than most earlier Ivens films. The progression of events unrolls in a leisurely, straightforward manner. Many of them are apparently constructed just as they occurred during the crew's stay in the village and are recognisable from Loridan's diary of the shooting, though their sequence is not always exact. One of the film's finest achievements is the evocation of the pace of village life, slow and orderly despite the bombing; and in the long run, this sense of pace undisturbed by the disruptions of war may well be more effective propaganda than the climactic intensity of *Ciel*. Ivens was explicit in his desire to make the impact of the film rest on its own powers of observation, on its own apprehension of its subject matter, rather than the kinetic or editorial devices of the artist.

The diegesis of the film proceeds with a slow oscillatory rhythm that informs the film with a simple formal elegance. The diegetic movement of the film alternates between passages of straightforward narration in the classical Ivensian semi-documentary manner, and points at which this mode of narrative pauses, giving way to an excursus of what can be described as indirect

discourse. Here an event is described orally to the camera, by a character who has taken part in it or witnessed it, through the medium of direct sound. For example, the film opens with an account of the American campaign to relocate the villagers within the demilitarised zone by forced evacuations to 'protected' hamlets, razing the peasants' homes and crops in the process. The story is told by refugees who have managed to escape to the North. While visuals in this sequence consist of rather static footage of the narrators and their audience in shot/countershot, much of it in close-up, often with an interviewer from the Peoples' Armed Forces of Liberation in the foreground with a question, the soundtrack, on the other hand, is a richly inflected, dramatic series of testimonies by the peasants concerned, vivid in details of cruelty and terror (translated by subtitles). This form of first-person narrative has a central position in the film, accomplished through a wide variety of mediators, including political and military officials, the two women already mentioned, a precocious nine-year-old boy named Pham Cong Duc who tells of his own exploits against the Americans, and a cultural official who recites poetry. A wide range of devices are employed for this purpose. Occasionally, a narrator will speak directly to the camera, as with Lan, a political commissar in the army, who makes a fervent declaration in French of the Vietnamese determination, without a dramatic pretext. Duc, the young guerilla, tells an invisible interlocutor behind the camera of his having found an American heli-pad in the jungle, subsequently destroyed by his 'uncles', and of his ambitions to become a soldier. More often the director chooses the rather novelistic device of a dramatic framework to serve as a pretext for the story of his narrator. For example, in one scene where Miên tells about her role in the defence of the village and the various air battles she has witnessed, the account is structured as a letter that she is in the middle of writing and interrupts to discuss with a friend. In another scene, Thu is interviewed by the film crew's doctor-translator who poses as a Hanoi journalist. In this context, she discusses the village's defences, the problems of morale and shelters, and the progress of the village women in their new roles. In another case, a rather stiff meeting among various political officials is the pretext for a similar conversation.

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The innovative use of such stylisation in these testimonial scenes must not deflect all attention from the narrative sequences achieved by the more traditional means, the profoundly fluid and moving progressions that elaborate the day-to-day activities of the villagers without the intervention of indirect discourse. The comparable passages from *Ciel* have been deepened and extended. The brief tableaux in that film of the essential village undertaking – ploughing, transplanting, earthmoving, irrigation, and munitions manufacture – have been broadened to include a vast range of subjects, including many of the supplementary but less picturesque agricultural activities such as

distribution via the cooperative store as well as glimpses of the general areas of health, child care, education, road and dike reconstruction, building repair, culture, and general political work. Here, the leisurely, contemplative pace of the film permits the inclusion of passages of stunning lyrical affect. One such interlude shot in an air-raid shelter diegetically interrupts an anti-aircraft battle and was actually shot under a bombardment: a dot of light approaches the camera on a black screen, a villager carrying a lamp through a tunnel as it turns out, moving through long corridors and finally arriving in a dimly lit hollow where the lamp reveals a mother patiently fanning her sleeping children, framed dramatically in the high-contrast play of shadow and light. The whole effect is less the aestheticisation of suffering, though the scene is hauntingly beautiful, than the affirmation of the continuity of life under conditions of indescribable hardship.

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98. *Le 17^e Parallèle* (1968): lamplight reveals a mother fanning her sleeping child underground, affirming the continuity of life under indescribable hardship. DVD frame capture. © ARGOS Films/CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



In general, a scene of village life is drawn out much longer than its counterparts in the shorter film, is attentive to numerous details that the poster-like scope of the former film would not permit, and attains a certain concrete vitality through the participation of live dialogue. Although spontaneous, non-diegetic dialogue is used throughout the film all too sparingly, it is perhaps this last factor that makes the crucial difference. For example, one admirable sequence in which Han, the cultural official, and his wife and daughter work on their shelter is elegantly narrated by means of fluid camera movements and an understated commentary and followed by a short scene in which the daughter washes at the village well where a live conversation between Miên and Thu, also washing, is recorded in direct. As the voices discuss the day's activities, and the number of planes spotted that morning instead of the weather, the camera records the sunlit group in classical Ivensian *mise-en-scène*: close-ups of one woman combing her long hair, intercut with group medium shots,

the camera lavishing attention on the details of the faces, the hands, and the water, building a subtle but exquisite interplay of voices and images.

Occasionally, a scene is built of a combination of this traditional narrative construction and the indirect discourse already described. One such scene is built with such understated virtuosity that it is a highlight of the film, the scene where Thu is interviewed by the team's translator, Dr. Phuong. Thu's and Phuong's conversation, replete with the intuitive political wisdom of the popular idiom, is about the growth of consciousness among the village women during the war ('it's only after two years of destructive war that we respect each other and love each other more and more').⁸ After some establishing shots initiate the dialogue, the screen image begins to shift from the speakers to views of other village activities, an artful montage of village life ensues, the medium two-shot of the speakers returning to the screen only periodically, in perfect complement to the content of the dialogue. The first cutaway from the actual interview introduces a long shot of an old woman weaving baskets in a sunlit doorway, another of a woman stooping over an arrangement of circular baskets drying rice in the sun, next, two progressively closer shots of the weaver, and finally a medium close-up of two new women drawing water from the well, framed before and after by the familiar shot of the two speakers. Then comes a closer, now medium, shot of the rice-dryer followed by another return to the speakers. The rice-dryer is then again presented as she refills her baskets, and at this point, the camera shifts closer to Thu and Phuong, capturing their conversation in medium close-up. Suddenly an entirely different activity is introduced, a woman in long shot in the shade of a columned verandah gently rocking a baby, and then a different view of this same activity follows, revealing a young man weaving nets nearby. A highly contrasted, shaded close-up of the face and hands of the net-weaver follows, and then is replaced by a smiling, sunny close-up of Thu that in turn gives way to a close-up of the face and shoulder of the stooping rice-dryer as she sways back and forth in a steady rhythm. The close-up of Thu concludes this coda-like string of close-ups and the sequence as a whole. The subtly orchestrated interweaving of these crescendos of camera proximity and narrative complexity coincides with a heightening magnetism of Thu's testimony as the initial awkwardness of the interview format is forgotten. The total effect is elegant and compelling, without departing from the serene mood of the quiet afternoon sunshine of the scene.

The mobile camera is by no means a discovery of direct cinema nor of Ivens in 1967. Nevertheless, Ivens and his operators, principally Dao one suspects, made important strides toward that special fluidity and spontaneity of camera, primarily handheld, characteristic of such artists of direct cinema as Leacock or Brault, though staying shy of the flamboyance of either. Equipped with

a heavy reflex camera with a blimp, movements of any kind were a challenge – yet the more static patterns of Ivensian *mise-en-scène* (shot/reverse shot, medium two-shot/close-up insert, etc.) that most often predominate often give way to an elegant walk, behind two women, say, as they leave the village into the jungle, or through the passageway of a shelter. The customary tilts and pans that have been the staple of Ivens's style for decades suddenly become much more expansive and flexible, an ample pan for example taking in all of the various activities within a communal shelter during a raid, or perhaps an attentive hovering about the details of a scene before a brisk pan of the entire scene that culminates in a track past it. It is particularly the shelters with their cramped spaces and long corridors which seem to have stimulated that new expressive potential of Ivens's style that distinguishes this film from earlier, less spontaneous ones. The expert long takes that dominate *Yukong* nine years later are the culmination of the first tentative steps in *Parallèle*.

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The role of the commentary in this film is still an important one, though markedly reduced insofar as the strategy of indirect narration by internal mediators made it unnecessary. Having abandoned the evocative ironic tone and allusive texture of Marker's script for *Ciel*, as well as the personal reflective tone of the Ivens part of that commentary, here the voice-over, read by a woman with self-assured, *rive gauche* matter-of-fact-ness, is concise and informative. The first line is 'Fifteen thousand Marines, ten thousand puppet soldiers landed here'. Often the commentary assumes the first-person posture of the indirect discourse narrative, which alternates with it on the soundtrack, adding to the sense of immediacy of the film: 'We hollow huge shelters not only to protect ourselves from bombs when they fall. But to live there. Our shelters are not holes where we hide. We have a slogan "Transform shelters into battle stations." Our shelters are our battle stations'.

Another aspect of this personalisation of the commentary is the effort to capture the flavour of the popular idiom of the Vietnamese people as expressed in the rhetoric of collective resistance, that militant folk wisdom that also surfaced in the slogans and figuration throughout *Ciel*. In this film, for example, we hear over a shot of the restoration of the damaged thatch of a bombed house, the voice-over meditation, 'Here they say, "Healthy leaves must cover torn ones"'. Elsewhere 'Each handful of rice saved is also a victory', 'If the Americans come here, they will be drowned in the ocean of the people's war', and 'every day our people enflame themselves more and more with anger and hate'. The currents of such thought, both aphoristic and metaphorical, make the commentary, despite its often purely informative function, a dynamic element of the film.

The film's reliance on this pattern, now outlined, of alternation of action and discussion, direct and indirect discourse, arises from a conjuncture of

various influences at this point in Ivens's career. The most important of these is of course the pervading presence of direct cinema in that historical context. Since Ivens's intervention at the 1963 meeting in Tours that had been so important in the dissemination of the theory and technology of direct cinema, at which Ivens's endorsement of the new technology had been qualified by his serious reservations about the new tendency toward naturalism and ideological slovenliness among the new filmmakers – since that critical point in documentary history, the idiom and the aesthetics of direct cinema had become the accepted point of departure in European and North American documentary. Even Ivens, having resisted the flood so long with his lyrical essays, sometimes received as charmingly old-fashioned, could no longer resist. Ivens has always relied on the language of the times to communicate his message, and one might have predicted that his impulse to penetrate beneath the surfaces of a people's war could only mean doing so by listening to his subjects' voices with the direct technology then in vogue – the culmination of tentative steps in *Italia* and ...*À Valparaiso* (1963, France/Chile, 27).

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Nevertheless, the strict exigencies of shooting under emergency conditions, within a relatively short time and a very stringent budget (Pierre Perrault, for example, would spend literally years with his subjects during this period with the virtually unlimited resources provided by the National Film Board of Canada for their superstar director) necessitated this mingling of many scenes of traditional silent, semi-documentary shooting, with the more contemporary synchronised material. No doubt various other factors necessitated keeping the direct material to a minimum: Ivens's own lack of experience in the style and above all that of his Vietnamese operators; his unfamiliarity with the language, by no means an unimportant consideration. We must also consider Ivens's rather stylised format for synchronised sound – the interviews, the interrupted letter-writing, etc. – as influenced by these conscious aesthetic and political attitudes as well, that is, his distaste for what he saw as the excessive naturalism of many of the *cinéastes-direct*, the tendency toward the accumulation of superficial detail at the expense of the deeper material structures of experience. Ivens's intervention in the natural ordering of his material, that is, in whatever arrangement was required for the semi-dramatised scenes of indirect discourse that dominate the film, must be seen at least in part as an intuitive Brechtian strategy, the manipulation of reality to facilitate the spectator's distanced, rational response. Certainly a Brechtian sensibility is apparent in Ivens's decision to limit emotional involvement with the film, that is, in his playing down of the climactic battle scenes that punctuate the earlier film, and his avoidance of 'atrocious footage' (one of the early notes records the decision to 'avoid images of babies on road – show once only, but forcefully'). There are other similarities with the Brechtian aesthetic, which would be elab-

orated by Louis Marcorelles (1968) in his article on *Parallèle* in *Cahiers du cinéma*. Marcorelles points to the extreme simplification of the dramaturgy and the reliance on ‘poetic intensification’ as a means of expressing the theme, as examples of these similarities.

Finally, one must consider a complex of personal influences as coming to bear upon the shape of the film, particularly since this film was the first of a series of projects more collaborative in design than any of Ivens’s previous films. The contribution of Loridan especially, as we have already seen, seems to be instrumental. Her name heads a list of collaborators under Ivens’s name in the credits whose respective functions are not detailed.⁹ In 1967, according to the pre-feminist fashion of the day, she not unwillingly accepted less billing than she deserved in the interests of the promotion of the film. Whatever may be the case, *Parallèle* is the first film in which the collaboration of Loridan and Ivens is a significant one: on *Rotterdam*, she was credited as assistant director but her contribution really involved only casual and miscellaneous consultation on a film conceived without her participation and conducted in a language unknown to her; with *Ciel*, a project which she readily admitted not to be her type of film, she was present only in the montage phase. Loridan’s interest in filmmaking dates from her contribution to Rouch and Morin’s *Chronique d’un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1961, 85), in which she performs the role of an on-the-street interviewer asking Parisians ‘Are you happy?’ with the help of the new synch-sound portable equipment (she came to that production with a background in a polling firm). Even more famous in *Chronique d’un été* is her one-woman confessional sequence where she walks through Paris, Nagra slung over her shoulder, remembering her deportation to Auschwitz as a teenager during the war and her subsequent return to Paris after the Liberation. Loridan’s professional filmmaking career was pursued entirely within the context of direct cinema, and her filmography includes *Algérie année zero* (35), a prizewinning solidarity film on post-independence Algeria shot in 1962 and resonant with testimonies of the citizens of the new country – both sync sound and simulated sync in this transitional moment. Her co-director on this pioneering film (regrettably unavailable) had been Jean-Pierre Sergent, her co-star in *Chronique d’un été*: the two had been lovers (they break up onscreen in the Rouch film) as well as fellow militants in the outlawed Algerian independence organisation Front de libération national, and Sergent would come back to collaborate with Loridan and her new mate in Laos, after *Parallèle*. Following *Algérie* Loridan’s career with French television involved direct cinema reportage and the preparation of broadcasts. In Vinh Linh, Loridan was thus more than qualified to become the soundperson for the production, primarily because of the shortage of staff, although she was not strictly speaking a sound engineer despite her experience as an interviewer. Her enormous talent in this

job, her great sensitivity to the spontaneity required in such a role, was evident from the beginning. Ultimately her influence in Ivens's shift towards synchronised sound – or rather what Stufkens (2008, 409) and Costa (1999, 277) call the film's 'mix of synchronous and post-synchronous sound' – cannot be denied. Nor, for that matter, can the vicarious influence exerted through her of Rouch, whose inspiration is surely present in the unpretentious, stylised formality of the direct sound sequences and in the use of first-person voice-over narration in the film.

Furthermore, the structural oscillation of the film must also be seen in terms of the contributions of the two quite different cameramen supplied by the documentary studio in Hanoi. Dao distinguished himself by his resourcefulness on the front line. At times, Ivens was even exasperated with his impulsive style when it was expressed in less urgent situations, drafting notes to him to 'wait, observe, and listen' before shooting, complaining that he was 'too quickly happy with quantity, not enough study'. The other operator was more at home in such circumstances: Nguyen was responsible for most of the synchronised scenes, no doubt completely comfortable with the semi-documentary approach Ivens developed for these scenes, that is the variety of camera set-ups and alternating camera distances, etc. Ivens consciously attempted to teach the two men his style (at one point, he chides one of them, 'You say yes, but fall into the old style. Not yet captured my style' [production notes, 1967, JIA]), but their respective individuality productively reinforced the film's oscillatory patterns of filmic discourse.

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Ultimately, however, the precise form of Ivens's encounter with direct cinema is consistent with his own aesthetic and political temperament. A man who for 40 years had been telling people not to look at the camera would have had considerable difficulty adjusting to the direct didactic approach, which might have seemed more organic in the situation, and more suitable to the blunt, unpretentious political rhetoric of his Vietnamese patrons. If the direct confrontation of the camera by the boy, Duc, and by the political commissar, Lan, are among the most impressive sequences of the film, partly because of the unmediated directness of their address, the other synchronised sequences that rely on the various dramatic diegetic devices already described seem more in character with the man, and with the traditional socialist realist aesthetics whose standard he bore for decades in the West, often alone. Ivens's curious tendency towards a refusal to acknowledge the camera in the era of Godard, Rouch, and Perrault, seems in keeping with the basic formal conservatism that had been characteristic of his career and of socialist realism in general. No doubt this conservatism has always been a function of the high priority he has placed on direct communication with a substantial public. In any case, it is to his credit that the semi-dramatised synchronised scenes lose

their initial stiffness as they progress, as the unpretentious directness and sincerity of the villagers' discourse overcomes any resistance on the part of the spectator. Whatever may be the success of such scenes in this film, it is true that they represent an important step toward the fulfilment of the 'cinematographic Maoism' represented by *Yukong* in the next decade; they constitute a provisional statement of unanimity with the strategies of the direct cinema, not in terms of technique or style alone, but with their potential value as applied to political principles that predate direct cinema by many years.

There are numerous precedents in Ivens's career for the use of semi-dramatic situations to bring out a deeper perspective of an event than is visible on the surface. Both *Komsomol* and *Spanish Earth* were heavily criticised for their use of reconstruction: Julian's letter-writing scene in the latter film serves a similar diegetic function to Miên's letter scene 30 years later. It is simply the addition of direct sound to the traditional aesthetic of documentary dramaturgy, practiced more or less universally by documentarists, even by Vertov, until the advent of direct cinema in the late fifties, without any feeling of contradiction, that makes *Parallèle* seem somewhat tentative.

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After the return to Paris in mid-July 1967, the post-production was anything but smooth and expeditious. While the rushes had turned out mostly well (except for two hours of unuseable exposed stock), the film had been shot on speculation with no European producer on board, and those now invited to participate flinched at the full-length format that Ivens and Loridan now insisted on. Only after the couple had mortgaged Loridan's apartment to fund the editing (Stufkens, 2008, 393-394) and had vindicated themselves with a 113-minute epic made to their own liking without any producer interference did Argos finally come on board (to the tune of the equivalent of approximately 90,000 [2015] euros [Stufkens, 2008, 394]). At the peak of the final stage of the editing in January 1968 the North Vietnamese Tet offensive escalated the conflict and threatened both to render their narrative from eight months earlier outdated and to heighten public interest in their frontline testimony. The March 5 premiere in four separate *rive gauche* cinemas was a star-studded event with the entire *rive gauche* in attendance, just like the old days. One attendee was Ivens's old Havana colleague Santiago Alvarez, in town for the editing of his own very different Vietnam film, *Hanoi, martes 13* (1968, Cuba, 38), which would premiere the following month. *Parallèle's* theatrical first run was a success (almost 13,000 tickets in the first two weeks [Stufkens, 2008, 395]), despite predictable right-wing threats and sabotage, but in a significant shift for Ivens's career the film's broadcast career was even more important and kicked in almost immediately, first in the Netherlands that same month, and later Denmark and West Germany, followed by broadcast sales in the

English-speaking world and Japan as well as the DDR. The tie-in launch of the couple's paperback on their experience in Vinh Linh, a few weeks after the premiere, was part of the successful publicity barrage, and a prize from the Centre national de la cinématographie was the icing on the cake. By the end of April both filmmakers were back in Hanoi for a celebratory local premiere with the individual and collective heroes of their film.

A two-hour feature and a theatrical hit attracts critics, and for once there occurred a lively and substantive critical discussion of the film, at least in Paris and the Netherlands. Direct cinema apostle Marcorelles's (1968) article in *Cahiers* is the most articulate analysis, focusing on the apparent contradictions inherent in *Parallèle*'s hybridisation of politically motivated documentary dramaturgy and direct cinema. Marcorelles's perspective is a curious updating and application of Bazinian phenomenology, and reveals the ideological motivation that such a perspective entails. Marcorelles saw the film's major problem as stemming from its unsuccessful attempt to reconcile 'applied Marxism' and '*cinéma vécu*' ('lived cinema'). Marcorelles was referring to that interactive incarnation of direct cinema developed in the 1960s by documentarists from Rouch to Perrault and even Marker, who would catalyse real-world events with their subjects, and aspire to achieve the truth of authenticity through the artifice of their intervention and their relationship with social actors. Ivens and Loridan were not quite there according to Marcorelles, and the critic admired most their use of direct cinema in transmitting an unmediated reality, that is in those observational passages of the film that Ivens would have considered most naturalistic, the unstructured sequences that include spontaneous dialogue: 'in as much as Ivens has described the simple life of an unconquerable people, watching them live, breathe, watching this antlike labour underneath the earth, listening to youngsters playing war but nevertheless remaining youngsters'. In the next decade the same critic would champion the couple's more successful development of *cinéma vécu* in *Yukong*.

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Marcorelles's most explicit objection is that the film is retrograde in its periodic recourse to synthetic battle sequences, a much smaller element in *Parallèle* than *Ciel*, to be fair, although still an important one:

When in the editing and mixing room, shots mounted end to end join the artillery fire coming from the Vietnamese camp and its supposed result in the other camp, when Antoine Bonfanti (the mixing engineer) adds to the soundtrack the background noise of artillery fire, we are falling back into the classical cinema.

It is hard to dispute this reproach except with that special dispensation we occasionally permit well-intentioned films with specific agitational goals on

behalf of a cause we admire, whose most important criteria of achievement are passion, urgency, and efficacy.

In any case, Marcorelles's more fundamental posture seems to be the familiar Bazinian faith in the ambiguity of experienced reality. This ontological position, in fact an ideological one as well, is extended by Bazin to the realm of aesthetics and by Marcorelles even further into the problematic of direct cinema: art in general and the direct cinema in particular should record and express this ambiguity, this fundamental illegibility of the world. Ivens, a dedicated Marxist (if not always an explicit one, theoretically speaking), could never be reconciled to this vision of reality, nor to this view of art, since for him reality and history had a precise, analysable meaning, and art in turn reflects this meaning and can even participate in its fulfilment. From Ivens's point of view, the task is not a reconciliation of applied Marxism and *cinéma vécu*, as Marcorelles suggests, but a cinematic discovery of an intrinsic Marxist meaning in real-world experience.

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Marcorelles's concluding questions, 'Do we still need art? What is the purpose of the cinema?' only throw additional confusion into his analysis with their implication that Marxist praxis and art are mutually incompatible. For Ivens, this implied prioritisation of aesthetic principle over political principle would be an artificial, ideological construct. The revelation of *Parallèle* is direct cinema's knack for listening to ordinary people control their lives and struggle for their future. There is of course a real limitation for a hurried project with such budgetary restrictions as Ivens faced, that is that direct cinema will most readily listen to the most politically articulate of potential subjects, and even those who, as the critic from *Le Monde* (Lacouture, 1968) put it, 'are more willing to resort to the formulas of the *Nhân Dân*¹⁰ than to the "verbal genius" of a people whose mocking vivacity is one of the weapons of war'. If *Parallèle* is occasionally vulnerable to this tendency,¹¹ it is more often the case that both the 'verbal genius' and 'mocking vivacity' of the Vietnamese people do break through the formal and technical barriers of filmic discourse in 1967 to register an aesthetic and political achievement of undeniable radical import. *Parallèle* would be joined in the dark years of 1967 and 1968 by other enduring epic testimonies to Vietnamese resistance and other eloquent denunciations of the atrocity of imperialist war, not only *Loin du Vietnam* and *Hanoi, martes 13*, but also a masterpiece from within the belly of the beast itself, Emile de Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig* – all these films of conscience together forming a political and artistic critical mass that can be said to have cumulatively helped turn the tide.

LE PEUPLE ET SES FUSILS

No sooner had *Parallèle* premiered in March of 1968, and Ivens and Loridan had emerged from the attendant round of interviews and press screenings, than the pair found themselves once more in Indochina. At first Loridan began planning a film with Xuan Phuong about a National Liberation Front-controlled neighbourhood in the supposedly US-dominated South, but a project set in Laos, in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Sergent, soon took precedence. The three filmmakers would make a film in those zones of Laos then liberated by the Lao Patriotic Front under the leadership of Prince Souphanouvong (aka the Pathet Lao, the Hanoi-allied faction who would assume power in 1975). As usual the concept for the new film was inseparable from a profound process of evaluation of the one just completed. If *Parallèle* had shown a people's war, it had not shown the process of organisation leading up to that struggle. As described by Sergent, perhaps the most theoretically articulate of the collective, and the one most in tune with the turbulent intellectual and political atmosphere in which the film was completed in Paris, the Vietnamese film had omitted the 'outline of the conditions necessary to reach this stage [...] the political work that preceded and made possible these results' (Hennebelle, 1970). The spokespeople for the Vietnamese in *Parallèle* had all been highly conscious and articulate fighters; it was clear to the filmmakers that for a film to do more than generate consciousness about a foreign struggle, that is, to serve a didactic function vis-à-vis the home front, to bring Vietnam home to France, as Godard and Marker had said in *Loin*, the new film would have to attempt to show the absorption of ordinary workers and peasants into the struggle for their own interests. As Loridan suggested in the same 1970 joint interview, *Parallèle* had concentrated too much on the political cadres, and not enough on the masses: 'The people are not given the floor enough in it'. She felt that the film had emphasised the military aspect of the struggle to the detriment of the political aspect, of the methods of organisation. Ivens himself summarised the stages of the auto-critique that led to the heavily didactic formula of *Peuple* in this way:

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Le Ciel, la terre appeared essentially like an agitation film. That is, as a kind of banner-film [*film-drapeau*]. A heroic people are shown in it who struggle by counting first on their own power. But, in discussing this with many spectators in various countries, after screenings, I realized that I was often being asked, 'Your movie is fine but the who's, what's, and how's are missing. How do you go about organizing a war of liberation like that?'

It was in answer to this question that I shot, just afterwards, *Le 17^e*

Parallèle with Marceline Loridan and some Vietnamese cineastes. This film constituted a progression, but one could go even further. It was necessary to deepen it still more: what happens in a liberated zone? Who are the cadres and what do they do? How do you go about unifying the peasants? (Hennebelle, 1970)

In choosing Laos as the setting for this film, the filmmakers deliberately focused their attention away from Vietnam, which had been occupying world attention almost exclusively, despite the fact that the war in neighbouring Laos had also escalated ferociously, Laos having become the most heavily bombed country in history, as the film's commentary tells us.¹² According to Loridan, their purpose was also to break the idea that monopolised the bourgeois press (in Europe apparently) that the Vietnamese were exceptional or chosen:

546 | There isn't any exceptional people, there isn't any chosen people. What the Vietnamese people have done, every people can do, taking inspiration from their example, following their principles, and adopting their methods that are those of Marxism-Leninism and the people's war. (Bonitzer et al., 1976)

There also seems to have entered into the motivation of the collective an explicit acknowledgement, a critique even, of the illusionist idiom upon which Ivens had so often relied throughout his career, including *Parallèle* with its synthetic anti-aircraft battle and semi-dramatised diegetic pretexts. This critique has much in common with the rediscovery of the Brechtian problematic by the 1960s generation of radical artists, and is perhaps anticipated, as we have seen, in *Parallèle* with its avoidance of excess atrocity footage (unlike Marker's assemblage in *Loin*, for example), or with its minimisation of traditional narrative technique. As Ivens explains further in the same interview (Hennebelle, 1970), with *Parallèle* 'it was possible to get settled in an armchair and, to a certain extent to exult in your emotions. This time, that is no longer possible. You are forced to reflect'. And Loridan voices a similar criticism of their earlier work: '*Le 17^e Parallèle* played somewhat on fascination. You came out of the screening saying, "Ah, what wonderful people"? but I wonder if you made progress politically'. The aim was now to produce a film in Ivens's traditional exemplary mode, but in a concrete, austere didactic way, which he had rarely attempted. In other words, if the Vietnam film had been didactic only in the abstract, inspiring by example, the Laos film was to instruct in a concrete way, to articulate and demonstrate the precise lessons to be derived.

As the team set about their work, however, they were less than precise about the exact mechanics of this intended didacticism. Upon their arrival,

they heard a series of political reports by both the leaders and the cadres of the Lao Patriotic Front (LPF), and set about the shoot using these reports as a point of departure. As in Vietnam, the subject of their film was the resistance of a people under bombardment by the US and their clients in Vientiane. However, here the resistance was centred in huge natural grottos buried within the sides of cliffs, instead of the subterranean shelters of Vinh Linh. The shooting was organised around four major focal points that eventually provided the film with its four-part structure. First, two mountain villages, one, Muong Niuyt, recently liberated by the LPF, and another, Sophao, which had long been part of the zone controlled by the LPF, provided examples of the political tactics of the Front in two different stages of implementation. Another focus was the complex of grottos that served as the headquarters for the political wing of the LPF, and another was the centre of military training for the liberation army. These four areas of concentration surface as the themes of the four parts of the finished film entitled respectively, 'The People's Army Arms the People' (about the newly liberated village), 'Who Commands at the Guns' (the leadership of the LPF), 'The People Can Do Anything' (Sophao), and the last, 'Without its Army, the People Would Have Nothing' (the military). The team also occasionally filmed aerial raids and ground-to-air battles, including once more the shooting down of an American pilot, although this material has no significant presence in the finished film.

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The collective's operators and technical crew were as usual recruited from local talent, although in this case, the local industry was scarcely yet in existence and Ivens and Loridan had to train as well as recruit their assistants. The Lao participants had apparently no role in the conceptual development of the film, and are oddly not mentioned in the credits of the film. The most important innovations in the collective's approach was the new emphasis they placed on direct-sound shooting. From the very start, the film was conceived of as stringently and unapologetically discursive – Loridan's catchphrase '*donner la parole au peuple*' ('give the floor to the people', or 'let the people speak') was not to be a hollow one. The crew shot long, often static, sequences recording the voices in play at political meetings, and in discussions, formal and informal, among students, political cadres, villagers, and soldiers. In all, about nine hours of 16mm film were exposed (6000 metres), most of it in sync.

It came as a great surprise to Ivens and his team, one night in May, buried deep in the grottos of the liberated zone, to hear short-wave radio reports of the worker-student agitation in Paris, in fact, of student-police battles over barricades in the rue des Saints-Pères, right under the very apartment vacated by Ivens and Loridan for supposedly greener revolutionary pastures. When the collective returned to Paris that summer after nearly three months in Laos, the events of May and June were already history, but the atmosphere in which

the montage of the film was to be effected had been vastly changed. The États-généraux of the cinema had met during the crisis, and since then a number of filmmaking collectives had formed with the goal of making radical cinematic interventions on the political front. These included the Groupe Medvedkine, the Groupe Dynadia, and others including the Groupe Dziga-Vertov, the most famous though the least typical. SLON, Marker's distribution outfit that had produced *Loin*, newly stimulated by the events, also formed an important part of the new radical front in the film industry.¹³ Some of the new groups had incorporated workers into their membership and most were oriented specifically towards providing workers' organisations with the tools and resources of filmmaking. Every area of film aesthetics previously unquestioned was being challenged and reworked in the air of excitement and ferment, not the least of which were the mystique of the auteur, the role of the artist in society, and the ideological determination of filmic structures. This reworking was happening far beyond the French borders as well, a characteristic of New Left and 'third world' media activism worldwide, and a characteristic of youth and artists' dissent in general across Europe (in which Ivens the elderly militant enjoyed immersing himself, especially in France, Italy, and the Netherlands).

Ivens, Loridan, and Sergent decided to accommodate their own filmmaking practice to the new cultures of revolt; they formed a collective to finish the film, recruiting people who had participated in the events of May and June while the threesome had been in Laos. It was felt to be particularly important for the collective to include non-filmmakers. Ultimately the group included, in addition to the three initiators of the project, three students, a worker from a Renault factory, a journalist, and two young filmmakers – some of these remained anonymous in the final credits of the film.

Though Ivens throughout his long career had seldom made a film without at least one important collaborator, the process of editing the new film as part of a collective of eight or nine was a real challenge, in many ways as arduous as the shooting under bombardment. Ivens found the process excruciatingly slow, particularly at first – he would leave the group gathered around the editing table for a coffee break and return to find them exactly in the same place where he had left them. Conflicts would arise between the three who had been to Laos and their collaborators, conflicts that had to be smoothed out meticulously in the manner required in that year of painstaking evaluation of basic concepts and values. At times, this conflict is expressed in the final form of the film, in moments of contradictory impulse, for example, where a moment of Ivensian lyricism is deliberately undercut by the editorial strategy, or where footage clearly designed for Ivens's traditional form of narrative continuity is subverted by a certain kind of editorial interruption. If, as Ivens admits, the final form lacks the *souplesse* of his other work (Ivens, interview with author,

February 1976), *Peuple* must still be seen as one of the boldest statements to have come out of that euphoric, turbulent period in the history of the French Left, and, in terms of Ivens's filmography, a remarkable testimony to the new inspiration he received from his first substantial contact with the European New Left. If the work is somewhat flawed by the utopian self-seriousness of its immediate historical context, the basic importance of the aesthetic and political questions it raises makes it a companion piece to films such as its exact contemporary, Godard's equally austere *Le Gai Savoir* (*Joy of Learning*, 1969, 95).

Sergent's characterisation of the Laos film as an *essai théorique* is a useful departure point for an analysis of the film fashioned by the collective out of the Laos footage. Intransigent in its didacticism and refusing concessions to popular taste, unwilling merely to publicise the Laos war or to attract sympathy to the plight of a distant and exotic people, the film attempts to build on the recognition that, as Sergent puts it, 'to make militant films, you have to militate yourself, and you can't become militant except in your own country'. The Lao-tian example becomes a pedagogical tool in an explication of the principles of the organisation of a popular struggle: the film seems light-years distant from the sensibility evident in the fund-raising, public-awareness orientation of *Spanish Earth*.

The collective interview in *Cinéma* by the three filmmakers (Hennebelle, 1970), already alluded to, is typical of the spirit of the film in its self-analytic rigour and theoretical forthrightness. Various descriptions of the film are offered: 'an attempt at a systematisation of the people's war', 'an attempt at revolutionary pedagogy', '[an endeavour to present] a concrete type of revolution in the making', and 'an exchange of experiences between the Lao revolutionaries and the French'. There is also much discussion among the three of 'the barrier of exoticism' confronted by the film: the solution to this perennial problem of militant filmmakers on foreign fronts (the temptation to be '*aventuriers-cinéastes*', as Loridan puts it) is, in Sergent's terms, this latter orientation toward the film as an 'exchange', and in Ivens's terms, his own traditional insistence on being 'tied' to the people being filmed. Both perspectives of the problem can be thought of as ultimately the same. In terms of the customary theoretical problematic of didactic art, Ivens is very clear in locating the film outside of the category of art: 'My film on Laos doesn't demand recognition, it's what happens in it that has to be recognised. People shouldn't experience it as an artistic achievement – they have to be made aware of the reality'. Sergent, for his part, even goes so far as to point to two specific sequences directly utilisable in a concrete way by French spectators: a scene in which soldiers are shown helping village women in their work while carrying on propaganda shows 'how the task of explication can be carried out in a factory, for example', and another sequence showing village mutual help brigades, primarily organ-

ised by women, would demonstrate to French women the way to organise day care centres, etc. It is only by this direct commitment to a functional didacticism, to an authentic self-militancy, that the collective were able to come to terms with the pitfall of 'exoticism', of revolutionary romanticism, in short, with the entire problematic of the ideological composition of the cinema isolated with such courage and perseverance by French radicals in those heady days of post-1968 and afterwards.

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This commitment is clearly manifest in the final impact of the film in a number of ways. Marked by the formal austerity and unrepentantly didactic flavour of many of the radical films of the era, most famously those of the Groupe Dziga-Vertov, *Peuple* seemed inaccessible, perhaps more than any film Ivens had ever made, to all but a highly alert and strongly predisposed audience. The distribution plans for the film, at least in its initial phase, seemed to take this into account: speakers from the collective were to be present at non-commercial screenings to lead the public in discussions, a tactic other radical filmmakers were emphasising at the same time – the American Newsreel collective, for example – and brochures were also provided at theatrical screenings with additional background information about Laos to compensate for what some observers saw as a paucity of information in the film itself. Nevertheless, audiences unprepared for its rejection of traditional modes of filmic discourse, often found the film baffling and uncompromisingly dry. Vincent Canby ([1971] 1973), for example, when the film finally opened in New York for a brief run in June 1971, found it 'so self-confident in its attitudes, so stern in its admonitions, so cinematically lifeless in its techniques', that its very competence as propaganda was in question, suffering even in comparison to the output of the US Information Service. Of course, Canby could not have understood that he was participant in an experimental probe of new cinematic forms, and that the aesthetics of illusionism, identification, and climax that had characterised the traditional propaganda film had been victims of the post-1968 re-evaluation of the language of the cinema. In their desire to instruct rather than titillate, the collective had eliminated virtually all the dramatic impact that Canby sensed missing from the film, the reliance on empathy, and various other dramaturgical manifestations of bourgeois individualist ideology. There were only residual traces of most of the traditional ingredients; for example, only the brief credit sequence, a short, staccato anti-aircraft battle, constructed with the barest minimum of narrative continuity, remains of the synthetic dramatic texture that had been characteristic of Ivens's earlier films. A scene in which an American plane had been shot down was hastily cut out of the final version because a preview audience had applauded – the collective wanted to avoid provoking this kind of exhilaration and contentment on the part of its audience, since it would interfere with the

film's didactic goal. Most of the film's directly anti-American references were similarly excised. None of the audience energy catalysed by the film was to be channelled off into a facile anti-Americanism.

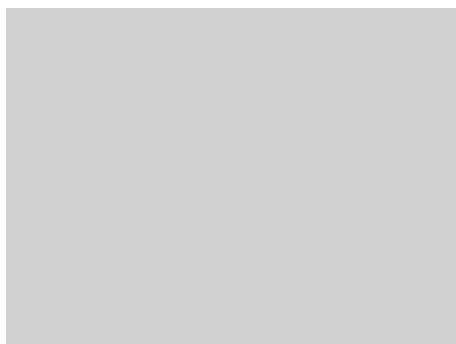
The basic diegetic structure of *Parallèle*, that is its narrative continuity, has also been suppressed in the Laos film, or rather, confined to a few interludes restricted to a transitional or an atmospheric function. As we have seen the synthetic montage tropes of the former film appear now only as a backdrop for opening and closing credits, their former function of audience identification and pace variation no longer operative. The use of familiar characters as narrators and protagonists has also disappeared. In short, the predominantly dramatic logic that had been the formative principle of *Parallèle* has been replaced by a logic that is discursive and analytic.

The decidedly different employment of the direct cinema elements in each film points clearly to this new logic. If in the Vietnam film, the direct cinema passages were used primarily as diegetic devices (Miên tells of her participation in village defence during bombings, for example), here the live speech elements either illustrate the theoretical points being discussed, that is, issues of political strategy, for example, or else contribute to that discussion itself. The film's reliance on these passages for its thematic is perhaps its most important achievement, and certainly its most radical innovation. That there are so few precedents for the direct-cinema recording of explicit political discourse among ordinary people makes the film all the more notable. And this despite the occasional awkwardness or formality of the material, the occasional lapses into that familiar staginess that was the temptation of socialist realism and all of its related forms since its earliest origins, a few demonstrations of the filmmakers' inability to distinguish between real dialogue and cant, and the occasionally questionable strategy of extending many of the direct cinema passages at great length. Each of the groups of Laotians under the scrutiny of the camera – LPF leaders, political workers, soldiers, peasants both from newly liberated villages and from those under LPF control for some time – each in turn becomes the focus of direct sequences, and their discourse becomes the diegetic impulse of the film at those points. Such sequences are inevitably long and require the rigorous concentration of the spectator.

Ultimately this uncompromising strategy pays off. In one case, a long and relatively static scene in a newly liberated village depicts a number of soldiers helping village women pounding rice.

The sequence comes early in the film before the film's unhurried, analytic pace has made its full impact. The soldiers talk casually and intermittently with the women as they help with the gigantic foot-operated pounder, commenting on the differences in village life after liberation, and offering advice towards achieving self-sufficiency. The senior woman's laconic, polite responses, her

99. *Le Peuple et ses fusils* (1970): in a newly liberated village, a soldier helps an elderly woman pound rice, static and unhurried, but absorbing. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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expressionless face, and the rhythmical thud of the pounder become more and more absorbing as the scene continues, and the point (reinforced by the subtitles) is ultimately secured, that is the importance of long, patient action alongside the oratory on the part of revolutionary workers in order to win the trust of the people and help them to take control over their lives. The impact of the scene is only gradually and subtly built up as the interaction of the women and the soldiers unfolds with unhurried deliberateness. Another sequence consists of an even longer meeting of a mutual aid brigade in a village community that is having a certain success in applying revolutionary principles to the lives of its members. The spectator follows a long discussion among the peasants who first sum up their achievements before proceeding to criticism and self-criticism. Here the women voice complaints about the men's negligence in caring for the village buffaloes. The slow, deliberate manner in which all of the problems are aired and acted upon suggests with vividness but without artificial histrionics the manner in which real change is brought about. These are two of the most memorable scenes in the film.

Historically, the traditional voice-over coincided perfectly with the vision of classical bolshevism, that is, the political wisdom of an avant-garde guiding and instructing the masses (with all the intrinsic dangers of bureaucratisation therein). It was also restricted by the technical crudenesses of a technology geared entirely toward the exigencies of industrial, narrative cinema, rather than the less commercial, more subversive possibilities of documentary. The capacity of direct cinema to record live, authentic voices, coincided with the new post-Stalinist radicalism of Mao and the New Left, radicalism derived in its essence from the wisdom of the masses. The voices of the Laotians in *Peuple*, unhampered by the preconceived narrative demands of *Parallèle*, represent this wisdom in a palpable form. The voices are admittedly often stilted by the dogmatism of an isolated and peasant-oriented political movement engaged in one of the most vicious wars of modern times and combating illiteracy and

hunger at the same time; but there are revealing glimpses of an ongoing process of growing consciousness and collective action in the voices we hear. Few of Ivens's predecessors in the application of direct cinema to the realm of politics – Rouch, Perrault, Marker – had revealed such a clarity of vision on the part of their subjects. Only Solanas's *La hora de los hornos*, roughly contemporaneous with *Peuple* but not seen by the collective until after the montage, rivalled it in this aspect. But where the Argentine film was comprehensive, expansive, and richly heterogeneous, enlivened by the artist's sensitivity to his own cultural context, *Peuple* is precise, disciplined, and sharply focused.

Of course, the vision is still incomplete: two months in bombing shelters can only yield a fragmentary, provisional political statement. The final step in the process, anticipated by the Italian interviews at the beginning of the decade, would not be consummated until *Yukong*, when, after eighteen months of living among what seemed like the most important political experiment ever undertaken, and above all listening endlessly to the voices of its participants, Ivens and Loridan would arrive at a form of political clarity.

At the time *Peuple* was released, however, and two years later when the export ban was finally lifted and it could be shown outside France, it was not the voices of the Lao peasants that attracted most attention – after all, since 1968, Ivens had been joined by several others who had discovered the radical potential of the act of listening, the most innovative feature of the film seemed to be the typographic framework in which the collective had mounted their material, the setting of intertitles and superimposed titles, about 70 in number, as well as voice-overs that dominated the organisation of the film. The intertitles go well beyond the tradition of Brecht or Godard in providing essential information and interpretation as well as capsulated summaries and slogans. Indeed at times, the interjected titles seem so abrupt, self-conscious, and solemn that they would almost appear parodic in another context. What might appear an exaggerated presence of titles, exaggerated even in reference to the examples of Vertov, Godard, and Solanas whom they most clearly evoke, is however part of the design of the film. The orthodox notion that 'literary' content is uncine-matic is of course part of the web of aesthetic premises attacked by the film. Sergent speaks of his conception of the film as 'flat' ('à plat'), 'like the pages of a book' (Hennebelle, 1970). The startling disruption effected between the kinetic and audio-visual substance of the live sequences and the flat, black, typographic interruptions is part of an overall scheme of discontinuity that the collective deemed essential for the film as part of its general reaction against the conventions of continuous narrative cinema. Interviewer-critic Guy Hennebelle (1970, 85) pointed to obvious parallels with *La hora de los hornos*, which had been launched in European festivals in 1968-1969, also structured prominently by titles, but Ivens countered that the two

sets of titles served different purposes, the Argentine film one of agitation, and the Laos film one of explanation. According to Sergent, the concept of the film was 'for it not to be dramatic, not chronological, but constructed in rupture, in discontinuity'. A long explanatory caption typically not only provides an introduction before and/or a summation after a sequence but interrupts it periodically with slogan-like capsules of interpretation and/or exhortation as well. For example, the rice-pounding sequence already described follows an explanatory reading, 'The combatants mobilize and educate the peasants of the newly liberated zone. On every occasion, they aim at heightening their political consciousness. They expose the lies spread by enemy propaganda. They explain the objectives of their revolution'. A lengthy dialogue then follows, interrupted by a total of five titles before its end.

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Often a caption succinctly and emphatically summarises a long preceding passage of dialogue or commentary. A voice-over paragraph describing the work and the goals of an artistic brigade touring from village to village with their pageants of anti-aircraft combat is followed by the slogan 'Unite with the people. Unite the people'. A conversation among teacher trainees about the political content both of a teacher's training and his or her role is interrupted first by the Marxian caption 'Understand the world so as to transform it', and then after another passage of dialogue the Althusserian 'To understand the world is to transform it' (to invoke an iconic thinker of 1968).

100. *Le Peuple et ses fusils* (1970): 'To understand the world is to transform it'. An analytic title card interrupts a teacher-training scene in another Indochina film perhaps too '1968' to be rescued from the archive. Frame enlargement, courtesy Eye Film Institute. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Often, the pattern of the use of captions, dialogue, and commentary is rigorously methodical in terms of its pedagogical intent: a principle is first articulated, then discussed, then demonstrated, and finally repeated in summation. For example, the sequence on the liberated village of Phathi is begun with an introductory segment of the commentary that elaborates the principle that the military liberation just completed is only the first phase of the struggle. Then follows a long synch-sound sequence in which an officer instructs his men

along the same lines, i.e. explaining the post-military tasks of propaganda and material aid to the villagers, within an egalitarian framework rather than a hierarchical one. Next follows a live-sound sequence of peasants and soldiers in the fields, and then a rest period in which the socialisation of the soldiers with the peasants is demonstrated, the spontaneous conversation and singing and laughter vividly present on the soundtrack though not translated in subtitles. Eventually the commentator explains the history of this particular village before liberation, concluding with the comment, 'Today they are discovering that a revolutionary army can serve them in many ways'. Then a final caption summarises the content of the preceding material: 'After the victory, the army mobilizes the masses it has just liberated. It must educate them, organize them and arm them'. The gamble, of which the collective must have been fully aware, was that such emphatic repetition of key principles, although pedagogically sound in principle, is potentially alienating for a spectator through its possible excess, or, worse still, its posture of condescension.

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There are other times when the relation of text to image is less complex and less problematical. For example, a lively sequence of military training in bayonet combat is interrupted twice by short slogans about fighting the enemy; here, the dialectic relationship of action and analysis is reduced to its most basic structure.

On the whole, the effect of the typographic interventions seems impossible to measure or categorise except in terms of specific audiences and specific screening experiences. Certainly Ivens found audiences to which he showed the film personally much more responsive to the political and topical issues at stake than he had been used to but he attributed this as much to the increasingly political climate in Europe after 1968 as to any property of the film. According to his experiences in Europe after the release of the film, audiences are much less likely to respond to a film in purely aesthetic terms. An essay published after the release of *Peuple* as an addendum to the Dutch translation of *The Camera and I* details his sense of changing audience response, and in addition provides a clear outline of his perceptions of the goals of the Brechtian framework of *Peuple* in terms of that audience dynamic (Ivens, 1970, 173). According to the essay, the function of the intertitles is to break the fascination provoked by the images, to break up the filmic discourse and the inevitable romanticisation that takes place in response to such a reportage, delivered uninterruptedly. The function of the text is to prod the spectators to think over their own personal and group situation, 'to take the text critically within themselves, to relate what they have seen to their own personal experiences'. According to Ivens, the intertitles both 'deepened' the Lao situation, and made it more general. They also, according to his concept of the film's design, are responsible for a certain alternation between an appeal to

the emotions (the image) and an appeal to the reason (the text), an alternation which informs the film with a 'rigorous tension'.

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Ivens admits that *Peuple* is not an 'easy' film nor does it try to 'please' the viewer or appeal to the 'normal reactions of the movie-going public'. There are important qualifications to be made of the Ivensian articulation of the Brechtian/modernist impulse evident in such an admission, and distinctions to be made between that articulation and the contemporary applications of similar impulses by such collectives as the Groupe Dziga-Vertov. It is important to realise that the consensus of the Ivens collective saw *Peuple* as a film of explanation, propaganda, and popularisation, rather than as an assault upon the preconceptions of the viewer or the traditional structures of filmic discourse. That Ivens would stress the appeal to both reason and emotion, rather than an exclusively analytic orientation, suggests a significant divergence from his contemporary Godard (though more than one critic reviewed *Peuple* and the Groupe's *Pravda* [1970, 58] together [Thirard, 1970]). No doubt Ivens would approve of one critic's view that '*Le Peuple et ses fusils* resorts to a traditional form of expression, but is nevertheless a revolutionary film, the strongest perhaps of these recent years' (Ivens, 1970, 189). The aesthetic of functionality and accessibility have not been replaced by the doctrine of deconstruction. As we have seen, *Peuple* depends on both the analytic project and the stylistic texture of Godardian discourse – the latter is undeniably present not only in the typographic interventions, but in the incorporation of the other strategies of discontinuity, in the unapologetic didacticism, and certainly in the play of different materials and visual textures. However, the ultimate tone is less one of Godardian self-interrogation – and the ultimate consequences of such interrogation when taken to extremes, that is, immobility – than of the traditional Ivensian posture of affirmation and exhortation, though now tempered in the dynamic of a pedagogic orientation toward the spectator. No doubt this complex mix of assertion and analysis is made possible through the medium of direct cinema: it is the voices of the Laotians that contribute the tone of revolutionary activism and the mediation of artist and spectator that provides the analytic overlay.

The filmmakers' Paris network was well aware of the risks involved in such an experiment. Six years after the sympathetic interview with Ivens, Loridan, and Sergent published in 1970, its author Guy Hennebelle had more critical distance from what he called the post-1968 'filmed lecture' and the 'real epidemic of title-itis' it entailed:

Moved by a concern that is legitimate all the same, to explain, to make the audience understand a certain number of truths, militant filmmakers often tend to adopt a professorial tone and to prop up with a lot of inter-

titles a veritable filmed demonstration: a plus b equals c. [...] That was reinforced at the same time by an excessive and somewhat masochistic reaction against the idea of spectacle. Given that Hollywood and a number of other cinemas had made use of the attractions and the baits of the mechanisms of representation specific to Tinseltown to condition the spectator, we tended to want to 'deconstruct' not only these artifices but also the cinema itself, held responsible for these evils. [...] This tendency leads ultimately to a 'scholastic realism' that is particularly boring and overbearing [...] the cinema remains and will always remain a spectacle. What is more appropriate to denounce are the manipulations of which it has been the object in a certain commercial cinema. Such is not the danger – far from it – in militant cinema, which suffers on the contrary from too great a formal austerity. [...] We must banish boredom and cultivate the notion of aesthetic pleasure. [...] We can never say enough how much the French, in the theatre as well as in the cinema, have considerably distorted the concept of distancing, which they have transformed into the fig-leaf of the worst intellectualist pedantry, while the plays of Brecht were conceived also to be warm, funny, and moving. We must combat this deformation and rethink also the systematic refusal of the principle of identification. (Hennebelle, [1976] 1984, 180-181)

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In terms of the specifics of Ivens's cinematographic style, strictly speaking, *Peuple* was not exempt from these tendencies despite its moments of undeniable 'aesthetic pleasure'. It must be considered a transitional film, like the other Indochina films. Given the necessity of using an untrained Lao camera crew and the hardships of shooting consistently in emergency conditions, the camera style of Ivens's and Loridan's version of direct cinema cannot of course be considered mature or even coherent in this film. The photographic approach to the film's subject matter is uneven to say the least, though Ivens of course would hardly consider the matter worthy of discussion (the updated Dutch version of *The Camera and I* also contains an impassioned promotion of the use of Super 8 and pamphlet-style filming on an amateur level in the service of political agitation, and an unconcerned dismissal of the relevance of the category of art in this context, with the suggestion that a technically imperfect film can often be more important than a perfect one [Ivens, 1970, 189]).

In any case, the synch-sound dialogue passages in *Peuple* occasionally seem unremittingly static. The camera sometimes resorts to a shot/reaction-shot *mise-en-scène* of the most limited inspiration, or else engages in a restless and distracted float about an event, zoom-happy and insert-ridden, zeroing in on a cigarette being lit, for example, for no apparent reason. Frequently prolonged and distracting cutaways suggest the difficulties that must

have dogged the crew in their efforts to record as well as photograph their subjects while avoiding the resort to reconstruction that might have tempted Ivens in earlier days. In one place, the beginning of the impressive sequence that depicts the meeting of the mutual aid brigade, an entire, lengthy discussion is relayed entirely by means of intertitles and long shadow scans of the assembly – sleeping babies, pensive listeners fanning and drinking tea – without ever isolating the speaker whose low-key, barely distinguishable voice is audible, but translated only on the intertitles. In this particular instance, however, what appears to be a rough spot arising from some technical exigency or other, is ultimately not unsuccessful on the aesthetic and pedagogic level: the intertitles spell out emphatically the villagers' proud but modest summary of the progress they are making, their achievements in the field of hygiene and collective social security, and above all the sense of community they express unconsciously in very moving terms, both personal and poetic, that rough peasant lyricism that so often surfaces in the film.

The non-discursive passages of the film, which appear with the rhythmic regularity already pointed to, serve as an interpolated current of lyrical and narrative interludes. This current reveals an internal stylistic eclecticism arising from both the technical hardships incumbent on the project, and the transitional character the late sixties had for an Ivens halfway between Valparaiso and Beijing (it is assumed that within the collective it was Ivens who undertook primary responsibility for the shooting, that is, the supervision of the Lao cameramen, who themselves did not make any direct conceptual contribution to the film, although it can also be assumed that their relative inexperience is partly responsible for many of the uneven patches in the cinematography). In any case, here passages of classical Ivensian documentary *mise-en-scène* alternate with passages relying on the new more mobile, more spontaneous idiom of direct cinema, often achieving a graceful fluidity and expressiveness. For example, a long walking movement follows a woman carrying water (what else!) from the jungle into the village clearing, or another movement through an underground machine shop takes in the general activity in long shot before arriving at an eloquent close-up pause on the face of a machinist. However, it is not until the leisure and the relative luxury of the Chinese shooting several years later that Ivens and Loridan had the occasion to perfect this new style, and master in their own way the art of the *plan-séquence* or long take.

In this non-discursive current of *Peuple*, it is still the old Ivens that is the most visible and the most impressive. If it is true, as bourgeois liberal critics continually say in regard to post-1968 Godard, that even politics cannot suppress the keen eye of the artist, then it is the long interludes of classical Ivensian observation that reveal the continuity of an artistry that has remained a constant through the decades of ideological struggles and political growth.

As has always been the case, Ivens is most comfortable and expressive while watching ordinary people shaping their lives by means of the sacrament of work. As soon as the villagers undertake some job, the fidgetiness of the discussion sequences, or the self-consciousness of the one or two choreographed 'spontaneous demonstrations' vanish (and this film is no less exempt from this particular Ivensian foible than any other), and the old master of *Zuiderzee* reasserts himself. An inevitable extra-long landscape shot introduces a scene of hoeing, ploughing, or harvest, firmly relating the minuscule collective of workers to their environment (in this film, an environment breathtakingly rugged, mountainous, and cinematic). Then comes a closer view of a single worker or a pair, a long shot broad enough to capture the entire field of his or her labour. Inevitably, the close-ups follow, close attention being accorded the intersection of tool and earth, of firmly planted foot or dexterous hand, always intercut or connected by an efficient tilt to close-ups of the intent faces of the workers. A graceful float of the camera may follow the plough or move from worker to worker. The mechanics and the sequence of the operation are always clearly and carefully observed in close-ups; the various formations of workers are always contemplated at greater distance by an artistic eye that picks out the graphic relationship of a curving line of hoers to the hills on the horizon, or the intricate functioning of a silhouetted assembly line. In *Peuple*, it is these compelling interludes of *homo laborans* that complement the workers' discussions and meetings, which authenticate in a material way the reality of the revolution that Ivens has undertaken to demonstrate.

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Often these scenes of work underline in a specific way a point made by the discursive element of the film. For example, the feminist insights achieved by the women in the meeting are expressed materially by the scene where women are learning to plough. The several scenes of soldiers working alongside the peasants are vivid and concrete demonstrations of the film's perhaps most important theoretical conclusion, the necessity for the participation of revolutionary cadres in the lives of ordinary people. This perception reflects the crucial problematic of the 1968 ferment in Europe as well as the reality of the Laotian situation. It dominated the atmosphere in which the film was mounted (as well as the composition of the collective) and provided the thematic for the huge spectrum of political filmmaking that followed the May-June events from Marker's *La Bataille des dix millions* (*The Battle of the Ten Million*, 1971, France/Cuba, 58) to Godard's *Tout va bien* (1972, 96). This theme, also exemplified in the finale's demonstration of peasants and soldiers brandishing tools, weapons, and fists (which became the film poster's iconic image), was apparently the most successful point made in terms of audience acceptance. Even Archer Winsten (1971), venerable critic of the *New York Post*, was impressed by the sight of soldiers working alongside peasants.

This particular insight is also an indication of Ivens's and his collective's growing affinity towards Maoism during the sixties. This affinity is demonstrated by the probing of other main tenets of Maoism as well, that is, the issues of feminism, the role of criticism, self-criticism, and analysis, the threat of bureaucratisation, and the danger in isolation of political and intellectual leadership from the masses (a shot of Prince Souvanavong hoeing with the peasants is significant by its presence in *Peuple*, even if its point is slightly undercut by the floating whiteness of his otherwise convincing hoeing under-shirt). Ivens's growing fascination with the Chinese experiment can be detected elsewhere in the film as well, namely in the references to the collusion of the US and the USSR in the encirclement of China. Ivens had been gravely disappointed in Vietnam at the failure of his onetime patrons, the Soviets, to come to the aid of the beleaguered North Vietnamese, speaking publicly in criticism of the Soviets for the first time in the summer of 1966 (Ivens, 1970, 189). In Laos this disenchantment had deepened.

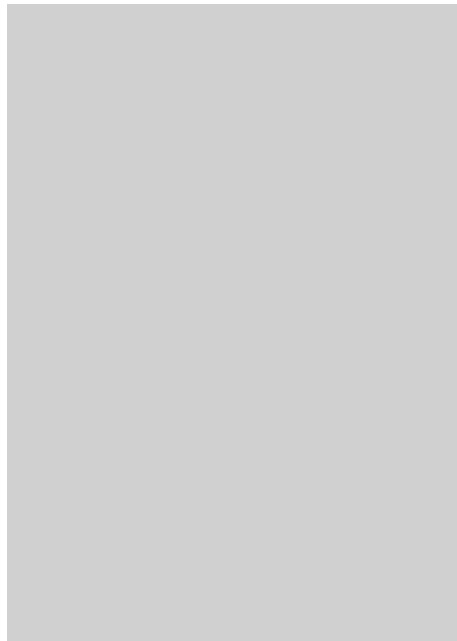
Ivens seldom publicly expressed this growing dismay with the Russians before the release of the Laos film (delayed until February 1970 because of the slowness of the editing process and the censorship problems). While in Vietnam, Ivens had been awarded the International Lenin Peace Prize, which he had donated to Latin American oppositional filmmakers (Stufkens, 2008, 404), and shortly after his return from Laos the next year, he received what he regarded as one of the greatest honours of his life, an honorary doctorate from Karl Marx University in Leipzig. The great aura of festivity and adulation that surrounded this November event was a moving seventieth birthday present – Ivens's public in the DDR was more widespread and worshipful than in any other country (except perhaps Holland, where few people had seen his films in any great numbers). The streets of Leipzig were festooned with his portrait. However, the celebration was somewhat marred, not only by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia the previous August and by his growing enchantment with Mao Zedong, but also by what he saw as the increasing stagnation in the Soviet film circles in which he had once been a devoted co-worker. The Leipzig festival held that year in the same month as the university ceremony, was also the occasion for his anger: the organisers had not only excluded from the festival all Western European films that testified to the revolutionary ferment of that year, but in addition arranged the expulsion of a number of Berlin film students who had managed to see some of the Paris material when Ivens and Loridan showed it unofficially. After Leipzig, Ivens ended his lifelong association with the USSR, resigning from the Soviet-sponsored World Peace Council (and saw Leipzig's Ivens award cancelled in 1971). He turned with increasing interest to various alternative political activities in Western Europe and elsewhere, including strikes, workers' occupations, and student

agitations, supporting everyone from squatters in Amsterdam to anti-airport agitators in Narita, Japan. In turn he faced a personal embargo from his many old friends not only in the USSR but also in East Berlin, where he had lived for many years, including his personal friend and biographer, Hans Wegner. If he publicly still refrained from explicit anti-Soviet polemics, privately he began to say, with typical wryness, 'I stayed revolutionary. If others have changed, it's not my fault' (Ivens, interview with author, February 1976).

The theatrical première of *Peuple* in February 1970 was in another of the small *rive gauche* art houses that had launched Ivens's successive films in Western Europe for most of his career, this time the Studio de la Harpe. It played alongside an unedited interview with Ho Chi Minh that he and Loridan had brought back from Hanoi a few months before Ho's death in 1969 (it consists of an jerkily shot eight-minute audience of a group of young militia with Ho, who discuss their shooting down of US planes and other combat experiences with their 'Uncle').

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101. Ivens with Ho Chi Minh, 1968.
Production photo © EFJI, Nijmegen /CAPI
Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Alongside the theatrical career, the filmmakers personally showed the film in more than 50 venues in Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands, as well as France (Hennebelle, 1970). Critical response was as respectful as it was bountiful, especially with the myriad French film magazines, as if critics had attended

carefully to the lessons of 1968. So had the censors: *Peuple* was forbidden an export license because of its anti-American references and it was not until over a year later that the film could be shown outside of France, after the producers had successfully challenged the censor's ruling on a technicality. Its impact so long after the heat of the moment was minimal, despite its attention to the political movement that would gain control of Laos within the decade. (Nevertheless, the New York theatrical run attracted dutiful if uncomprehending critical attention, even from *Women's Wear Daily*!) Not included in the 2008 box set, this unique and fascinating work of art and politics from a key year of Western radical politics is not available in any format. Back in the late sixties and early seventies, however, Ivens's and Loridan's schedule of globetrotting had accelerated and they continued to show the film personally and proudly all over the world, to young filmmakers in Brazzaville, to strikers in an occupied Coca-Cola factory in Rome, as well as at the circuit of international festivals that Ivens regularly visited with a new film under his arm. By February 1972, Ivens's and Loridan's wanderings had taken them to Beijing, where old friend Zhou Enlai jokingly – or not so jokingly as it turned out – asked Ivens why he hadn't brought his camera...



102. *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (1976): original German poster underlines heroism of both subjects and artists. Original in colour. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen.

China 1971-1989

Waugh presents the working methods of Ivens and Loridan well, and one gets a full understanding of their approach to filmmaking. However, the article seems to me at fault in its slightly naive and overly laudatory treatment of both Ivens and the Cultural Revolution. [...] On Waugh's part the picture presented is too praiseworthy and rosy.

– *Alan Rosenthal, 1988*

Feeling revolutionary is a feeling that our current situation is not enough, that something is indeed missing and we cannot live without it. Feeling Revolutionary opens up the space to imagine a collective escape, an exodus, a 'going-off script' together.

– *Lisa Duggan and José Muñoz, 2009*

China is the place – or at least the utopian cinematic China onscreen – where the career of the elder 'Flying Dutchman' and the career of the naive earth-bound Canadian who has written this book first crossed paths. China is also the specific focus of this last chapter, or more precisely, Ivens's two major China works of the last two decades of his career, produced in the 1970s and 1980s respectively, during the Cultural Revolution and during China's gradual emergence as an economic powerhouse of neo-liberal capitalist globalisation. Though *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, 1976, France, 718) and *Une histoire de vent* (*A Tale of the Wind*, 1988, France, 78), both co-authored with Marceline Loridan, could each command their own chapter, I consider them as an inextricable pair. Together these two films embody both the contradictions, richness and scope of Ivens's legacy, and the intensity of his historic encounter with China that must be considered as a core of that legacy, an encounter shaped by political risk and intensity, shame and transcendence, renunciation and final synthesis.

A disgruntled BA in English Language and Literature, this would-be graduate student in film studies, arrived wet-behind-the-ears in New York City in 1972, was soon discovering his passion for 'committed documentary', and would write a passionate master's thesis the following year on Quebec direct cinema as embodied by the work of nationalist poet-documentarist Pierre Perault. I was soon looking for a doctoral research subject but was increasingly frustrated by my program at Columbia, which I found to be a cloister of apathy, formalism, and mediocrity. Shaped like many other young intellectuals in the West in those heady days by the New Left and the emerging social movements of the 1970s, including feminism and soon enough gay liberation, I looked off-campus for my intellectual and political community and quickly found it in many places: in an eclectic intellectual-artistic heritage that ranged from



103. *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (1976): the crew before a campus dazibao wall. The foreground message from an electronics professor calls on students to go to the countryside to experience working people's lives under Chairman Mao's guidance. Production photo, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.

Vertov and Grierson (yes!) to Brecht and Marcuse; in the increasingly articulate networks of radical proto-queers that I was reading *Das Kapital* with once a week; in the cluster of radical film critics, teachers, and historians at the rival university, NYU, including the gentle and generous Jay Leyda, who eventually confessed to me that he had been Ivens's ghostwriter for *The Camera and I*; and in the increasingly influential political film mags led by *Cineaste*, *Screen* and the brand new *Jump Cut* from 1974 onwards (I was spending a stultifying summer working in the Columbia library periodicals room and there discovered the then Berkeley-and-Chicago rag's inaugural issues, emblazoned with Shirley Temple but bursting inside with perspectives of Cuban cinema and working-class Hollywood, and denunciations of the auteurist film studies regime I was being fed at Columbia: it lit a fire under me).

Another off-campus resource was the network of screening venues for the cinematic wing of the New Left. It was amazingly resilient, regularly offering in repertory an increasingly eclectic canon that included everything from *Point of Order* (Emile de Antonio, 1963, USA, 97) to *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (Memo-

ries of *Underdevelopment*, Tomas Gutierrez Alea, 1968, Cuba, 97). We didn't have video, of course, but if you waited long enough and read *The Village Voice* very carefully you could catch almost everything eventually in museum screenings or repertory houses or campus festivals. There were even first-run theatrical sites that specialised in the political as well as the foreign, like the First Avenue Screening Room where, if memory serves, I saw Haskell Wexler, Tom Hayden, and Jane Fonda's Vietnam documentary *Introduction to the Enemy* (1974, 60) and the radical diva herself! I had loved Fonda in Godard's *Tout va bien* (1972, 96) which I saw in one of these venues, and wrote a passionate term paper about that film, which my program tolerated I guess because it was about their fetish idol Godard along with Brecht and working class revolt. MOMA continued to do its part as a major link in this radical exhibition chain, as it had on Ivens's first trip to New York in 1936 (it would host a few years later the American premiere of *Yukong* in 1978), offering for example a retrospective on Marxist compilation documentarist de Antonio in 1975: this led to my even longer term paper on de Antonio, which became my first publication ever, in *Jump Cut* naturally, in June of 1976.

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I don't recall when Ivens first appeared on my radar, perhaps in a documentary seminar led by Columbia's bright light, my mentor Erik Barnouw, whose great book *Documentary* came out in 1974, the year I finished my MA, larded with as fat an index entry for his fellow Dutchman Ivens as it had for Grierson and Flaherty (though not as fat as for Vertov). Or maybe I had first stumbled across Ivens through *The Camera and I* (1969), which was in the lefty bookstores I was frequenting, was cheap, and made me want to know more about that guy with the camera on the cover: I was soon as engrossed in the narrative of his still surging career, 75 and counting, as I was amazed at what seemed to be an embargo on his work in both English-language film literature and the radical exhibition network (except maybe for *The Spanish Earth* [1937, USA, 53] and *Le 17^e Parallèle* [*The 17th Parallel*, 1968, 113]) – for after all the Vietnam War was not over. The situation was slightly better in French, a language I forced myself to learn in high school and university, and I bought the two monographs on Ivens from Paris, which cost several weeks' groceries. As rumours began to proliferate about Ivens's and Loridan's imminent epic on the China's Cultural Revolution, I was hooked – less because of a passionate personal response to films that I had mostly not yet seen, than because of the urgency of appropriating an undervalued Left cinematic activist heritage. I needed to get moving before my funding ran out, and by the time *Yukong* bowed in Paris in March 1976, I had already finished my coursework, visited the Ivens collections in Amsterdam, East Berlin, and Paris, wrapped up my first chapter – on the Indochina films – and interviewed the white-haired patriarch in his Paris flat, and Loridan to boot. I also secured his permission

to review the film series for *Jump Cut*, which hit the stands in all its crisp but ephemeral high-acid newsprint glory in December 1976.

In compiling my review, enthusiastic of course, despite having seen only four out of the twelve films (somehow in Paris I believe, the month before the premiere!), I relied on an assortment of critical responses, tentative, perhaps random, but admittedly euphoric, that was an obvious index of these films' importance both to my own intellectual and political place in 1976 and to the New Left audience of the 1970s. I was especially plugged into the enthusiasm of Parisian critics, like Maria Antonietta Macciocchi and Louis Marcorelles, who were not marginal ultra-leftists but respected mainstream voices writing in one of the world's most influential dailies, *Le Monde*.

When Israeli scholar Alan Rosenthal would reprint my *Jump Cut* piece twelve years later in his anthology *New Challenges in Documentary* (Waugh, [1976] 1988), he was not easy on my enthusiasm of the previous decade, as already seen in my epigraph:

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Waugh makes clear his political sympathy, which is fine, but one senses that neither the critic nor Ivens himself asked the difficult questions about the Mao regime [...] (a fault that in a similar way undermined Shirley MacLaine and Claudia Weill's *The Other Half of the Sky* [1975]). On Ivens's part, one must remember that he was filming during the Cultural Revolution and that he apparently was a ready follower of the line of the Gang of Four. As critic Henry Breitrose put it, 'Ivens's films are curious historical artifacts about a China that existed mostly in his mind.' (Henry Breitrose to Alan Rosenthal, 12 January 1985) (Rosenthal, 1988, 126)

While I need all the comparisons to Shirley MacLaine I can get, and while Rosenthal's misinterpretation of the Gang of Four connection was entertainingly absurd, on the whole I thought the criticism was as ideological as it was frank though not unfair (but I could not help noticing that mine was the only piece among 44 chapters held up to such an editorial disavowal). I wryly noted as well that the book was published by the same University of California Press that had declined to publish or review my *Show Us Life* on committed documentary in the early 1980s, and had repeatedly declined to publish a book version of my dissertation on Ivens. This fact I attributed to the Reaganite climate that would prevail in US academic publishing for another six years as well as to the baffling, still-in-force Ivens embargo.

The Cultural Revolution had been launched by Mao Zedong in 1966 to reinvigorate his country's revolution that was less than two decades in. First as a careful campaign to root out dead wood and potential rivals in the Beijing

party hierarchy, and next as an effort to do the same in the country's educational world, the Cultural Revolution never had transparency as its watchword:

[Mao] had started the Cultural Revolution by letting (his wife and future leader of the Gang of Four) Jiang Qing secretly supervise (in Shanghai) the production of a newspaper article attacking an intellectual in order to topple the boss of Beijing. Now, in phase two, he would manipulate a mass movement at China's educational institutions to unseat the head of state. (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006, 52)

The jury is still out on how to explain these decade-long, cataclysmic events known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Were they attributable more to the 70-something Chairman's revolutionary fervour or to his no doubt justifiable paranoia? Mao was still smarting after the USSR's de-Stalinisation process of a decade earlier and perhaps worried that the Soviet putsch of 1964 that had thrown out Khrushchev provided a tempting template for his own party, and was of course furious with the Soviet revisionists' betrayal of Marxism-Leninism, not to mention their refusal to share nuclear technology. Were these geopolitical concerns at the root of the Cultural Revolution? If Mao demonstrably fomented the upheavals, was he also tapping into real grass-roots waves of criticism and revolutionary activism that had its own grounds, energy, momentum, and rage at the calcification of the now two-decades-old revolution? Or was it simply a mass hysteria of score-settling, scapegoating, monumental demographic displacements, economic dislocations, and steam- and bloodletting manipulated by factions in the Communist Party of China (including an oedipal baby-boomer uprising, personified in the Red Guards, not dissimilar to the youth revolt that was happening in the West?), which coupled with cataclysmic economic and political blunders led to even what some have called democide (Macfarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006)? Was Mao the heir of Marx and Lenin who made some mistakes, as the official CPC 1983 postmortem had it, or a senile megalomaniac who had no inkling of the havoc and bloodshed his policies and whims were causing? Or, as is likely the case, is the answer all or most of the above?

Of course the Cultural Revolution's byzantine dynamics and layers of contradictions enrobed in cultural difference and Aesopian language were not clear to the Western New Left any more than they were to most Chinese – and Ivens was right that there were 100 Cultural Revolutions, 'as elusive as multiform' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 315). Our idealistic enchantment in the West with certain key aspects of the events – their opposition to cynical Soviet bureaucracy and imperialism and to the exhausted cynicism of the Old Left in general, their challenge to hierarchy, authority, complacency, and privilege,

their repertory of fresh new performative political rituals like criticism and self-criticism, their populist confrontation with discrepancies between urban and rural realities, between the industrialised North and the so-called underdevelopment of the South, and between intellectuals and the so-called masses – sparked a huge following within Western social movements on the left. Or as *Yukong* collaborator Alain Badiou put it more elegantly in the heat of the moment in 1980, during the Beijing trial of the Gang of Four:

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Behind the enormous confusion about its various stages, the lines of force of the Cultural Revolution, the entrance on the stage of tens of millions of actors, and the blockage of its goal, all bear on what is essential: the reduction of the gap between intellectual and manual labour, between town and country; the subordination of the productive impetus to the institution of new social relations; the end of university elitism; the reduction of the insolence of cadres; the end of wage systems of inequality and stratification; the ideological opposition to the degenerate ‘Marxism’ that rules in Moscow and in the ‘communist’ parties pledging allegiance to it, and so on. (Badiou, [1980] 2005, 660)

Some accounts of the New Left’s attraction to Mao’s revolution in North America (where the Black Panthers carried out community fundraising through selling the little red book of Mao’s thought [Gitlin, 1987, 349]) have tended towards the caricatural:

My anti-Stalinist movement friend Chris Hobson and I felt moved by the Cultural Revolution in China, which we saw as old Mao’s last-ditch effort to crush state bureaucracy, to shake off the heavy hand of Stalinism. (We didn’t know, or chose to overlook, the fact that Stalin remained prominent in Maoism’s pantheon.) In 1967, Paul Potter gave a speech supporting the Cultural Revolutionaries on the grounds that the Chinese purgers of corruption, like us, were bands of brothers and sisters seeking meaningful work. [...]

How could the organization [Students for a Democratic Society] that began by echoing Albert Camus and C. Wright Mills end with one faction chanting, ‘Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win’, while members of the other waved their Little Red Books in the air and chanted ‘Mao, Mao, Mao Tse-tung’? The comic-book crudeness of the sloganeering at this point was self-evident to anyone with a residual hold on reality. (Gitlin, 1987, 264, 382)

And of course period voices from Jean-Luc Godard (*La Chinoise* [1967, France, 96]; *See You at Mao*, aka *British Sounds* [1970, UK, 52]) to John Lennon ('But if you go carrying pictures of chairman Mao/You ain't going to make it with anyone anyhow') were already clinching the caricatural discourse in the late sixties. Godard's images of young Parisian intellectuals lounging about a bourgeois apartment declaiming quotations from the little red book, filmed at the height of the Red Guard moment of the Cultural Revolution, are understandably famous in themselves and as precursors of the events of May 1968. Others have emphasised the tie-in to the Vietnamese resistance and 'third world' leadership rather than the Cultural Revolution's domestic significance in and of itself:

[China's] attraction for new generation activists date especially from the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966 and China's post-1967 claims that it was Vietnam's firmest supporter. The Cultural Revolution was pivotal because it seemed to promise a more democratic and creative kind of socialism than that of the USSR. Officially, it called for ordinary people to rise up, participate in political life, and criticize officials who wielded power, even if they were leading Communist officials, and Cultural Revolution doctrine claimed that socialism would be built mainly through moral and ideological transformations, not economic development. For US young people rebelling against alienation and consumerism this approach seemed totally on target (and only later would many become aware of the gap between the Cultural Revolution's claims and its bitter reality). [...]

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Ideologically the Communist Party of China (CPC) put itself forward as a new centre for the world revolutionary movement (in a way that the Cubans and Vietnamese parties did not) and promoted itself as the shining example and prime champion of liberation movements waged by peoples of colour all over the world. (Elbaum, 2002, 45)

In France, however, the left engaged scientifically as well as politically and culturally with the Cultural Revolution, Godard's ambiguous if not flippant films notwithstanding. One of the *Yukong* production team, specifically a contributor to the commentary, was Badiou, a young philosopher who became the leading mouthpiece of French Maoist ideology. A founding leader of the Maoist organisation Union des communistes de France marxiste-léniniste, Badiou was a prolific producer of polemics and politico-philosophical tracts engaged in fierce debates within the French intellectual and political networks that were the heritage of May 1968. Around the time of his participation in *Yukong* and its completion and circulation, the targets of his critique included oth-

er thinkers on the Left, including his teacher Louis Althusser (Badiou, [1975, 1977] 2005), and of course the 'revisionist' French Communist Party and mainstream trade unions. Badiou wrote the commentary for *Yukong* and presumably consulted in particular on its political line. One of the earliest and most authoritative critic fans of the *Yukong* series, Macciocchi (1922-2007), was also a prominent French Maoist whose 1971 book *De la Chine* (Macciocchi, [1971] 1973) was the first major French encounter with and celebration of the Cultural Revolution. Ivens and Loridan themselves also participated in such debates, albeit their ardour tempered by post-production on *Le Peuple et ses fusils* (*The People and their Guns*, 1970, 97); after their first return from Beijing the pair published in *Écran a fervent* and uncharacteristic piece on the Cultural Revolution's policies on art and cinema, with many citations from Mao, and intriguing details on recent Chinese cinematic history, including the film industry's forced hibernation during the Cultural Revolution (Martin, 1972).

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From such lofty issues to the ridiculous, my tailored Mao jacket from 1971 is the most trivial exhibit of a search among Western progressive intellectuals and activists for models of resistance, revolt, and reconstruction to follow, and I still have somewhere on a shelf of Marxist theory, perhaps alongside the writings of Rosa Luxemburg, my own little red book.

By the time Ivens and Loridan landed in 1971 upon the unexpected invitation of Zhou – the first bloody, turbulent phases of the Cultural Revolution were long over, having yielded to the next transitional stage of gradual consolidation, retrenchment, and stabilisation. The Cultural Revolution is constantly and repeatedly referred to throughout *Yukong* in the past tense by both filmmakers and characters. The political atmosphere was still marked of course by continued skirmishes between ultra-left factions on the one hand and reformist and modernising factions led discreetly by Ivens's patron, Zhou Enlai, on the other hand. Then simmering in obscure terminology, this tension would only erupt definitively after Zhou's and Mao's deaths within eight months of each other in 1976, the year of *Yukong*'s first run in Paris. This historical trajectory was not clear to foreigners as it was unfolding, and many Western radicals were scarcely aware that the ground had shifted. One dramatic aspect of the second phase of the Cultural Revolution in China was the concomitant process of 'opening up' to the world, initiated by the modernisers and reformists in the Chinese political landscape – which had allowed the European filmmakers' invitation in the first place. Glimpses of China finally began to emerge to Western journalists and on Western screens in the early seventies – alongside diplomatic breakthroughs first by ping-pong players and then by politicians, first Canada's Pierre Elliott Trudeau whose trial-balloon recognition of the PRC came in 1970, and then Nixon the following year (US National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger was in Beijing

incognito in June 1971 laying the groundwork for the following year's presidential visit as Ivens and Loridan were there laying the groundwork for what would become *Yukong*).

Our cinematic glimpses of the Chinese 'permanent revolution' were scattered and tantalisingly superficial. Of those films made by the Chinese themselves, only the occasional documentary had offered any useful insight into the shape of their revolution-in-progress. Chinese feature films were usually based on ballet and operatic modes too deeply rooted in Chinese tradition to serve as much more than exotica to audiences in the West. The Western documentarists who started to visit China brought back fascinating films, to be sure. But the films remained unhappily distant from their subject, never succeeding in probing more deeply than the impressionism of any short-term traveller's notebook.

Among such China films were MacLaine and Weill's *The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir* (the film critiqued by Rosenthal; 1975, USA, 74), Marcel Carrière's *Glimpses of China* (from the National Film Board of Canada, 1974, 69), and Don McWilliams's *Impressions of China*, a short compilation of slides and Super 8 footage taken by a group of Canadian high school students. Michelangelo Antonioni's *Chung Kuo - Cina* (1972, Italy, 207) is no doubt the most famous: invited by Zhou at the same time as Ivens and Loridan, and shot like *Yukong* starting in May 1972, Antonioni's feature documentary later became a lightning rod of tensions between modernising and ultra-left factions – like *Yukong* in its own way – and an international *cause célèbre*, as we shall see below. Of these first outsider glimpses, MacLaine's and McWilliams's films seemed to come off the best because of their simplicity and unpretentiousness, their acceptance of their own limited focus. Unlike the larger, more ambitious films of Antonioni and Carrière, they refuse to make any sweeping assessment of a culture and a society of which they have necessarily received only random surface impressions. Instead, they concentrated on the personal dimensions of interaction between travellers and hosts.

The Chinese themselves say that those who come to China for the shortest time write the longest books. (And in those cases when filmmakers have almost zero track record in either documentary, China, or the left, as with Antonioni,¹ they make films that are even longer!) This may have been true up to that point, but in the mid-1970s as the Cultural Revolution was running out of steam, Ivens and Loridan stayed a very long time – almost eighteen months – and made a very long film indeed, in fact twelve films, a total of almost twelve hours. *Yukong*, their long, intensive study of everyday life under the second phase of the Cultural Revolution, opened up a whole new era in China films. The series opened in Paris in March of 1976, timed serendipitously between the deaths of Zhou and Mao, and created quite a stir.

Throughout Ivens's entire career, it was a customary, no doubt instinctual, reflex for him to pause after a cycle of films on liberation struggles and turn to the subject of economic and social struggles in a new peacetime setting. So it was inevitable that Ivens, the anti-imperialist combatant under the bombs in Southeast Asia, would shift gears and sooner or later show up once again in China as Ivens, the poet of socialist construction.

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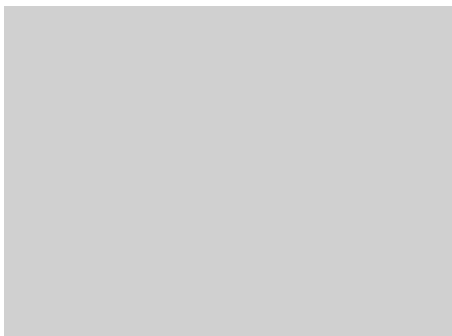
Ivens and Loridan's partnership was almost a decade old in 1971 when they were welcomed in Beijing. Ivens had visited China twice before with his camera, as we have seen, and many times without. When Zhou, eight months the filmmaker's elder, half seriously asked why Ivens hadn't brought his camera with him, the leader thus had good reason to. Ivens and Loridan began to think seriously when Zhou suggested a new China film. Meanwhile they left with Zhou the selection of French documentaries made during May 1968 that they had with them, and took the rest of the summer to visit Shanghai and Nanjing as well as Beijing, beginning to get inklings of the vast social and political excitement as well as turbulence underway. The couple were converted, although the rather Maoist Laos film that was finally circulating in France reminds us of course that they were already on board. They gradually abandoned the few film ideas they were considering in Europe at the time, including a version of Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (a spin-off of *Rotterdam-Europoort* [1966, Netherlands, 20]) (Stufkens, 2008, 356), and would carry out preliminary research about possible film ideas, first in China and later that year in Europe, testing possible audience interest and specific areas of curiosity. Before their departure from Beijing, Zhou organised a screening of the Paris films for artists and cultural bureaucrats, including three high-up officials who turned out later to be the core of the modernisers' nemesis, the Gang of Four, who were not amused. The couple sensed but could not yet define the political struggles that would dog them over the next decade, but plowed ahead and were back in Beijing in March 1972.

Their topic was to be the Cultural Revolution. Although the Chinese Central Newsreels and Documentary Studio offered valuable technical and personnel support, the film was not to be a co-production. Financing was to be entirely the responsibility of the filmmakers. Ivens and Loridan themselves were to produce the film with three successive advances from the French *Centre national de la cinématographie* and with additional personal loans to be offset by anticipated worldwide television sales.

Their original conception called for a three or four-hour work, a two-headed ensemble including a transitional work on everyday life within the Cultural Revolution, and a more Ivensian 'international' 'synthetic' concept 'in which the majesty of China's natural resources and history were to be combined with a story about socialism under construction' (Stufkens, 2008, 422-423). Start-

ing preliminary shooting without a clear scenario, as usual, the pair gradually decided that such a divided approach could only lead to the generalised, superficial result that they wanted to avoid, shelved the synthesis film for another day and focused all their attention on the Cultural Revolution. Their projected three-month stay was first stretched to five months and finally to eighteen to allow for the extended immersion within Chinese society that could permit the kind of intimate, authoritative perspective they wanted. Over that year and a half, Ivens and Loridan proceeded leisurely, in a manner more reminiscent of Flaherty than of the customary urgency that had resulted in almost 50 Ivens films since 1928. They set up camp for lengthy periods in a wide range of different locations. After initial scouting and formation of their crew in Beijing, they headed for the Xinjiang region, filming Uyghur and Kazakh minority cultures (this early footage would later in 1977 be incorporated into autonomous programs with their own circulation since the filmmakers did not consider the quality up to par with the rest of *Yukong*).

104. *Les Kazaks – minorité nationale, Sinkiang* (1977): model open air school, filmed as Ivens and Loridan did *not* want to film the Cultural Revolution, surrounded by local party cadres showing off for Beijing. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



105. *Les Ouigours – minorité nationale, Sinkiang* (1977): local women enjoying tea and comparing women's lives before and after the Cultural Revolution. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



There they discovered how they did *not* want to film the Cultural Revolution. That is, they did not want to film episodes surrounded, bullied, and manipulated by local party cadres who wanted to show off the best side of their local

revolutions to the Beijing party headquarters and to the world, a situation that sparked traumatic flashbacks of the Guomindang-controlled and harassed shoots of 1938.

576 | Back in the capital, Zhou eventually helped his French guests make the terms of the project clear and practical – independence, autonomy, and protection, and a focus on everyday life. Meanwhile they were also training their Chinese crew: they had selected the talented Li Zexiang as their cinematographer by screening a great number of Chinese films upon their arrival and deciding upon one where the camera style showed the promise of the flexibility they wanted. They then proceeded to show him examples of the fluid and mobile direct cinema synch-sound work from the ‘young European cinema’ that had not yet permeated Chinese documentary and that they wanted him to emulate. Buoyed by the new support team, understandings, and arrangements, the filmmakers headed for Shanghai, where they spent four months in a generator factory, and another two months in an experimental pharmacy in the same city, next a month in a military barracks near Nanjing, and a similar stretch in a Shandong fishing village, and finally a petroleum field in the remote northern Daqing area, the focus of the nation’s pride for its role in energy self-sufficiency. Along the way were several Beijing interludes where the six films based in the capital were shot (one feature and five shorts). They had visited a number of Beijing educational institutions before wrapping up at the end of 1973, including Beijing’s Tsinghua University at the very outset, where the cinematography by Li and a still untrained local crew turned out to be unuseable (Li at first thought the foreigners’ style was ‘naturalistic’ while they thought his work was profoundly inhibited by his cultural propensity for static long views and short takes, not to mention his lack of experience in synch sound 16mm). Ultimately, only two shorts would touch on the academic settings that had been the crucible for so much upheaval in the late sixties, the popular *Une histoire de ballon: Lycée no. 31 Pékin (The Football Incident, 21 min.)*²) shot spontaneously at the very beginning of the process in a Beijing high school, and another short *Le Professeur Tsien (Professor Tchien, 13 min.)*, on a Beijing physicist academic who had experienced first-hand the brunt of the Cultural Revolution and its banishment of intellectuals, yet cast a positive light on it for the camera.

The only other major gap in their itinerary was the peasant milieu. That was no small omission in a society that was still largely agricultural. In contrast, fifteen years earlier during the Great Leap Forward, a rural agricultural setting had completely dominated *Lettres de Chine (Before Spring, 1958, 38)* and the urban counterpart that would come to the fore in *Yukong* had been utterly avoided. Is this contrast symptomatic?: in both the 1950s and the 1970s, had Ivens skirted, either consciously or intuitively, a key crucible of

each moment's upheaval? This gap in *Yukong* was partly compensated for by attention to the rapport with agricultural communities that was a feature of all the urban contexts they observed, and in any case the settings of *Le Village de pêcheurs* (*Fishing Village*, 102 min.) and *Autour du pétrole: Taking* (*The Oilfields*, 84 min.) were indeed remote, though not agricultural. Hardly interested in a travelogue without a practical application to their audience's lives, the filmmakers' rationale – and perhaps rationalisation – also included the argument that a thorough exploration of the agrarian application of the Cultural Revolution would have demanded a full year of exposure to the seasonal cycle, etc., and the film's largely urban Western audience was expected to be able to identify more closely with the urban problematics examined by the filmmakers. This reasoning can be taken at face value, for it was no doubt assumed in good faith, but can also be read as part of the web of contradictory and unspoken pressures that were inevitable in the couple's touchdown at the epicentre of such a fraught and complex political experiment. More than one critic would comment on this 'sizeable lacuna, not easily understood: the peasants – those peasants who are the great mass of the Chinese – hardly appear at all, or very indirectly. Are they allergic to the camera?' (Gervais, 1976).

On returning to France in March 1974, the pair set about an eighteen-month process of editing the 120 hours of synchronised rushes that they had accumulated, a long process of organising and selection. In late 1975, a futile effort to obtain some reshoots long distance led to a trip back to Beijing and a confrontation there with the Gang of Four, who had become ascendant as the Premier and Chairman declined, a confrontation much more serious than earlier run-ins. The four were profiting from Zhou's hospitalisation to escalate the ongoing power struggle and demanded 61 cuts from the preview of the Shanghai material that the couple screened (all on the absurdly literal level of 'delete shots of pharmacy customers carrying worn luggage since they look like peddlers'). The couple quickly left the country on the ailing Zhou's secret advice, and they realised their epic was done, reshoots or no reshoots: eleven hours and 50 minutes of finished film, twelve documentaries in all, including four features, four medium-length works, and four shorts.

The ultimate ratio had turned out to be about ten to one, perhaps ample for Ivens, but austere in comparison to ambitious direct cinema projects of the period in the West such as *An American Family* (Craig Gilbert, Alan Raymond, and Susan Raymond, 1973), another television series of similar scale that clocked in at twenty-five to one (Rosenthal, 1988). In contrast the even more similar series *L'Inde fantôme* (*Phantom India*, 1969, France, 378), carried out by Louis Malle in India in the late sixties, was based on a very Spartan ratio of three to one.

The couple's magnum opus was subdivided into four theatrical programs³

each lasting about three hours, a challenge even for the committed, opening simultaneously in four *rive gauche* art houses in early March. It was still running in Paris five months later at the death of Chairman Mao, but reduced to a single theatre. Rejected by commercial distributors, the filmmakers' game plan was self-exhibition and self-promotion on the part of CAPI Films, with the idea of reaching both theatrical and diverse unconventional audiences. Over the long run in France, *Yukong* reportedly reached 130,000 viewers in the capital and 300,000 in France as a whole (Stufkens, 2008, 432). The next stop was Cannes, where the *L'Usine de générateurs-Une histoire de ballon* program was shown, and then Venice, where the whole work was on the bill. North America came later with the Montreal premiere that same fall, followed by MoMA and two cinemathèques in the Bay Area in 1978.

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In France, the programs basked in almost unanimous critical acclaim, from the dailies, general interest magazines, and film magazines, left and right alike, with many long and detailed, sympathetic interviews circulating in every corner. The lengthy review in the *Nouvel observateur* (Bory, 1976, 61-62), a liberal weekly general interest magazine with almost a half million readers, was typical: 'And this cinema, a major cinema if such a thing exists, a cinema on its feet [...] helps peoples to take over their own history by helping them gain a clear awareness of the obstacles they find in their path. [...] The twelve hours of Joris Ivens are not only passionate, they are beautiful'. Only *Cahiers du cinéma*, whose scrupulous and lengthy coverage appeared later than the other media, had the audacity to compare *Yukong* implicitly unfavourably to Godard's *Ici et ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*, 1976, France, 53), which bowed six months after *Yukong* and recycled the filmmaker's self-reflexive dissection of solidarity cinema from *Loin du Vietnam* (*Far from Vietnam*, 1967, France, 115), only this time with Palestine in its sights rather than Vietnam.

Notwithstanding the scale of the response to the theatrical run, the most important target was television. Despite a disappointing deal with French television – only the public third channel took it on – things went slightly better elsewhere. English, German, Italian, Dutch, and Finnish versions were produced, each carefully monitored for quality control, and were soon broadcast in European and North American markets. Most broadcast deals were limited to eight-hour versions of the series and only Italy, Holland, Canada (French), and Finland took on the whole twelve hours (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 334). Since the Chinese circulation of the film series was interwoven inextricably with the playing out of the final denouement of the Cultural Revolution (Stufkens, 2008, 443), we shall come back to that story later.

The working title of Ivens's and Loridan's epic had been fittingly *The Second Long March*. But the release title finally chosen had an appeal with considerably more mystery about it though it was equally epic and even evoked

the Ivensian trope of massive earth moving – not to mention the important advantage of being a citation from Mao Zedong. *How Yukong Moved the Mountains* is the title of an old Chinese fable that appears in the writings of Chairman Mao, and was recapitulated in a title card at the start of each of the twelve instalments:

We are told that once upon a time there was an old man called Yukong... He decided to carry away, with the help of his sons, two great mountains that blocked the access to his house, by means of a pick. Another old man... burst out laughing and said to them:

‘You will never be able to move those mountains all by yourself’. Yukong answered him, ‘When I die, there will be my sons... In this way the generations will come after each without end... With each blow of the pick, they will get that much smaller... Why then won’t we be able to flatten them?’

Heaven was moved by this and sent down to earth two celestial genies who carried away the mountains on their backs. Our heaven is none other than the masses of the Chinese people.⁴

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Ivens’s and Loridan’s answer to the West’s curiosity about China contained both the same devastating logic that is in Yukong’s response to his questioner and the same infectious confidence that is at the root of Mao’s revision of its moral. The new China films were particularly important for a lingering diverse international left configuration of social movements and political formations, and in particular those whose engagement on the cultural front as scholar-activists was animated by several considerations. As socialists, we saw in the twelve-part film its potential as an instrument and witness of social change. As cinephiles, we were enthralled by its ability to capture in colour 16mm synch sound the vitality and everyday political sensibilities of ordinary people, its magic combination of affect and ideas. As had happened often in Ivens’s career, we were engaged by the sight of film serving as people’s means of expression when they are in the process of developing a revolutionary awareness or are caught in the flux of resistance and change. As a documentary scholar I was captivated by the series’ epic grandeur and intimate detail, and endlessly cited Walter Benjamin’s ([1936] 1969, 232) epigraph about ‘modern man’s legitimate claim to being reproduced’. As a graduate student and soon to be teacher animated by those principles, I was drawn to this epic as an object of study, both classic and innovative, and it is no accident that I published my rave of *Yukong* in *Jump Cut* ([1976] 1988), which was fomenting its own mini-Cultural Revolution in English-language film studies.

Over the half-century between 1938 and 1988, Ivens’s four cinematic

encounters with China all seemed to coincide with major crises in Chinese history: the war against Japanese aggression in 1938, the Great Leap Forward of 1956-1957, the Cultural Revolution 1966-1976 and the transformed party's and society's embrace of neo-liberal globalisation of the 1980s that was symptomatically problematised in the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, a year after the release of *Histoire*, only weeks before Ivens's death. In each case, Ivens brought to bear upon the particular conjuncture the generic structures available at that point of film history and at that moment in his own aesthetic trajectory. Each encounter idealised its societal object in its own way, each was enlivened by the tension between the commitment to meet the China he loved on its own terms and his mission as both artist and ambassador to celebrate, record, and advocate – and maybe even question those terms. Each encounter resonated with the tension between mutual exchange and the enlightenment and enlistment of foreign audiences. Each of the four episodes, what Sun Hongyun (2005, 16) has called 'key moments of Chinese history [...] small piece[s] of the 20th century', included its own mode of solidarity and its own challenge to the host society, in solidarity of course (such challenges were hyper-diplomatic, crystallised perhaps in Loridan's question to factory workers studying Engels in their off time, 'Why are you studying 19th-century philosophy?')

In 1938, as we have seen, Ivens had refined the solidarity template that he had first developed in *Pesn o geroyakh* (*Komsomol*, 1933, USSR, 50) and *Spanish Earth*, adapting it to the highly stressed, conflictual and straitjacketed circumstances of the Guomindang–Eighth Route Army United Front. Two decades later during the Great Leap Forward, his work was almost fully subsumed under the pedagogical framework of his Beijing institutional context. But two films came out of it, calling on several generic structures. First the demonstration film, reinvented simply in *Six Hundred Million With You* (1958, China, 12), had extended the tropes contained within *Misère au Borinage* (*Borinage*, 1934, Belgium, 34) and *Indonesia Calling* (1946, Australia, 22), in developing the latter film's 'third world' ideological frieze: Arab alongside Chinese rather than the earlier shoulder-to-shoulder line-up of Indonesian, Australian, South Asian, and Chinese. (One of the consequences of its long excerpt in René Seegers's 2008 documentary critique of Ivens's relationship with Maoism *Een oude vriend van het Chinese volk* [*An Old Friend of the Chinese People*, Netherlands, 53] is to remind how good the original 35mm black-and-white demonstration documentary, not available in the DVD box naturally, now looks as a pioneering postcolonial poster film.) Second, the three-part *Before Spring* had offered a hybrid of ethnographic impulses with socialist realism, a nonfiction riff on Wu Guoying's hieratic feminist fiction of communes, harvests, and summer storms that Ivens had

presided over in *Die Windrose* (*The Windrose*, Cavalcanti et al., 1957, DDR, 110) from two years earlier.

Film the future, Ivens was telling his Beijing students (Film Archive of China 1983), and in *Before Spring* they did so – in collaboration of course with young cameraman Wang Decheng and writer He Zhongxin, and finally with the famous actor-director Xie Tian as eventual narrator. The three episodes showed agrarian life in three different regions of China as the late winter advances towards the full-blown spring, with a socialist realist confidence surging out of the relationship between silent images and the commentary gloss: first Mongolian herdsmen driving their horses and camels through the northern snow, dreaming of imminent rail links and the marketing of their milk products throughout China; next a village in the Nanjing region as snow melts over the fields and waterways is prepared for planting and children clamour for spring and dream, according to the commentary, of careers as scientists; and finally even further south a lakeside village is celebrating spring with enough fish for every family while a migrant worker back home for the New Year's festival notices new changes every year. Seegers's (2008a) charge that the third part involves a Potemkin village of well-scrubbed and well-dressed extras – 'As if Ivens filmed a Chinese village scene staged in a studio' – is unbecomingly Euro- and present-centric. Not only mistaking Ivens's 1950s pre-direct collaborative process shaped by differences in camera cultures and inflected by the novelty of the new colour cinematography, Seegers is apparently unaware of the Chinese custom of wearing new clothes for the spring festival! (This insult to a director who was legendary for stopping a whole shoot when a busybody came up to wash a grease smudge off a bulldozer repairman's face before a take, and who critiqued his cameraman at the start of *Yukong* for having set up an elaborate lit environment before a night shoot in a university dormitory⁵ [Li Zexiang, 1983, 115])! Yet the film's romantic hue is undeniable, all the more with its exquisite patina of 1950s colour (Sovcolour negative printed on western Agfa colour stock), shaping its observations of agrarian work, festivals, intergenerational transmission, and everyday life. To see the three parts of this film as prophetic heralds of *Yukong* fifteen years later is to confirm the lingering role of the socialist realist aesthetic in the 1970s series, never before acknowledged, both in dramatic structure (at least three of the parts ending in spectacular *Komsomol*-like celebrations like *Before Spring*) and in its reliance on exemplary characters and heroically iconic epic settings. A peasant poem retained in the *Before Spring* documents captures this heroic flavour and has stuck with me, perhaps if only because it could also have pertained to the very urban *Yukong*:

We will heap up our wheat
And I will climb on the top
Then I will wipe my sweat with a cloud
And light my cigarette on the sun. (Ivens, *Before Spring* production notes,
JIA)

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In 1971 and 1972, Ivens and Loridan were immersing themselves in a society that had moved well beyond the Great Leap Forward only to traverse the even greater Cultural Revolution and then enter a healing phase around the still open wounds from these massive upheavals, whose dynamics and repercussions were still playing out. It is hard to imagine that this recent history and ongoing present were not on the filmmakers' radar every single day, as well as being imprinted on their films in every shot, both negative and positive. These imprints varied: the endlessly recurring 'before the Cultural Revolution... and now' tropes, which punctuate every film; the veiled references to Ivens's host Zhou and the recently dead Lin Biao and the not-so-veiled references in *Daqing* to the disgraced 'traitor' Liu Shaoqi (the PRC President deposed in 1966); the inclusion of the Cultural Revolution rituals of criticism and self-criticism in almost every film. Structurally more important was the almost palpable tension between the filmmakers' professed objective of quotidian typicality and their hosts' socialist realist-inflected eagerness to extract the positive and the constructive from the still-ongoing traumatic process. Chinese subjects and facilitators avidly demonstrated exemplary testimonies, gestures, and relationships, keen both to film the future and also to perform a present of working through and carrying on the heritage of the revolution – clearly inflected by a camera culture that favours exemplary conduct in front of any camera.

Solidarity is among other things an act of friendship. The filmmakers, aware of the still precarious state of the body politic, and out of affection and respect for Zhou their host, the vulnerable tightrope walker, reconciler, moderate and canny survivor, chose not to focus on any invisible undercurrents, abuses, and detours they were sensing, and let their subjects speak for themselves. It was a strategic gamble that paid off, cinematically speaking at least. Shortly after the *Yukong* production, Ivens explained this complicated ethical – and hence political – negotiation of solidarity and friendship through the editing of their enormous trunk of rushes:

With Marceline, we had not completely abandoned the idea of making a film on the Cultural Revolution, but we were overwhelmed by the immensity of the subject, by its obscurities and by the profusion of our material. But what preoccupied us before anything else was the contradictions

of the Chinese reality and the regime's difficulties. We wanted to talk of them, but we didn't know how to do it. As soon as we got back to Paris, we were confronted with this problem first of all. If we started by demolishing China before combating the basic ignorance of Westerners, we risked going against the current of what we were wishing to do. For example, if we wanted to speak of Xinjiang and the problems we encountered there, how to say it? Whom should we accuse? The system, Zhou Enlai, the Party's dogmatism?

Other questions came to our minds. What was the share of individuals, of their stupidity or their ignorance? The role of conservatism, within or outside of the Party? The role of the traditions and the blockages of the old society? The role of cynicism and that of helplessness [*incapacité*]? An anti-communist has no problem answering all of these questions: it's communism's fault, that's all you need to say. Or else, it's the Chinese's fault. For ourselves, the answers were otherwise complex, and my friendship for China forbade me to take the slightest risk. We preferred to keep silent and devote ourselves entirely to the editing of our film. After all, that's how we were going to express ourselves. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 326-327)

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Loridan added one nuance to this reflection: 'We could not also take the risk of betraying the great friendship we had for Zhou Enlai and, even more, for China' (Prudentino, 2003, 138).

In *Chung Kuo*, Antonioni felt no such compunction or friendship. Repeatedly violating the ethical right of the subject, whether national or individual, to control his or her own image, Antonioni seems perversely to have insisted on filming whatever his hosts requested him not to. For example, the things he was asked not to film and did include the following: a gunboat in Shanghai Harbour, a free-enterprise peasant market on a rural road, even a burial caught in telephoto when his hosts suggested that the filming of a burial would offend the Chinese sense of privacy. As he and Ivens/Loridan demonstrated, it is easy to shoot film in China. But it is far more difficult and a far greater achievement to receive and honour people's trust. For Ivens and Loridan, their first responsibility was to their subjects, and Antonioni was not so motivated.

Let's now first move through the twelve parts of the *Yukong* series both describing them and pointing briefly to the political and aesthetic issues they raise, then focus on direct cinema as the vehicle of this epic, and finally assess the reception and aftermath of the work both domestically (by this I mean both France and China!) and abroad, in terms of its political and cultural meaning historically speaking.

My favourite *Yukong* feature film in the 1970s was *La Pharmacie no. 3: Changhai* (*The Drugstore*, 79 min.) – and this I share with Loridan it turns out. It seemed the most fully achieved in its confluence of an observational and interactive application of direct cinema and in its felicitous cinematic encounter with the Cultural Revolution. My opinion has hardly shifted.

The inspiration to film such an establishment came quite spontaneously. Although the filmmakers tended towards the ideal of dealing with some kind of commercial setting in Shanghai, they felt that any of the large department stores would have resulted in too diffuse a film – and Frederick Wiseman's *The Store* (1983, USA, 118) would soon prove them right. When Ivens became ill during their visit to Shanghai it happened that the workers in the neighbourhood pharmacy took a special interest in his care and recovery. The couple developed a special friendship with them. Impressed with the workers' experimentation with a program of community outreach beyond the usual merchandising notion of pharmacy, Ivens and Loridan decided to make their film on it. They spent the next two months constantly at the store and in the neighbourhood following the staff in the course of their duties. The pharmacy was a model one, a sort of pilot project experimenting with the idea of extended community service (as explicitly acknowledged in the narration), but paradoxically it is the film of the series that best captures the complexity and contradictions of everyday life within the Cultural Revolution, and doesn't forget in the process humour, pathos, and empathy, as well as a strong narrative.

During the film we see the interaction between the pharmacists and the local community, as they provide all sorts of clinical consultation and care as well as drugs (free if dispensed from a prescription). They even engage in on-the-spot acupuncture for a variety of minor ailments. We also witness endless meetings among the staff themselves as they conduct evaluations of their work and their own personal roles. (With Antonioni's film, the content of those one or two such meetings that he presents is not relayed directly or literally to the audience but either summarised in voice-over narration or omitted altogether).

The members of the pharmacy staff each become live and identifiable characters. One bespectacled young man, Xiao Liu, perhaps *Yukong's* most famous character, gets impatient and nervous with clients whom he considers 'idiots'. He conducts perpetual self-criticism of this failure without ever offering the audience any convincing hope that he will improve.⁶ A young woman had once wanted to be a doctor but decided that service to the people was more important. An elderly clerk is ultimately revealed to have been the former owner of the pharmacy and is now an employee of his one-time enterprise. This last character is charmingly candid before the camera and jokingly admits to non-revolutionary feelings, namely an unquenchable taste for prof-

it. But his admission is contradicted by the evidence of his rapport with his fellow employees and his conscientious work behind the counter.⁷

Here again we can make a telling comparison with Antonioni's treatment of a similar subject. Ivens and Loridan treat the role of acupuncture as part of the pharmacy's clinical practice almost matter-of-factly. They emphasise the socio-political and personal relations among the characters, whom we know on other terms than as agents of acupuncture (which had become something of a Western fad during the 'opening up' process). We also see the totality of the pharmacy's social role, of which acupuncture is only a small part. Antonioni, on the other hand, chose to observe the use of acupuncture techniques in major surgery (a childbirth) as conducted by gowned functionaries to whom we are scarcely introduced. In general that scene's observation seems detached from any systematic view of Chinese socio-medical practice. Antonioni's interest in the scene is twofold. It's in the exotic significance of the needles and the 'human' drama of the woman giving birth, specific and concrete to be sure, but abstract in its divorce from societal context. In *Pharmacie* the acupunctural ministrations of the young pharmacists have a political as well as a dramatic and visual meaning.

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Pétrole, shot the following autumn at the end of the eighteen-month process, surveys the northern oil fields at Daqing, in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang. The selection of this prestigious site for the last shot of *Yukong's* six full-length films had symbolic strategic resonance for the host society, though at the time of filming its pioneering role in China's energy self-sufficiency was already on the wane (Wikipedia, 2014). *Pétrole* thus echoes *Pharmacie* in the sense that it too is about a model enterprise. As usual, the filmmakers' emphasis was on the community of workers, men and women that lived around the project, engaging with them intimately in homes and workplaces, with a backdrop of spectacular collective struggles with the area's wintry natural environment and spectacular collective celebrations of this success story of industrial autonomy. Interestingly, *Pétrole* contains one of *Yukong's* only two compilation segments, an all-too-brief excursus of 1960 archival shots showing the first drillers, mostly dealing with the harsh wintry conditions, but also reading Mao by firelight. (The other compilation segment is in *L'Usine de générateurs* [*The Generator Factory*], illustrating one elderly worker's pre-revolutionary memories and the Shanghai region's revolutionary past in general. The segment also illustrates Ivens's revolutionary past as well, with its clip of the Shanghai bombardment from *The 400 Million* [1939, USA, 53]. Ivens, the narrator at this moment, sums things up, 'This people is master of its memory'.)

In contrast with the legendary Daqing, while still in Shanghai Ivens and Loridan deliberately decided to focus another of the feature films on a gener-

106. *Autour du pétrole: Taking* (1976): a rare use of compilation in *Yukong*, 1960 archival shots of the first Daqing drillers, engaging with harsh winters and Mao's thoughts by firelight. DVD frame capture.. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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ator factory. Protected and encouraged by Zhou, they could film any topic they wished, except a nuclear installation. They even would have been permitted to go to Tibet had not Ivens's asthma prevented it.⁸ Even with a collection of twelve films to be made, the initial choice of individual areas of concentration had profound political and aesthetic implications. If the team had dwelt exclusively on such experiments as Drugstore No. 3 or such prestige projects as Daqing – and they were certainly dazzled by the diversity and the scale of experimentation and production breakthroughs of these kinds – the resulting films would have had a certain utopian relevance and socialist realist resonance towards the future without a balance of a less exotic and more complex picture of contemporary China. Accordingly, they decided to find a factory suitable for filming. They made a firm commitment to focus on an ordinary, typical work situation to balance the exemplary aspect of films such as that on the pharmacy:

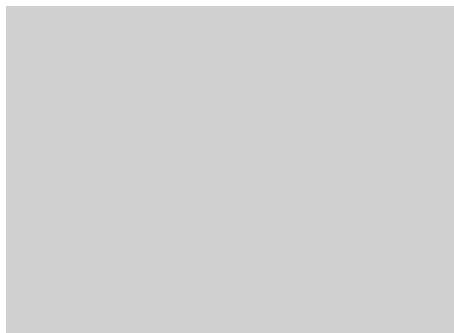
We visited fourteen other factories, tractor factories, watch factories, pilot factories, exemplary for their management, for their relations between cadres and workers, for their role in the Cultural Revolution. But we wanted at any price to film something average. It would not have been interesting to film the watch factory that gave rise to the most important *dazibao* movement (wall posters). We would have described a perfect democratic situation, at a given moment, and would not have touched at the heart of the difficulties. Whereas with choosing an average factory, that involved hoping that something would happen. [...] In any case, if we had filmed in the watch factory, with these people working on microscopic pieces, that would have been less spectacular. You have to create a strong visual impression as well. (Macciocchi, 1976)

The resulting film *Usine* was by far the series' longest at 129 minutes and

focused on a manufacturing complex with 8000 workers near Shanghai. Over their four-month stay there, the filmmakers developed the concept of everyday life within a living social and political institution as well as an economic one, an open place, not walled in, where families of workers are part of a living and working community. But it was their good fortune and ours that something did indeed happen in the generator factory that the team filmed, a spontaneous movement of criticism by workers against the management. The protest is expressed first in *dazibaos*, huge, strikingly cinematic banners, large-character hand-brushed paste-up posters usually involving criticism of politicians and administrators. These had dominated the Western media's visual impressions of Chinese politics since the mid-sixties, the fundamental, public Cultural Revolution activity enshrining grass-roots citizen democracy (and contributed a new word to the English language along the way). The workers' criticisms targeted administrators who always stay in their office, official favouritism seen in such matters as the distribution of cinema tickets, and general ineptitude in the running of the factory. Eventually we sit in on workers' meetings, their study sessions on Engels and the general problem of revisionism, long meetings with the bosses, and joint efforts to arrive at a new anti-hierarchical and non-bureaucratic organisation of the factory in revolutionary committees. We hear the voices of factory workers as they design their *dazibaos*, one metaphorising their institution as a disabled vehicle: 'You should draw it like this... The truck is stuck in sand in the desert and its wheels are turning round and round. You can hear the noise of the motor but the truck is not moving. That's how we should represent the management'.

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107. *L'Usine de générateurs* (1976). Factory workers creating a *dazibao* critiquing the management for trying to drive a truck in the sand. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marcelline Loridan-Ivens.



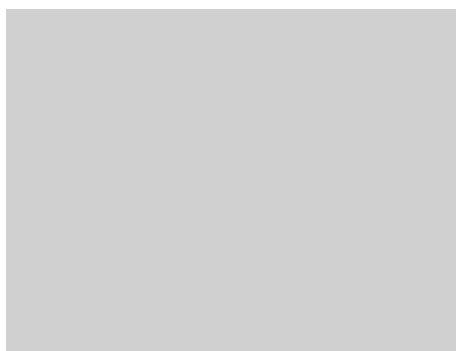
The film gives an overwhelming sense of being present at a particularly important moment of history, and the institution's ordinariness within this fraught historical context (Shanghai factories had been on the vanguard of the Cultur-

al Revolution, sometimes sites of pitched battles among factions or among radicals and conservatives and the military, with much loss of life) perhaps ensured that the film demonstrates more fluidity and freshness than some of the other feature-length works. It was one of the two items selected for the 1976 Cannes screening, a fine documentary on its own terms and in isolation (Macciocchi, 1976).

Ballon also shows institutional ferment, and was the most successful short of the series, if its privileged place alongside *Usine* at the 1976 Cannes Festival and its 1977 César award for best documentary short are any indication. The film covers a single incident that Ivens and Loridan happened upon quite by accident during the course of their routine visit to a Beijing high school at the very start of the *Yukong* circuit. The film has an entirely different sort of dramatic and cinematic interest than those films with a larger scale and scope – a chamber film vignette rather than an epic – and bears the freshness of discovery. As the filmmakers arrived in the schoolyard, they noticed a sense of excitement in the air. Students and teachers hastened to give the filmmakers their own versions of a student-teacher dispute that had just taken place. A woman teacher had rung a bell signifying the start of class, and a teenaged boy, engrossed in his play, had kicked a ball in her direction which he claimed had passed over her head. She then confiscated the ball. When the crew arrived, a meeting of the class had just been called to discuss the affair, and the filmmakers were invited to record the session. After an initial recap of the incident by playground bystanders, the camera proceeds inside. The rest of the film follows the analysis by teachers and students of what happened. At first both sides are evasive, self-righteous, and accusatory. The boy provides alibis for his behaviour and freely charges the teacher with not respecting his ideas, and the teacher remains adamant.

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108. *Histoire d'un ballon: Le Lycée no. 31 à Pékin* (1976). Happy ending: both teacher and pupil having admitted to political error, face is saved and an awkward handshake wraps it up. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



This remarkably spontaneous discussion moves through various stages in its eleven minutes, each freely commented upon by those present. The girl students sometimes side with the teacher and sometimes with the boy and his allies. The meeting finally arrives at a moment of reconciliation which is curiously ritualistic and face-saving for all, but affecting and authentic all the same. The teacher finally admits to having underestimated the boy's political consciousness in confiscating the ball. The boy admits to having tried to avoid loss of face in constructing his excuses. An awkward handshake and exchange of grins concludes the episode.

The vignette is all the more moving when one realises that the two teachers featured were certainly aware, no doubt first-hand, that their profession had been one of the principal targets of the Red Guard 'Seize power! Seize power! Seize power!' phase of the Cultural Revolution (some of the torturers had been hardly older than the boy who hit his teacher with the ball) and educators' ranks had been depleted astronomically, in Beijing as in most other places (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006, 126). A sizable minority of the pupils are wearing Red Guard armbands, yet the two women perform with grace and eloquence. This film, though it provides a thoroughly absorbing vignette of the revolution in progress, is different from the other entries in that it focuses entirely on discourse around the event that had transpired, and criticism and dialogue become its own event. When I attended a revival screening of the film organised in Beijing in conjunction with the Ivens's 110th anniversary in 2008, it was followed by a panel bringing together a few of the original participants. The atmosphere was jovial, full of pride about this 35-year-old document of a process, despite the official consensus over the last quarter-century that the Cultural Revolution was a historical trauma to be survived and disavowed. This vignette is short and sweet, also full of humour and charm, amazingly cinematic despite its early place in the shooting sequence and its whole reliance on talk within a constricted pedagogical space rather than action, and proof that within the contradictory process of the Cultural Revolution authentic spaces for community, growth, and problem-solving were possible. Its retention as one of the two *Yukong* items included in the 2008 box set is understandable (however lamentable the fact that it is one of only two).

Of the twelve *Yukong* films, two are directed primarily to issues of gender politics. One of the most significant aspects of the Cultural Revolution for many Western viewers of the film was the specifically feminist dimension of that Revolution (Kristeva, 1974). *Une femme, une famille* (*A Woman, A Family*, 108 min.) studies the working and home life of Gao Shulan, a woman welder and union official in a locomotives factory near Beijing, and deftly navigates this complex terrain. For example, it had long been a commonplace of the 'China film' to point out how Chinese women had once had their feet bound

in childhood. Neither the Italian nor the Parisians depart from this tradition, but again a comparison points out important qualitative differences. Antonioni uses a gratuitous and crude close-up of the feet of a nameless old woman passing by. In a far different manner, Ivens and Loridan's reference to the old custom comes almost incidentally from a character whom we have come to know naturally, as a person, Gao's mother-in-law, within the framework of the film rather than as a specimen of self-righteously culture-centric and voyeuristic *chinoiserie*.

No doubt it was partly Loridan's influence that the film's response to feminist problematics is such a focused one. Since Ivens's association with Loridan, he had perceptibly modulated his perspective on women. Shared credits were one index of this modulation: in the past Ivens had frequently shared directorial credits with male collaborators, such as John Ferno, though never with Van Dongen or Michelle, but things changed with Loridan in the 1960s. As Loridan explained to interviewers of *Filmfaust* in 1977 (quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 300):

It was only through the women's movement after May 1968 that it became clear to me that as a woman I had to earn a place for myself as opposed to men. [...] I have expressed and proven myself in the work – but not publicly every time a film was finished. I didn't think it worth the trouble of signing my name because I knew that they would only speak about Joris Ivens anyway and not about Marceline Loridan.

Their practice of publicly accepting joint responsibility for the Indochina and China films indeed did not always impact on their critics' and collaborators' references to the work, least of all in China.

Perhaps more precisely, the feminist thematics of Ivens's work, always present throughout his career arguably, had come more explicitly to the surface in Vietnam and now especially in China, both filmically and extra-filmically. For instance, in Ivens's iconic repertory, woman-mother is now given equal emphasis in relation to woman-soldier and woman-worker. (To be fair, Ivens has always been more sensitive than most of his contemporaries to the importance of women's labour and the drudgery involved in housework. He scrupulously had presented the farmwife in *Power and the Land* [1940, USA, 33] as an equal partner in the Ohio dairy farm.) History, as well as Loridan, has also played a role in Ivens's shift in emphasis. The role of women in the Spanish Civil War, for example, hardly compares to that in the Indochinese struggles in which, according to the couple's testimony, the women's heroism and perseverance were crucial to the final military (and economic) victory.

With *Yukong* the project context was not a military situation like Spain and

Vietnam but rather the production of everyday life in a peacetime period of gradual normalisation. There is in general throughout the twelve hours a rigorous commitment on the part of the filmmakers to balance the role of women in the ongoing revolution to that of the men, even and especially where a certain form of the sexual division of labour still exists. This is true, for example, in the oilfields of Daqing. In *Pétrole*, this film on an industrial community, not a feminist topic per se, we see that the manual work and most of the engineering jobs are seemingly assigned to men. As usual, this work offers more of a 'strong visual impression' than that of the women. Yet there is special attention to gender politics in the film's monitoring of political discussion among workers, and especially among women workers. The women in the oil fields say, for instance, that formerly their husbands never talked of anything serious with them, but that now they discuss economics and politics. Formerly their husbands' permission was necessary in their allotment of the family income, but now there is no such hierarchisation of family responsibility. Women hoeing vegetables in the shadow of the derricks reject the possible status implications of such a division of labour. They take pride instead in their contribution to the oil project and claim equal importance in their roles with the men.

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Elsewhere in *Pétrole*, an animated 'group interview'/conversation by women sewing-machine workers on Marxist theory and economic policy is interrupted by one of the series' rare interpretative voice-over interventions. This voice-over updates Lenin's famous remark that revolution consists in a woman kitchen-worker participating in the state, with the corollary that revolution must also mean seamstresses talking of philosophy. At another point, the anti-Confucius campaign that intrigued Western correspondents in the seventies is given a feminist slant when Confucius is referred to as the 'woman-eater' and is quoted as saying, 'A door opening on a courtyard is not a real door. A woman is not a real human being'.⁹

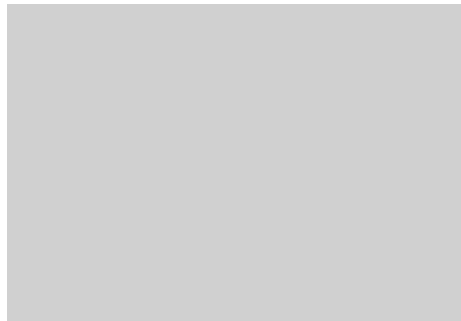
This film and the others do not whitewash the situation of women in China. Although there seem to be women on the research and administrative bodies of the oil project, as we have already seen, the film does not paper over the residual existence of what seems to be an unnecessarily rigid sexual division of labour. Even more, as *Femme* demonstrates, the implication of the twelve films seen as a whole is that the liberation struggle of women has advanced much further in the vocational area than on the home front: Gao, whose professional duties as welder and union official are the focus of *Femme*, seems clearly more outspoken in the exercise of her job than in relation to her husband, whom she sees only on the weekend. In *Pharmacie*, during a weekend visit to the young woman pharmacist's home, the husband is carefully shown doing his duty at the washboard, but he is also clearly disgruntled at being filmed doing so.

Moreover, this film and the others, and by extension Chinese feminist discourse in general, are unhappily reticent in probing of areas of sexual mores and family structures. Ivens put the following relativist light on this matter:

Sexuality, here in Europe it's a rehashed-over subject. After centuries of prohibitions we are living a period of relative liberty that can be interpreted as degeneration or as progress. In China, sexuality doesn't present itself in these terms at all. In old China, that is to say China before 1949, marriages were all arranged by families. Girls were sold, and if a woman publicly displayed her love for a boy, she risked being lynched. Sexual freedom in China is first of all monogamy; it's that a girl can freely choose her husband and, still today, when a woman marries, one asks her if she is being forced or not. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 325)

592 | The contradictory cultural and historical difference of which Ivens speaks is highlighted in *Village* during a sequence when the women's group of young fishers are swimming on the village beach, in uniformly modest black swimsuits. The voice-over explains that the cameraman was too shy to record the moment of leisure and companionship in anything other than extreme long shot. Yet at the same time, the openness of the discussion of birth control carried on in public in the crowded pharmacy puts Western society to shame – even in the 21st century. Gao's disclosures of her decision to limit her family and the revelation of several long-distance marriages seem the only tentative probes of alternatives to the traditional heterofamilial framework, which is otherwise taken completely for granted. All the same, Ivens and Loridan do not indulge the template of the companionate couple, still enforced in the West, and implicitly explore the extended family – itself situated within a neighbourly courtyard that provides much visual evocation of community – as an economic and reproductive unit.

109. *Le Village des pêcheurs* (1976). A group encounter with the collective of young women fishers reminds that the precarious situation of women is still being 'struggled'. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Village is set in the maritime village of Da Yu Dao, in Shandong province, where an exemplary collective of young women have become sailors and fishers. Everyday life in the village and the application there of the Cultural Revolution are on the agenda, with a heroically Ivensian backdrop of vessels plying their way over the brilliantly blue ocean in and out of the cinematic harbour. But the centrepiece is the young women's voices and labour, and they are shaped by discourses of then and now. Their autonomy and their physical strength are both taken for granted and given a heroic cinematic construction. However, interviews with individual male authorities from the clinic doctor to the revolutionary council chair threaten to overwhelm the more taciturn women, usually encountered in groups, and remind that the situation is still being 'struggled' (to use Cultural Revolution parlance). All in all, the film brings out the precarious contingency of women's progress across the society as a whole, which adds to these two films' credibility: the feminist achievement in China is shown as a slow, constant process involving everyone, men and women, in a process of analysis and critique like the larger Cultural Revolution itself. Significantly the best feminist films in Western society in the 1970s had relied, like that of Ivens and Loridan, on various incarnations of direct cinema in their endeavour to capture the process of perpetual analysis and exchange, consciousness raising, and ideological offensive that are the preliminary requisites and continuing support for the feminist struggle.

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From a homosocial women's universe we come to a male one, *Une caserne* (*The Army Camp*, 57 min.). The Nanjing military community offered the filmmakers a glimpse of army life where officers eat with the men, soldiers help peasants with agriculture, soldiers' wives and officers work alongside the soldiers in neighbouring factories, and the military helps the civilian community in road upkeep, cultural activity, and militia training. The filmmakers must have sensed the extreme sensitivity around the People's Liberation Army during the Cultural Revolution, 'the pillar in the Chinese party-state' according to Badiou ([2008] 2010, 144), only a year after the fatal alleged attempted defection of Marshal Lin Biao. The latter had occasioned a symbolic stop to years of extreme tension between the military and political leadership of the country, which at times was on the brink of civil war – especially around the army's role in curtailing the excesses of the late 1960s and in returning the country to 'order' (McFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006). No one in the crew realised that the Nanjing shoot was the series' egregious example of pre-shoot manipulation, in this case by military brass who knew a thing or two about liaison with the outside world: the soldiers were experienced men kept on for an extra year for the purpose, and in retrospect the accommodations had seemed 'too beautiful, too tidy', with a ten-man room converted into a six-man room for the filmmakers. Moreover, the inevitable

segment of the soldiers criticising their officers probably sets off warning signals to some viewers with their perfunctory ritualistic quality. Not surprising then that *Caserne* turned out to be one of the stiffest and most cautious of the *Yukong* films in general, though still rich in its gleanings and much classic Ivensalia.

110. *Une caserne* (1976). A criticism session with officers and soldiers has a perfunctory, ritualistic quality in this stiffest of the *Yukong* films. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The role of intellectuals within the Cultural Revolution was another fraught issue for the filmmakers – and obviously for this writer: as a self-professing intellectual who to this day tries to live the Cultural Revolution attack on ‘the divorce between theory and practice’. A comfortably tenured academic, I wonder what I would do in the situation of the many intellectuals who come alive in *Yukong* segments. Would I perform before the cameras with courageous authenticity? with duplicitous and artful complicity? a combination of both? Intellectuals including filmworkers had been regular targets of scapegoating and violence by Red Guards and others during the first several years of the Cultural Revolution. As the couple were first getting their project off the ground, many of Ivens’s former collaborators from the 1950s were languishing in the remote countryside in ‘May 7 Schools’ ‘working alongside the peasants’, and could not be contacted. At least two of *Yukong*’s most valuable collaborators had been recruited from the countryside, apparently by Zhou, in order to contribute to the documentary production, manager Qian Liren and translator Lu Songhe. The issue was touched on in *Usine* with its cheerful encounter with engineers who formerly had had nothing to do with workers but are now seen working alongside them and relating to them as equals in order to maximise improvements to equipment and procedures. Ivens and Loridan joined in the ritual and worked for a week in the Beijing locomotives factory, the subject of *Femme*, to try out this particular Cultural Revolution ritual, apparently with benefits to all (Stufkens, 2008, 419, 440-441).

111. *Le Professeur Tsien* (1976). The role of intellectuals: the subject Professor Qian critiques knowledge as merchandise with a grain of personal experience and authenticity. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Professeur Tsien features a 60-something university teacher Qian Weichang (1912-2010), a physicist who had been the target of the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution, and tells his story. It is a moving and seemingly honest story, for all the ambiguities that surround the long takes of him, his wife and his two teenaged daughters sitting in their comfortable living room in front of his bookshelves, fanning themselves in the hot lights and the Beijing summer heat. Qian spent the late thirties and the war in North America doing his graduate work in physics and returned to China on the eve of the Revolution. His narrative conforms to the familiar ‘then and now’ and self-criticism templates, but the grain of personal experience adds individual authenticity to the encounter: the wife who occasionally jumps in to add even more correctness to the conversation (‘We agreed with the Red Guards’), the son whose joining the ranks of the workers was first felt as a loss and then as a gain, his reported experience working in a steel factory where the worker at his side taught him about testing metals, the critique of knowledge as merchandise, and Qian’s earlier fetishisation of his books. The role of intellectuals is thus treated as thoroughly and as sensitively though as superficially as the running time of twelve minutes suggests: it is hard to understand Qian’s commitment, and that of other rehabilitated citizens within the other films, to moving beyond recent traumas without recrimination or blame, at least publicly. Maybe non-consensual ostracism and re-education in some cases were actually a positive experience? When I pondered the same enigma in Beijing in 2008, listening to panels that included several May 7 School veterans, and hearing Lu and other witnesses in Seeger show the same positive forward focus alongside their utter devotion to Ivens, I attributed the performance of generosity and frankness by these witnesses in part at least to cultural factors, but this of course is not the whole story.

What to think of *Yukong*’s three cultural shorts, on the Chinese opera, circus, and traditional crafts respectively? Historically the courtship of authori-

tarian or bureaucratic regimes with 'cultural' cinema had been as productive as it was a safe apolitical refuge throughout the 20th century, whether we are talking about the various state studios Grierson sparked around the Commonwealth from Canada to India, whose finest creations at certain moments tended to be uncontroversial arts documentaries, or the six-decade-long cinematic history of the USSR and its tributaries, which traversed cautious periods when its finest output consisted of biopics of nineteenth century composers and medieval icon painters or adaptations of Shakespeare. *Une répétition à l'Opéra de Pékin (In Rehearsal at the Peking Opera, 32 min.)*, focuses on opera performers in acrobatics and dance and a performance of a new work; *Entraînement au Cirque de Pékin (Behind the Scenes at the Peking Circus, 16 min.)* again focuses on performers and a performance of acrobatics; and *Les Artisans (Traditional Handicrafts, 15 min.)* focuses on lingering ancient crafts. All emphasise training and the transmission of artistic skills and properties from mentor to student, from one generation to the next. Shot towards the end of the *Yukong* circuit in Beijing, these three shorts express a direct cinema style that is the most restrained of the series, though the intimate, attentive, submissive encounter with workers on the job jibes perfectly with the Ivens *oeuvre*. At the same time the three films are exceptional in the series in that their subject is presented without discussion or materialist framework. Sun Hongyun's (personal communication, May 2014) opinion is that the three shorts were intended to respond to Antonioni's film. These three films were clearly an implicit acknowledgment of the threat to the transmission of China's artistic heritage posed by the Cultural Revolution, specifically thanks to the hegemony of Ivens's nemesis, cultural despot Jiang Qing (legendary for allowing eight and only eight permissible opera templates). This reading gives these otherwise seemingly innocuous little films a slight political thrust. It also gave them a mighty propaganda edge with Western audiences who could well have heard of the desecration of Buddhist monuments and other treasures during the worst earlier excesses of the Red Guards.

But the filmmakers surely had an eye on programming as well. The respective combinations of opera with petroleum, circus with military life and the fishing industry, and craftsmen painting dolls with generator manufacture respectively in the individual theatrical packages was not so much a wry comment on politics as show business as a strategic insertion of the spectacular into the discursive. The filmmakers disavowed the lure of the exotic with one hand and with the other sweetened the package with great acrobatic leaps, non-western music and pretty porcelain for their theatrical and television audiences in the West who may just have been experiencing blue and grey Mao suit fatigue. Almost never discussed in *Yukong* literature or in Chinese accounts of the series, these three shorts (the longest is the opera film) were

possibly soft-pedalled because of culture's association with Jiang, or simply because culture needed to play second fiddle to production and politics, as it arguably had through Ivens's career. Whatever the case, it is likely that these preoccupations with the Chinese cultural heritage were the only remnants in *Yukong* of Ivens's original 1972 synthesis project and the likeliest bridge forward to the fully realised encounter with China's cultural heritage in *Histoire* in the 1980s.

112. *Une répétition à l'Opéra de Pékin* (1976). A political thrust in these three restrained films about cultural transmission: an implicit critique of the Cultural Revolution's threat to heritage? DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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113. *Entraînement au Cirque de Pékin* (1976). Familiar exoticism offers a propaganda and programming edge with Western audiences perhaps fatigued by Mao jackets? Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



114. *Les Artisans* (1976). Observation of fastidious craftsmanship without an overlay of analysis or materialist context. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



Finally, *Impressions d'une ville – Changhai* (*Impressions of a City: Shanghai* (60 min.) shot cumulatively during the filmmakers' six-month-long stay in the southern metropolis at the start of their peregrinations, is perhaps the most personal of the *Yukong* films. The commentary for *Pharmacie* had already confessed to the Parisians' fondness for this cosmopolitan and elegant port city most resembling their own, and *Impressions* indulges this affection. Perhaps the most dated of the *Yukong* series, *Impressions* feels now like a time capsule of practices and spaces that have disappeared from urban China in the meantime. It is also the *Yukong* instalment where the significant use of a hidden exterior camera is noticeable. Nevertheless window-shopping and on-the-street interviews, indulgence in cross-cultural observation, make the film unique. Long interviews with two charming traffic cops who talk about their work in relation to the Cultural Revolution, delighted that anyone is interested in their unglamorous work, make the film especially irresistible. An ending with the ceremonial launch of a huge ocean vessel as spectacular as the concluding mass rally in *Pétrole* and the climactic denouements of a few other films as well, brings the tourist gaze back to the celebration of everyday production. In comparison to Ivens's other city films – especially *Regen* (*Rain*, 1929, Netherlands, 16), *La Seine a rencontré Paris* (*The Seine Meets Paris*, 1957, France, 32), and *...À Valparaiso* (1963, France/Chile, 27) – Ivens and Loridan deepened the ethnographic potential of the hoary genre with person-on-the-street interviews and the intensity of direct synch-sound. But they did not do so at the expense of the enchanting lyrical potential of the legendary harbour (which did not enchant the Gang of Four, who found the misty dawn Ivensian lyricism bespoke pollution – not necessarily untrue...).

115. *Impressions d'une ville: Changhai* (1976). An Ivensian harbour vista in a classic city film with deepened ethnographic potential. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



At the start of the 1960s, the new technology of direct cinema suggested special possibilities in the direction of cinematic ‘democracy’, the weighty concept invoked strategically by Ivens in the 1976 citation above (Macciocchi, 1976), and of the political empowerment entailed by Loridan’s phrase ‘letting the people speak’. By the early seventies it had still to live up fully to this potential, ultimately neither focusing consistently on potentially oppositional topics nor applied systematically to transformative ends – except perhaps for France in the aftermath of May 1968. Sporadic currents of an activist direct cinema elsewhere in Europe and in North America, and isolated movements of similar orientation in Latin America and Asia (such as that led by Sukhdev and some less prominent regional contemporaries in India), struggled to build up a continuous tradition with a wide base, a culture around a genuinely radical discourse or a significant impact. If nothing else, the increasingly expensive, emerging standard platform of synch colour 16mm continued to be a major hurdle for those typically under-budgeted and under-equipped filmmakers who moved into the seventies still wanting to change the world. The practices of even the most sustained projects, like the US Newsreel collective output (1968 on) or the Canadian Challenge for Change project (1967-1980), were difficult to maintain and renew. Many landmark political films of the day like Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas’s *La Hora de los hornos* (*Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968, Argentina, 260) didn’t make full use of synchronised sound, no doubt because they couldn’t afford it (they couldn’t even afford colour!). But by the last half of the 1970s, two prizewinning North American feature documentaries, both focusing on gender in relation to the classic proletarian theme of the strike action, *Harlan County, USA*. (Barbara Kopple, 1976, 103) and *Une histoire de femmes* (*A Wives’ Tale*, Sophie Bissonnette, Martin Duckworth, and Joyce Rock, 1980, Canada, 73), demonstrated how instrumental the 16mm ‘let the people speak’ formula had become as the tenacious New Left clung to a foothold in the mainstream. But they did so through a strong narrative formula rather than an interactive or rigorously analytic agenda. As for the French films of the summer of 1968, Loridan-Ivens (telephone interview, February 2014) does not remember what films from this surge the pair got into trouble for showing at Leipzig in 1970 or brought with them to Beijing in 1971, but their legacy was already being tarnished by Paris intellectuals for whom each season brought its latest political fashion and faction.

Writing in 1976 after having seen *Yukong* and interviewing the two filmmakers, yet sensing the hurdles to applying it to the western context, the Paris critic Guy Hennebelle assessed a decade’s worth of French progressive cinema, and a lively subcategory of direct documentaries in film and video that aspired to ‘let the people speak’. He was more inclined to be critical of their abuses and faults than he was inspired by their demonstrated impact or prom-

ise, and echoed some of Ivens's criticisms from the previous decade, ultimately advocating hybrid cinemas for which the direct would be only one of several elements:

The crushing majority of militant films are shot in direct. [...] This fact suggests once more the reaction against the polish and slickness of the Hollywood cinema and the will to assure oneself a guarantee of authenticity in 'letting people speak' who have never had the chance. But if the direct offers these advantages, it can set loose also – and this happens too often – a tedious avalanche of words, a verbal deluge which quickly becomes tiring and which is also frustrating: in effect, it is rarely more interesting to hear someone telling past events than to see with one's own eyes the events themselves, indirect or reconstructed. [...]

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As much as the direct has undeniable advantages, it also presents an especially grave disadvantage on certain occasions: in effect, it happens that the people interviewed restore in their speech the clichés of the dominant ideology that have been hammered into them by television and other media. If they are not careful, militant filmmakers can, in spite of themselves, simply end up rehashing the ideology they are trying to combat! The use of the direct can correspond also in certain cases to an escape from the problems that political analysis inevitably poses. [...] One gets out of [them] by 'letting the masses speak', but in reality one only masks one's incapacity to produce a correct interpretation of the situation, to achieve the 'communist decoding of the world' spoken of by Vertov. [...]

I can't say often enough how false it is that direct cinema restores reality without deformation of any kind. It is better to admit frankly the manipulation and make it agreeable to the eye and the ear by making use of the whole arsenal of the cinema. (Hennebelle, [1976] 1984, 181-182)

If we can now forgive Hennebelle's overlooking of to the cinematic potential of oral historiography, at the time I enthusiastically opined in *Jump Cut* that in *Yukong* we finally had a film that represented that convergence of technical potential and truly democratic subject matter that had been so long in coming. Familiar with the ideological traps that Hennebelle was locating within the French progressive direct cinema, I felt and feel that this epic negotiated its way dialectically through these traps, less through the formal hybridity that had characterised earlier work from *Pour le Mistral* (*For the Mistral*, 1965, France, 33) to *Loin* than through a dialectic process of both embracing solidarity and moving beyond solidarity. Ivens's and Loridan's complex marshaling of the direct in their outsiders' exploration of ongoing social transformation

allowed a detailed, challenging and above all useful relationship with a people involved in the aspiration to and the process of radical change in their daily lives. The filmmakers' technological apparatus, multiform direct style, and assemblage of multiple generic angles (two portraits; three city films; one event film; three institution films; three arts films) were finely tuned to capture cumulatively the dynamism and intricacy of the process of social change and democratic empowerment in twelve widely different contexts in five distinct regions and to bring it back to us in the west as an intervention in our own process.

I also in 1976 observed that the Cultural Revolution, as encountered, recorded, and transmitted by Ivens and Loridan, was engaged with as a living struggle rather than as a *fait accompli*. Rather than fall into the additional trap into which socialist realism was arguably mired in *Pierwsze lata* (*The First Years*, 1949, Bulgaria/Czechoslovakia/Poland, 99), Ivens and Loridan and the Chinese themselves presented their revolution as a constantly ongoing process in the ordinary, everyday lives of flesh-and-blood individuals. The process was constantly in need of self-criticism and renewal, and was transforming not only political and economic structures but personal ones as well. *Yukong* was not an exhaustive book on the methods and effects of the Revolution. What Ivens and Loridan did instead was take the time and energy to really observe and listen to Chinese people engaged in taking control over their own everyday lives. And the filmmakers did so with an amazing degree of intimacy, the sense of which they succeeded in passing on to the 1970s New Left audience.

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Of course, I could not know in 1976 that the next few years, after the deaths of Zhou and Mao and the fall of the Gang of Four, would see a sharp turn in Chinese politics and history – or was it a *gradual* turn? A whole generation of modernisers, moderates, and pragmatists rose to the surface and would in fact turn into that crude demon of Mao's thought, capitalist roaders. Much but not all of the process that I had admired onscreen would be renounced, yet not only *Yukong* but also its filmmakers, who had fled the capital in 1975, would be paradoxically disavowed, rehabilitated, and celebrated at the same time, and then politely forgotten before yet another rehabilitation. But that is another story we shall come back to a little bit later to alight on briefly before moving on to the final Chinese chapter of Ivens's career.

Meanwhile in 1976, the finest compliment that was paid the film in the French press was that of Louis Marcorelles,¹⁰ the high priest of direct cinema in France, who came round to Ivens's side after his 1967 demurrer on *Parallèle*. Marcorelles had a slightly different take than Hennebelle and reinforced my own response, referring to Ivens's and Loridan's achievement as 'cinematic Maoism':

A strange predestination one day had to bring together Mao Zedong's applied Marxism-Leninism and that modern technique for capturing everyday life called direct cinema. Just as the masses are henceforth writing the history of the world, and particularly in China, just as lightweight cinema, which demands a minimum of technology but a maximum of human presence, constant attention to reality, offered the ideal working tool for approaching the Chinese masses, letting them speak.

The big word is out: letting them speak, or, if one moves to the other side of the camera, to take up speech.¹¹ [...] Everyone now has the right to speak: a different speech, not only the frozen speech of manuals, the dramatized speech of Corneille and Labiche, but the lived speech of those whom we have never heard speak, live, the forgotten ones of history, those who create the world with their own hands. The meeting between the applied Maoism of the Cultural Revolution and this cinematic Maoism [is] defined by a very precise technique. [...]

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No more than correct ideas, dear to Chairman Mao, correct films don't fall from the sky: they are obtained through the strength of the mike and the camera, in a daily combat with nature among the people. [...]

In terms of cinema, a revolution it is [...] the camera of Li Zexiang was in perpetual movement, marrying the fluid shapes of the real. Communication was established by exchange, friendship, familiarity: by the camera as well, which one forgot, as should be the case. The image, whatever one thinks of it, keeps all its importance, even takes on new relief in counterpoint with speech, gives a purer meaning to the words of the tribe. [...] *Autour du pétrole* and *L'Usine de générateurs* are the most successful of the package, making the links evident. (Marcorelles, 1976)

I agreed fully with the term 'cinematic Maoism', apt in its context of the post-1968 Left, with all of the connotations of a populist inspiration and authority and a self-renewing dynamic rooted in the people. Direct cinema previously 'let the people speak', to use Loridan's expression for the goal of the China films (Loridan, interview with author, February 1976), with certain important successes to its credit as well as the liabilities that Hennebelle (1976) stressed. But when the resources of direct cinema were finally applied to a society with a concentrated agenda of 'letting the people speak' for the first time in their history, the result shifted paradigms.

In formal and cinematic terms, Ivens and Loridan 'let the people speak' in a variety of ways, deploying a range of direct cinema processes, sometimes observational, occasionally even narrative, but mostly interactive. Interviews and monologue performances are the prevalent idiom: often the camera con-

fronts a single subject head-on, usually in close-up, mostly 'set up' in the sense that a collaborative spirit dominates (though the filmmakers refused to give the questions in advance), but sometimes also improvised on-the-spot (Lu Songhe, interview and conference presentation, Beijing, November 2008). The subject or subjects talk directly to the camera in response to provocatively worded questions thrown out from behind the lens, almost always by Loridan. Either responding or performing, the subjects are remarkably candid and also are clearly eager to please the filmmakers, to assert their own dignity and empowerment (and perhaps even to please the local officials who may have often been hovering off-camera, as *Yukong's* critics have stressed [Zhang Tongdao, conference presentation, Beijing, November 2008]). Yet the evidence onscreen and on the soundtrack cannot be denied: the witnesses speak politically – personally, substantively, eloquently – in a way that undermines whatever myths of Chinese reserve, Red Guard cant, manipulation by CPC cadres or more generalised surveillance a Western viewer has held before seeing such a film.

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Loridan's talent for putting her subjects at ease had been amply demonstrated before, as we have seen. In China, she gradually learned the language over the period of her stay, that is, the Beijing dialect, and two fulltime interpreters functioned as an integrated part of the crew. Despite the necessity of filtering all communication back and forth through translation (and for eventual non-French and non-Chinese spectators through an even more multi-layered process of post-synched translation), the dedication of the filmmakers and the openness and humility with which they were able to relate to their subjects ensured the trust of those filmed. I have heard it speculated that the two filmmakers' shortness of stature was also an unspoken and perhaps even unrecognised factor in this trust – and of course Ivens's wrinkles (notwithstanding the Red Guards' sometimes hideous gerontophobia) – and the relationship of trust was obviously reinforced by the Chinese identity of the crew.

But spatial configurations were also key: production stills of interview set-ups reveal how the filmmakers and crew were typically part of a close relationship that spatially matched a real world interaction of a small group of five or six speaking in normal voices. In this sense, for example, the slightly cramped space of the Shanghai drugstore was actually an asset. One leisurely four-minute conversation with a young woman employee two-thirds of the way through *Pharmacie* (a character, whom we have already observed serving clients, administering acupuncture, and participating in long staff meetings, and who was in fact initially planned to take up more space in the film [Lu Songhe, interview with author, November 2008]) unfolds with the subject busy behind the counter in the midst of the establishment's working day. The camera varies its proximity to her, sometimes capturing the whole busy environ-

ment and sometimes focusing on her smiling and slightly shy but voluble face up front and up close.

116. *La Pharmacie no. 3: Changhai* (1976). The charming pharmacy employee who later takes us home: one of Ivens and Loridan's many open, interactive and mutually trusting portraits. (DVD box, 2008). Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



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A male fellow employee occasionally jokingly kibitzes and customers listen in and smile and floating cutaways allow us not to lose sight of the activity all around. Prodded by Loridan's questions she talks first of her six-year career in the shop, beginning with her initial feelings of misfit, her youthful aspiration to practice medicine, but then her understanding through the Cultural Revolution process that participating in the life of the community pharmacy satisfies her needs and 'serves the people'. She then veers into family life and reflects on her role as a woman and on sharing with her husband their responsibilities, finances, and childrearing. She then tactfully generalises on women's achievement in China and her own feelings of freedom. Eager to please, flattered by the attention and the opportunity to share, but blushing at the bluntness of the questioning, this social actor's overall performance-portrait, its climax in intense close-up, engages with both crew and spectator in a performative relationship that is typical of the basic *Yukong* approach. Later we will follow her home to meet her extended family, where her descriptions of family life and gender roles are borne out but complicated.

Let's elaborate slightly while still on the topic of the close-up, the principal visual co-efficient of the film's extraordinary relationship with its subjects, a configuration that can of course be optical as well as spatial. Indeed, *Yukong's* succession of long contemplative close-ups of the Chinese people is itself a source of genuine fascination, but can be thought through more precisely in comparative terms. For example there is a categorical distinction to be made between this technique as used by Ivens and Loridan and that used by Antonioni in his China film. Antonioni's film is also in many respects a physiognomical treatise, or as he says in the film's burdensome narration, 'a survey of

faces'. There are worlds of difference between Ivens and Loridan's open and interactive portraits, based on the mutual trust of filmmaker and subject, and the close-up telephoto zooms that Antonioni inflicts, for example, on reticent subjects in a remote village who have never seen a Westerner (and who were simultaneously being harassed by local cadres, according to Jie Li [2009]). Antonioni also has close-ups taken in a market with a hidden camera¹² filming shoppers among the vegetable and poultry stalls. In principle, these shots are hardly different from the close-up zooms of the chickens and hogs that also compose the sequence.

Beijing scholar Sun Hongyun (2009, 50; conference presentation, Beijing, November 2008) pursues the comparison, contrasting Ivens's 'affection' with Antonioni's 'infiltration', calling the latter's optical close-ups 'excessively aggressive' and his contemplative style as 'callous', cold and intrusive. The less diplomatic Loridan went even further: '[Antonioni had] a look and also a behaviour vis-à-vis the people he was filming that, for me, was very disagreeable. Because as for me I don't like snatching [*piquer*] people like butterflies, whether it's in China, Japan, or Ardèche. It was camera-rape, and ourselves, we wanted to do the opposite' (Ivens and Loridan, 1976a, 8). There is certainly a qualitative difference between silent faces captured by a long lens and close-ups of subjects in dialogue with the filmmakers behind the camera. In the one case, the artist seems to impose him/herself upon the subjects; they become mystified, exoticised, colonialised, if you will. In the latter case, the artists have subjected themselves to the people filmed in a kind of cinematic democracy. Here the people have asserted control over their images through the exercise of their capacity for self-expression. The central principle of Ivens and Loridan's film is that one must listen and engage as well as observe. The filmmakers extended the Maoist principle of people's control of their own lives and social situation to the realm of the image and the soundtrack.

Interviews are not only of single individuals: the group interview is a sophisticated and versatile resource throughout the series as well, and in some ways arguably reflects China's volatile but fundamentally collectivist society better than the individual close-up interview. Although Jie Li employs a dichotomy of private-public in this context, I believe the individual-collective one is more applicable, certainly to Chinese society in the early 1970s. I have argued elsewhere that the 'group interview' format, relatively rarer in the individualist West, emerged historically in other such contexts as direct cinema was affirmed and adapted to local cultures, for example the newly surfacing independent Indian documentary in the next decade, whether an extended family address the camera together as their slum dwelling is being demolished in Anand Patwardhan's *Bombay Our City* (1985, 82) or a group of fishermen do likewise in their beachfront workplace in the face of state appropriation

in the aptly titled *Voices from Baliapal* (Vasudha Joshi and Ranjan Palit, 1988, 40). In a typical group interview in *Yukong*, say of a factory work-floor cohort, a question often goes around a circle, and the group input ranges from substantive (*Usine*) to smilingly and proudly perfunctory (as when Loridan warms up a group of women at a day care centre in *Village* by asking each to share the number of children they have had). The collective interview or 'talking group' has a rich potential for both cultural and political explanations of the relation of the individual to the group and to the camera:

A social actor's identity is defined by his or her relation to a group, rather than through a distinctive individual psychology. His or her first alliance is not to the self or the state, but to the immediate community, on whom rests the responsibility for responding collectively to an outside threat and for working out a solution. [...] In the talking group convention, allowing oneself to be filmed is not a private affair but a participation in collective speech, in group identification and affirmation. [...] The processes of oral culture create a catalytic dialectical tension among different groups and enter into community consolidation and problem solving. Group speech operates on a collective scale with a transformative power that is analogous to that of the individual subject's access to language in the psychoanalytic process. [...] Functioning as a kind of cultural empowerment with a wide range of political ramifications, the Indian direct cinema matches the first-person plural of its subjects' dialogue with a model of first-person plural cinematic discourse. (Waugh, [1990] 2011b, 248-252)

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Of course the Parisians' status as outsiders complicates this last match, but all the same *Yukong's* group interviews, from the smiling pair of traffic cops in *Impressions* to the group of busy female agricultural workers in *Pétrole* – talking while cornhusking, knitting, breastfeeding, sometimes talking all at once – demonstrate a collective cinematic empowerment. Jie Li (2009, 35) points to a more insidious aspect of the collective interview: '*Yukong* rarely if ever features a private interview – all interviews are conducted within a work team, a family, or another kind of group setting, thereby showing another fact of life during the Cultural Revolution: no one can escape surveillance from others'. While her cautionary note is important, I do not agree fully with her (for one thing she exaggerates the scarcity of private interviews in the series), since cultural values around privacy and individualism are intrinsic to the matter, and since all collective societies encompass by definition benign forms of surveillance and constraint by which individual behaviours are kept in conformity with cultural norms (and surveillance is hardly unknown in certain individualist societies!).

Sometimes in *Yukong*, rather than interacting with social actors, the camera and recorder simply participate in an ongoing event, which always develops spontaneously in spite of their presence. The patient and gradual immersion of the crew within an environment allows the slow building up of mutual confidence with the people to be filmed. Non-interactive episodes are sometimes observational in the strict sense, for example recurring scenes where the always fascinated Ivens just intently watches physical labour, from epic long-shot earthmoving to a close-up of the highly skilled turn of a lever, as if almost nostalgic for the 1930s. Sometimes the non-interactive approach might be called catalytic or '*mise-en-présence*'. In the latter sense social actors and crew collaborate on facilitating an event that might not otherwise have happened there and then but which would then unfold spontaneously – a principle well known to the era's practitioners of direct cinema in the West. Sometimes the fine line between non-interventionist observation and collaborative *mise-en-présence* is blurred: a case in point is the pharmacy staff's weekly meetings for criticism and improvement, which the by now familiar crew unobtrusively observed and which are marked by ranges of comfortable spontaneity alongside what one might call exemplary performances among certain participants. An engaging five-minute conversation where a dozen workers move from the advantages of having oxygen tanks in stock to the importance of courtesy and patience with all customers fluctuates among self-conscious ritual performances of prescribed self-criticism to interventions by individuals who have clearly forgotten the camera. Also in this category, collective food preparation scenes abound throughout the series, including an extended courtyard dumpling-making sequence in *Femme*, and are excellent occasions for performing the truth of relationships – among social actors, between them and the crew, between them and the spectator.

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117. *Une femme, une famille* (1976). Star Gao Shulan (foreground) with her mother and family in their courtyard making dumplings: 'the mixture of truth and theatre'. DVD frame capture. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The artifice of a spatially stable and temporally delimited narrative event where everyone's busy fingers contribute (usually ending in the pleasurable, shared consumption of the virtual produced) is highly productive. Tani Barlow's (2005a) expression, 'the mixture of truth and theatre' is an apt description of such an effect. Another term from French-language direct cinema theory of the period, already encountered in Chapter 7, is highly applicable to such events, *cinéma vécu* ('lived cinema').

608 | Admittedly an aficionado of observational purity could view the *mise-en-présence* strategy with apprehension, and the unexamined pejorative terms 'staging', 'set-up' or 'artificially arranged' (Seeger, 2008) enter the discussion with their own ideological colour (though the terms are never applied to Rouch or Perrault, to mention just two of the direct cinema innovators of the technique in the first decade of the direct). For the last 50 years Ivens had obstinately insisted on the documentarist's ethical right to 'reconstruct' the event to be filmed. He paradoxically asserted that the look and feeling of authenticity are more important than actual authenticity. Aside from an occasional lapse into the socialist realist fondness for static, declamatory *mise-en-scène*, rare enough but undeniable, *Yukong*, to my and other 1970s eyes, was remarkably free of such liabilities. Subsequent exposés of alleged deceit, manipulation, and gullibility, reports of multiple takes for example, constitute not only a sideswipe at Ivens's and Loridan's ethics and intelligence as artists but also a misunderstanding of a complex technique that is based on the paradoxical relationship of artifice, constraint, and performance to truth. Zhang Tongdao (quoted in Seegers, 2008b, 5) puts it more pragmatically and less judgmentally than others in terms of subtle relations on the site of filming and the balance between layers of 'realness' and 'positive' and 'negative' sides, in particular after the early Xinjiang disaster when the filmmakers adamantly rejected the interference of local cadres:

I don't think Ivens shot any fake scenes. You need to distinguish between public China and private China. The footage Ivens shot was all real. The outer layer he filmed was real. But there was another reality which he didn't have access to. He wanted to document it, but he was surrounded by government officials. He only got to see what they deemed appropriate. [...] The people who accompanied him were all Party members. They were higher and lower officials. It's not that they misled Ivens on purpose. They themselves felt that they had to show the positive side rather than the negative side.

Moreover,

The Chinese government arranged for many officials and cinematographers from Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio to accompa-

ny Ivens so that he would not be able to get close to the negative aspects of China. Ivens tried to fight against this because when shooting Ivens's principles were to pursue truth and nature. When he was filming, Ivens only met people that had been trained to be shot. Ivens could only shoot the bright side of China but he could not get close to the other side that showed the fighting, the starvation, and the difficult labour and education. Ivens was blinded by a mask and never doubted the correctness of the Cultural Revolution.

(This comment about 'training' is misleading, problematised if only by the pro-filmic behaviour onscreen of many subjects throughout the series. Even for some subjects who may have been involved in pre-shoot orientation activity with local cadres or Beijing facilitators, such as in *Pétrole* or *Caserne*, around anything that stretched from how to behave in front of the camera to what we would now call 'talking points' to include or emphasise, the word 'train' is too blunt a concept to describe this process, in my opinion, all the more so since questions were not provided in advance [Lu Songhe, interview and conference presentation, Beijing, 2008]. If Prof. Zhang is accurate on this nuance, the trained subjects all turned out to be brilliant actors, admirably skilled in Western-style behavioural acting, which cannot possibly be the case.) Less nuanced accusations (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 329) are usually also based on a sloppy scrutiny or memory of what is on screen, as well as critics' and participants' ignorance and decontextualisation vis-à-vis direct cinema's inventory of strategies and procedures; moreover they have seldom been corroborated in precise terms of what second-language or translated informants actually meant to say, and thus have not undermined my fundamental trust in the authenticity of this fundamental strategy (more later). Ivens with Loridan had developed these strategies of *mise-en-présence* during the Indochina period wherever budgets and bombing lulls permitted and mastered them over eighteen months in peacetime China where other less urgent stresses were in play.

Finally, here and there throughout the series, collaborative narrative *mise-en-scène*, a tactic held over from the pre-direct period, is a fallback resource. This is especially true in *Femme*, not surprisingly, since it is the series' only extended individual portrait, and Gao was a party member, union delegate, and Cultural Revolution veteran who no doubt instinctively felt the need to control every nuance in her portrait. The technique looked dated in 1976, for example, with the camera following Gao on a train with her daughter and husband, all strictly following the 'don't look at the camera rule', but the film springs back to life with its privileged moments of interactive group interviews and long *mises-en-présence*. Narrative editing, including even the hoary point of view shots that were already problematical in *La Seine*, as I have argued in

Chapter 6, compounds the issue. As late as 1968, Ivens had been scolded by Marcorelles himself for this latter tendency in *Parallèle*, as we have seen. For me, however, the most flagrant relic of earlier narrative idioms is the ‘don’t look at the camera rule’, which many practitioners of the direct had consigned to the dung heap of anachronism (though not hold-outs like Wiseman) but which Ivens still stubbornly clung to in certain contexts and which Chinese subjects like Gao Shulan enthusiastically obeyed. (In an amusingly self-reflexive moment, the rule is also enthusiastically obeyed by a young father, caught in long shot profile in *Impressions* watching the concluding ship launch spectacle while holding his toddler daughter in his arms. The latter is more interested in the crew however, and the father must prod her and direct her to obey the rule and points to the spectacle she is supposed to be pretending to watch, like him. One assumes most other instances of the rule being flouted in the series ended up on the cutting room floor.)

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Another French documentarist, Louis Malle, more than three decades Ivens’s junior, arguably had his finger more on the pulse of emerging direct cinema aesthetics and ethics when in 1968 he set things straight with his cinematographer for the ethnographic television series *L’Inde fantôme*, Étienne Becker (who had by coincidence just finished shooting *Rotterdam* for Ivens):

I thought it was important to start in a village, because it is the essential Indian social structure. [...] Étienne said, ‘But they’re all looking at me, it’s not right, tell them not to look’. I said, ‘Why should I tell them not to look at us since we’re intruders? First, I don’t speak their language; just a few of them speak a little English. We’re the intruders, disturbing them. They don’t know what we’re doing, so it’s perfectly normal that they look at us. To tell them not to look at us, it’s the beginning of *mise-en-scène*’. It’s what I resent about so many documentaries where filmmakers arrive from somewhere and start by telling the people, ‘Pretend we are not here’. It is the basic lie of most documentaries, this naive *mise-en-scène*, the beginning of distortion of the truth. Very quickly I realized that these looks at the camera were both disturbing and true, and we should never pretend we weren’t intruders. So we kept working that way. (French and Malle, 1993, 71)

Malle was coming to his own considerable documentary accomplishment from the direction of New Wave fiction rather than documentary proper, yet this divergence – generational? philosophical? – between the two artists and their sense of direct cinema ethics and aesthetics is telling: Ivens kept his artistic sensibility rooted in certain earlier practices at the same time as moving forward into *Yukong*’s cutting edge interactive work while it took a novice to point out the emperor’s nudity.

The other visual co-efficient of Ivens and Loridan's 'cinematic Maoism' is what they called the '*plan-séquence*'. I translate this as 'long take' rather than the literal 'sequence shot', because the filmmakers and editors almost never constructed full sequences upon a single shot. Rather their standard approach was often to assemble several long takes, some minutes in length, to fashion a sequence or a recurring motif. This cinematic approach based on long takes and a spontaneous, mobile camera, was at that time completely foreign to the Chinese tradition. Yet the training process that Ivens and Loridan provided for Li had its results. Li wielded the camera (an Éclair 16) with flexibility and sensitive control throughout the film, would enact graceful circles, hover around an event and float dexterously from one participant to another, catching both speakers and listeners, encouraging the spectator's trust in the indexicality of a scene.¹³

The long takes confirm the sense of authenticity and spontaneity that is already richly connoted by other visual and behavioural cues, but the non-Chinese audience may not be not fully equipped to decipher cultural intonations of body language, facial expressions, and voice, not to mention content. This problem is complicated by traditional cultural barriers to self-expression that operate in Chinese society with its still palpable feudal and colonial heritage – at least in the 1970s – against which not only the filmmaker but also the revolutionary had to struggle. One current insight put it this way: '[the] un-openness of ancient Chinese culture and the intricacies of Chinese personal relationships frustrated Ivens's filming at every turn' (Sun Hongyun, 2005).¹⁴ The long take preserves a sense of these intricacies all the same, of the pace and the structure of the political discourse, including culturally shaped opacities, ambiguities, and inhibitions that were part of the Cultural Revolution on the grass-roots level. Moreover the long take honours the perpetual self-questioning and self-awareness, ritualised, repeated, and occasionally formulaic, that has its own rhythm and is at the centre of the process the filmmakers wanted to capture. Ivens's and Loridan's self-effacement before the natural shape of an event, factoring in minimally the requirements of compression of course, clearly guided the editing, especially in the longer films, *Pharmacie*, *Usine*, *Pétrole*, and *Femme*. In short, some group discussion scenes have an indulgence that the 'sound bite' culture of the West could never tolerate.

One exemplary long take scene was shot on the floor of the Beijing locomotives factory featured in *Femme*. This virtuoso six-minute sequence introduced by Ivens's own voice-over about the politics of remembering starts with 1930s-style workplace exposition attentively following workers strenuously but gracefully removing long glowing steel rods from the furnace and inserting them into electrical spring coil-shaping equipment. We follow through the process until the finished wound coils, still glowing, pop out onto the shop

floor. A group of workers introduce themselves and each tells when he joined the factory (one's employment even predates the 1949 revolution). The group then invites the filmmakers to follow them over to another corner of the shop to view an old mechanical device that was once used to bend the coils, an apparatus operated mechanically by human strength rather than flicking a switch on a control panel. (Did Ivens remember that he had filmed a similar apparatus in action 40 years earlier in *Zuiderzeewerken* [*Zuiderzee*, 1930-1933, 40-52]?) The outdated machine has been preserved in line with the political principle of political remembrance just elaborated, and it is demonstrated for the camera in a vivid single-take *mise-en-présence*, by six or seven straining, sweating labourers rotating a lever. The theme suddenly becomes technical innovation and improvement of working conditions, and the group, which includes technicians and worker delegates as well as factory floor workers, now take the time to explain collectively to the crew how the Cultural Revolution brought together these three groups to facilitate improvements in procedures and equipment. Ivens the narrator explains the key Cultural Revolution plank of the distinction between worker and intellectual, and the ensuing shop-floor group monologue is lively and interesting, ranging among different degrees of stiffness and comfort within the group. All are animated by the 'before/after' trope, the workers remembering that their heads were empty during the days when brute muscle was the only requirement and engineers remembering how they used to be shut up in the office away from the workers and the application of their science. The fluid long takes are essential for preserving – even if only incompletely – the rhythm and integrity of labour and thought, speech and listening, interpersonal relationships and the space of it all.

It would of course be absurd to make exaggerated essentialist or formalist claims for the abstract virtues of the synchronous head-on close-up, interview or monologue, individual or group, of *mise-en-présence*, or of the long take. Direct cinema like any other art form is shaped inevitably by the artist's selectivity, subjectivity, and application of ethical principles—and his or her own disclosure of them to subjects and spectators. But here a real dialectic is in effect. Ivens and Loridan found a hybrid cinematic form that not so much minimised their own subjectivity, but rather transformed their subjectivity into a relationship with their subjects. This form is open to and dependent on the subjectivity of both filmers and filmed, culturally and contextually determined of course. It is also contingent on the integrity of the events before the camera, which are transmitted to us transparently and respecting original durations, thought patterns, spaces and relationships – to the optimal degree possible. In short, Chinese people were speaking to us more directly than they ever had before. Moreover Ivens's own occasional intervention as voice-over narrator (and Loridan's distinctive Parisian voice as interlocutor), perpetually

remind the viewer of their subjectivity and of their personal stakes in these relationships.

It could be argued that a similar effect comes out of the pair's choice to transcend the traditional linguistic limits of direct cinema not by subtitles but by a form of dubbed translation over the original language soundtrack, somewhat lowered in volume. This acoustic structure is to this day much more common in Europe than in North America, and in this case tends to stress the dialogic dynamics of the original encounter. It is to the filmmakers' credit that the dubbing is done very smoothly and sensitively, with great attention to maintaining audibility of the original Chinese, translators constantly on hand in the mixing studio to prevent the loss of the tiniest syllable or intonation. Ivens's (1976a) cinematic rationale for this post-production practice was simple: 'I believe that the option – subtitling or dubbing – is one of the fundamental choices: you have to give a film to be read or to be seen'. But the well-known preferences of the television industry were obviously also a factor.

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Ivens had been in Moscow in 1936 and in East Berlin in 1953 and was well aware of the real-world turns that the dictatorship of the proletariat could take, though he had seldom publicly reflected on these turns. Still he and Loridan were perhaps less than fully aware of the complex turbulence that shaped the political landscape in which *Yukong* was filmed and was to be released (this is Seegers's, [2008a, 2008b] obsessively conspiratorial theme: 'why had Ivens not been told of what was *really* going on by his Chinese colleagues?'). Or at best they were naively confident that their sponsorship by an elder statesman, whose terminal illness was already reportedly obvious to most when the filmmakers met him, could protect them and their project in perpetuity. They realised how wrong they were when they discovered the Gang of Four capitalising on Zhou's 1975 hospitalisation to harass them and their film. What better way to attack the rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping, who was temporarily in office once more as premier, and steer the country in their own ultra-left direction, than by demanding weird and picayune cuts from foreign filmmakers! The distressed couple quickly left town, as we have seen, and prepared for the March premiere in Paris and the series' subsequent releases throughout Europe and North America. Zhou was to die two months before the release without ever seeing the film. However distracted Ivens and Loridan must have been by *Yukong's* career, they followed closely the events that took place in Beijing that April, a mass challenge to the Gang disguised as a spontaneous memorial to Zhou in what was actually the first Tiananmen incident. They also acknowledged Mao's death in September (their footage of the Paris commemoration made it onto Chinese news) which led within a month to the military coup that arrested Jiang and her three henchmen and soon restored Deng and his 'liberal' regime to power. They also noticed with hurt and surprise how the Chi-

nese media had not acknowledged *Yukong's* triumphant career in the theatres and European festivals that summer and in North American cinematheques in their wake, but would later discover that long, positive coverage had been prepared and denied publication (Ivens and Destanque, 1983, 334).

The post-Mao era soon made up for this neglect and the filmmakers once more became the toasts of the Chinese regime – partly in Zhou's honour, for the Cultural Revolution was quickly going out of fashion. By February 1977, Ivens and Loridan were back in Beijing, guests of Marshal Ye Jianying who had appeared in *400 Million* and had masterminded the coup against the Gang. Deng was restored to power in July and the next month the 11th Party Congress officially declared the Cultural Revolution over. Thus at the end of the year when *Yukong* ceremonially premiered in Beijing in its Chinese version, with much speechmaking by filmmakers and politicians, the film series was already about the past rather than the present. Nevertheless the series began to circulate throughout the country in hundreds of prints (Stufkens, 2008, 433-434) – most of it. Four of the features made the cut: *Pharmacie*, *Village*, *Usine*, *Pétrole*, and two of the shorts *Ballon* and *Artisans*, admittedly six highlights of the series. But the Shanghai city film was shelved, perhaps because of its touristic interest, alongside *Caserne* (the less said about the PLA in general, whose role in the new order remained somewhat ambiguous?), *Professeur Tsien* (part of the pattern of disavowal of the traumatic memory of elites and intellectuals who had been sent down along with Deng himself – if they were lucky?), plus two other shorts and a feature, *Opéra*, *Cirque*, and *Femme* (which I suspect had too much of Jiang's fingerprints on them because they featured either the arts that had been officially under her wing, or a hardline Beijing female cadre who had played an active role in the Cultural Revolution [Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 334]). Speculation about such byzantine mysteries aside, few failed to notice that the state studio was sponsoring the circulation of an epic cinematic homage to a decade-long political experiment that was officially over. As Zhang (2009, 37) wryly commented, 'the sudden change in Chinese politics slapped Ivens in the face by claiming that the Cultural Revolution was a national disaster [...] while Ivens had been commending it to the West. The belief in communism broke again. Ivens said he was an ideological man but never thought of concealing something or deceiving anybody. "In that 50 years my relationship with China and communism changed a lot, I was bitten by the teeth of history and the fight taught me to be cautious"'.¹⁵ According to Stufkens (2008, 453-454), 'all screenings of the film after the first screening at the end of 1977 were halted eighteen months later [June 1979]', though Sun Hongyun (2005) reveals that that would not stop the informal circulation of the films as VHS gradually emerged in the new market economy of the 1980s and then gradually ceded to DVD over the years.

The rehabilitation of Ivens and Loridan continued: they were regularly on the scene throughout the late 1970s, consulting with the Chinese film studios, as well as catching up with their 'disappeared' old friends and learning first-hand more of their 7 May tribulations. In 1979 Ivens took part in a Conference of Literary and Art Workers, and the following year recalled 'Old and young film workers all impressed me with the fact that after ten dark years Chinese film art was recovering and advancing' (Ivens, [1980] 1983, 77).

Ivens's eighty-first birthday was celebrated with a huge splash in November 1979, widow Zhou presiding, and this led to an official retrospective at the Film Archive of China in Beijing the following year. The book catalogue accompanying the retrospective would appear only two years later (Film Archive of China 1983), full of splendid testimonies about the greatest friend of the Chinese people from most of his Chinese collaborators since the 1950s.¹⁶ Moreover, both *The Camera and I* and Ivens's 1982 interviews with Claire Devarrieux were published in translation by China Film Press. This may have been little consolation for Ivens and Loridan, who felt shame, depression, and ostracism, not to mention economic hardship and unemployment back home in France (Loridan, 1998, quoted in Sun Hongyun, 2005, 15), around a work they had devoted many years of sweat and soul to in tribute to a revolution that had suddenly been declared a disaster (On 27 June 1981, the trial of the Gang over, the Central Committee of the CPC [1981] had officially declared that the Cultural Revolution 'brought serious disaster and turmoil to the Communist Party and the Chinese people'). In 1982, Loridan, the more outspoken of the two, admitted to a Dutch journalist (*Volkskrant* 20 January 1982, quoted in Seegers 2008b) that she could no longer watch the films and felt ashamed, and confided to a French journalist Claude Brunel (December 1982, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 452), 'What are people thinking about the film these days? It's hard to say [...] abrupt turnabouts in history can be disconcerting. But this film represents a page in the history of China. Some say the series is a monument. For Joris and me it is a monster, a folly'. She elaborated with slightly more complexity in a later Dutch interview (*Volkskrant* 17 January 1989, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 453) a few months before Ivens's death – and at the apogee of the Chinese turn to its neo-liberal regime:

Three years ago there was a retrospective screening of all twelve parts of *Yukong*. I turned green and wanted to die. Had I believed it all, everything that was said in those films? Apart from the fact that *Pharmacie* remains a handsome film in its own right, I later came to understand that it was the work of a couple of westerners filming the dream, which later turned out to be a utopia, that people can change, that there is something good in people. It's almost unimaginable that those people were lying. [...] It's

possible that the regime used us. But our cameras were always focused on the people and at the time you believe in the people you're filming. It's a question of innocence, but in that innocence we might perhaps have cheated people.

By 1985 the pair had informed their old friend Jan de Vaal at the Nederlands Filmmuseum that the series was no longer to be available for screening.

Loridan had learned well the lessons from her Paris and Beijing friends about how to erase history and disavow the convictions of earlier days, and had not listened carefully to her own commentary in *Femme* spoken in voice-over by her late husband '*Connaître le passé, ne pas oublier, c'est un principe politique* [Knowing the past, not forgetting, is a political principle]'. Nor to the words from his autobiography 'I had nothing to regret of my past' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 344). When it came 20 years later to preparing the definitive DVD box set of her husband's *oeuvre* in conjunction with the Foundation bearing his name, Loridan did one better than *Yukong's* post-Mao Chinese distributors in 1977. Instead of allowing only one half of the series to be seen, she decreed that only one-eighth would represent *Yukong* in the selection, *Pharmacie* and *Ballon*. It seems that the baby had been thrown out with the bathwater,¹⁷ both by the new leaders of the Chinese state and the co-director of the most eloquent, artistic record of its revolutionary past.

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The meaning and legacy of *Yukong* are complex in the neo-liberal era of Chinese history, post-Tiananmen, as globalised markets and big box sweatshops proliferate in the boom and bust cycles of global capitalism. The era had already been foreseen in 1980 by Badiou ([1980] 2005, 660-661) as 'the politics of Deng, the politics of Coca Cola, of the omnipotence of factory directors, of productivity incentives,¹⁸ of the reduction of education to exams, and of the suppression of the rights to strike and to post one's grievances'. Viewers must sigh with mixed sadness and irony when they watch the fastidious recycling of metal and oil 40 years ago in the generator factory and Daqing oil field, seen now in a new China where cottage industries of electronic recycling thrive throughout the toxic backyard dump to the global North that China has become; they must have the same reaction when they watch Gao Shulan's teen-aged daughter being chided and teased by mother and brother for buying new pants she doesn't need, seen now as an augur of the rampant consumerism of the 21st century. Deng and his successors had already thrown the baby out at the same moment they were sending the tanks out upon the protesting students in 1989, students who were echoing on the same spot their 1976 ancestors who were challenging the Gang through mourning Zhou, and echoing their even more numerous Red Guard ancestors who even a decade earlier than that, also on Tiananmen, challenged hierarchy, complacency, and abuse:¹⁹

The path that Deng defined was to transform China in two decades from a closed backwater to an open centre of capitalist dynamism with sustained growth rates unparalleled in human history [...] the construction of a particular kind of market economy that increasingly incorporates neoliberal elements interdigitated with authoritarian centralized control. [...] But the reforms also led to environmental degradation, social inequality, and eventually something that looks uncomfortably like the reconstitution of capitalist class power [...] neoliberalization in the economy was not be accompanied by any progress in the fields of human, civil, or democratic rights. [...] A democracy of consumption was encouraged in urban areas to forestall social unrest. [...] The urban/rural differential in real incomes is now, according to some estimates, greater than in any other country in the world. [...] China has travelled the path from one of the poorest and most egalitarian societies to chronic inequality, all in the space of twenty years. [...] The accumulation of wealth [...] proceeded in part via a combination of corruption, hidden ruses, and overt appropriation of rights and assets that were once held in common. (Harvey, 2005, 120-145)

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This book cannot answer the questions raised by this fraught history that unfolded both before and after Ivens's death. But I will not throw out the *Yukong* baby with the Cultural Revolution bathwater in the meantime, and will not allow Seegers, Schoots and the capitalist roader film critic at the *International Herald Tribune* to have the final word on this rich, honest, committed, gargantuan, enduringly political, epic work of art: 'The film itself is not distinguished by any cinematic artistry and never rises above the newsreel level, but as a screen reportage it is an achievement crowded with valuable information' (Curtiss 24 March 1976, quoted in Schoots, [1995] 2000, 329). An engineer in *Usine* in *Yukong* cites Chairman Mao to the effect that there will be three or four or five more cultural revolutions, and the final word has thus not yet been said.

Those of us who felt 'hailed' by *Yukong* in the West in the 1970s, and embraced it, from this humble graduate student to Marcorelles, Maccioccho, Badiou, and Hennebelle to the dozens of critics, programmers, and viewers around the world, were not dupes or knaves. It is incumbent upon us to remember our utopias, our myopias, and our pragmatisms and to understand, rather than to silence, blame and shame. The Chinese film studies community have perhaps done us in the West one better: the 2008 Beijing conference celebrating Ivens's 110th birthday did not seem like a toast to foreigner who had blindly chronicled a disaster, but rather a careful exploration of a treasured history of an artist-friend who 'let the people speak'.

A consensus among 21st-century Chinese film scholars is clear in recognis-

ing certain lasting achievements and enduring value in *Yukong*: Ivens filmed his subjects with ‘warm faith and great energy’ and ‘we can feel what comes from the heart’ (Sun Hongyun, conference presentation, Beijing, November 2008). Young Shanghai scholar Jie Li (2009) points to a clear legacy even if it is shared with the very different Antonioni and is at the very least unintended:

If all of China was a stage (or a movie), and all Chinese men and women were actors, there were still imperfect rehearsals, spontaneous lapses, and tears at the edges of the stage set. It’s the inclusion of accidental figures and unscripted moments *alongside* iconic images and polished performances that distinguish both *Chung Kuo* and the *Yukong* cycle from Chinese domestic productions of the time. Both films thus provide us with the most *human* pictures we have of life during the Cultural Revolution, whose visual legacy otherwise appears to us today as fanatic, hysterical, exaggerated, and overwrought.

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Zhao Chunlan, a specialist in architecture and environment, finds *Yukong* to be a unique research resource:

The long, spontaneous conversations from men and women on daily life presented opinions never before seen or found elsewhere. The unique way of filming and the open minded way of approaching the people in front of the camera resulted in films that were completely different from Chinese state films of that era.

Moreover,

As revealed in *Pétrole*, many wives were proud to talk about their activities in home building and farming. When building activities had been traditionally perceived as man’s job only, it became a vital practice and experience for these women to prove their potentials and capacities. (*The Ivens Yearly*, 2006b, 40)

Outspoken independent documentarist Li Yifan (*Before the Flood* [co-dir. Yan Yu, 2005, China, 147]) has a similar sense:

Ivens provided a different way of looking at China under communism. In those days, communism was everywhere, even in the schools. Ivens’s perspective focuses attention on ordinary matters, not on the party and government functionaries. He doesn’t ask who’s wrong and who’s right, but exposes the consequences of political change on everyday life with

a non-political vision. I have seen the *Yukong* series and I thought it was very good. (Relouw, 2005, 7)

Other Chinese filmmakers have also partaken of this heritage. Ivens's and Loridan's cinematic Maoism would enter the Chinese cinematic lexicon, but not overnight and not universally. Ivens was eager to explain this impact in 1976. Drawing from the profound intercultural respect which comes from his 40 years of Marxist practice and addressing a Western reader, he hypothesises how the Chinese cultural heritage impinged on the political aesthetics of Chinese documentary:

The Chinese cinema is different from ours. It is more contemplative, more static. The camera doesn't take part in the action, the camera records, it observes it. According to ancient Chinese philosophy, man, standing between heaven and earth, looks at the ten thousand things of the universe. The result is that the camera doesn't move. For a cameraperson, to understand that he or she can move with the camera, it's quite an upheaval. And most often, when this is undertaken, a Chinese cameraperson falls into the opposite extreme and moves it too much. It is necessary to explain to him or her the role and the function of each camera movement. Another important point is that in the Chinese cinema, in general, there are fewer close-ups than in ours. That's also tied to a cultural tradition. In the body of their visual art, you don't see portraits brought up close to people, except in the Buddhist tradition. It was necessary for me then to explain the role I was giving to the close-up, why compact framings were useful. That took a long time, because in China you have to have the patience to convince people. It is not a question of persuading them with arguments on the basis of authority, as you can often do elsewhere. That also is the Cultural Revolution. (Ivens and Loridan, 1976a)²⁰

In China, you know, man [*sic*] is not the centre of the universe, like in the West. Look at Chinese paintings: man is represented there as very small, his relationship with the world is thus of another sort. (Macciocchi, 1976)

Li's, Ivens's and Loridan's achievement, when regarded in terms of *Yukong's* intervention into this cinematic tradition, takes on a different and even more admirable aspect, and the subsequent teaching careers of both Li and Ivens's friend and contemporary Situ Zhaodun were two routes among many for this transmission of influence (Stufkens, 2008, 20). Jie's is among several claims pointing to the palpable influences *Yukong* would have on Chinese documentary, its rocky career notwithstanding, for example on China's perhaps most lauded 21st-century documentarist:

China's new documentary movement produced such films as Wang Bing's nine-hour three-part epic *West of the Tracks* (2003) on northeast China's industrial area as millions of workers undergo a painful transition from state-owned industry to a free market. Based on techniques like synch-sound, long takes, follow shots, and interviews, this sequel on the fate of China's working class is perhaps the closest inheritor of the *Yukong* cycle in style and content, except that there is no more faith in the redeeming power of a political, social, or cultural revolution. (Jie, 2009, 36)

Gauthier (2001, 18) has also made this claim about influences on Wang Bing, and Prudentino (2003, 133) sees an even wider web of influences among more hybrid works by Tian Zhuangzhuang and others of the 'sixth generation'. It was not the first time that Ivens's roving camera had had a stimulating effect on the cinematic practice of another society in this way.

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Although Chinese witnesses are scrupulous about not explicitly claiming a political heritage of the Cultural Revolution, Loridan (quoted in Prudentino, 2003, 138) was able in 2003 to salvage some positive outcomes of her trauma: 'At the same time I respect these experiments that they attempted, even if they renounced them five or ten years later; experiments of generosity, giving of self, sharing, caring for others in an extremely hard and egotistical, closed and envious society'. Ivens had anticipated the need for a balanced stock-taking two decades earlier:

Today we are reproached quite often of not having evoked the other China, of not having spoken of repression and struggles, of excesses and mistakes. But how to do that? In a certain way there's been a misunderstanding about *Yukong*. Some have perceived and classified it as an official film. Holding this view has no sense. Official in respect of whom? Zhou Enlai? Certainly not, he never gave or even suggested a direction. In relation to Jiang Qing?²¹ Even less. No, *Yukong* is an Ivens film and its defects and its limits are the defects and limits of Ivens. On their side, the Chinese – and I mean by that filmmakers, intellectuals, political cadres, men and women we worked with – perceived another dimension. For me, for Marceline, getting a worker to talk, or an employee or a fisher, in front of the camera was a natural thing. For them, it was a revolution. In this sense, *Yukong* got out of our hands and went beyond us. The film was built in the middle of these ambiguities, but, it was my feeling and it was my decision, it had to be made. That's called taking risks. When one is a documentarist and when one works in the heat of events, it's difficult to avoid them. The current of history almost moves in one direction, you

think you are following it correctly and, suddenly, it changes direction, or else an undercurrent, invisible until then, becomes stronger and carries everything with it. What does that mean? That beyond all these turbulences there is a direction that I've chosen, to which I believe and to which I try to stay faithful. It's Man in the conquest of his Freedom and his Dignity. Do I have to spell it out for it to be clear? *Yukong* was made in this spirit. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 334)

Ultimately, our estimation of *Yukong's* success is tied to our historical understanding of what is dismissed as the 'failure' of the Cultural Revolution, and Badiou helps us relativise that concept to such other 'failed' historical episodes as the Paris Commune, the October Revolution, and May 1968:

We have to think about the notion of failure. What exactly do we mean by 'failure' when we refer to a historical sequence that experimented with one or another form of the communist hypothesis? What exactly do we mean when we say that all the socialist experiments that took place under the sign of that hypothesis ended in 'failure'? Was it a complete failure? By which I mean: does it require us to abandon the hypothesis itself, and to renounce the whole problem of emancipation? Or was it merely a relative failure? Was it a failure because of the form it took or the path it explored? Was it a failure that simply proves that it was not the right way to resolve the initial problem? (Badiou, [2008] 2010, 6)

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Tani Barlow is among the few American scholars to share such a serene and lucid view of the legacy of Ivens's work and of the Cultural Revolution, outlining several pragmatic reasons for the importance of keeping *Yukong* in view, worthy of being cited at length:

First, seeing the documentary film will help disrupt a well-established tendency to see the Maoist Cultural Revolution in black and white terms, because *Yukong* documents mundane political drama. It presents us with a complexity that has been lost in the bitter polemics of the post-Mao era. Viewing *Yukong* now will return politics to a day-to-day issue, where it can be seen more clearly and reconsidered. [...]

[Next] the fate of politically engaged art and philosophy hangs in the balance. The great tradition of engaged cinematic art has been reborn in China. Documentary-style *cinéma vérité* is a leading sector in the arts scene. The socio-economic 'Great Transformation' of the Chinese polity has brought into being a thriving art movement that is seeking to document the lives of the poor, migrant, minoritized, or dislocated, as well as

the everyday experiences of ordinary rural or urban people. In this way, although obviously not directly in a cause and effect relation, *Yukong* is a progenitor of filmmakers in China today. And what happens in the People's Republic engages moviegoers everywhere.

[Finally] the drama of present day Chinese 'development' and its neo-liberal high tide is anything but benign: *Yukong* is agitprop art, and as art, it carries a political heritage that should not be forgotten in these times.

Barlow also turns like myself to Maoist *Yukong* collaborator Badiou for an eloquent summation of her argument:

In his poignant essay, 'Love What You Will Never Believe Twice', Alain Badiou argued that from political catastrophes we inherit problems, not solutions. It is important to remember what impels us to act, even catastrophically. [...] The question of whether a history of the Cultural Revolution is possible is also important. If it is possible to document what led millions and millions of people all over the globe to take a radical road toward desired social equality and anti-capitalism in the late 1960s, then perhaps two previously obscured promissory notes can appear as redeemable. We can ask why revolution became repression. We can think again about a future post-capitalist world at least in part because we have inherited the failures and successes of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The problems of China are everyone's problems. [...] *Yukong* documents a failed attempt to address crises that have not gone away. Its value to our today and tomorrow is vast. (Barlow, 2005a, 18)

Finally, American queer theory supplements French Maoist philosophy in offering an even more ringing conclusion to this section on *Yukong* and his dreams of future generations:

The history of political formations is important because it contests social relations as given and allows us to access traditions of political action that, while not necessarily successful in the sense of becoming dominant, do offer models of contestation, rupture, and discontinuity for the political present. These histories also identify potent avenues of failure, failures that we might build upon in order to counter the logics of success that have emerged from the triumphs of global capitalism. (Halberstam, 2011, 19)

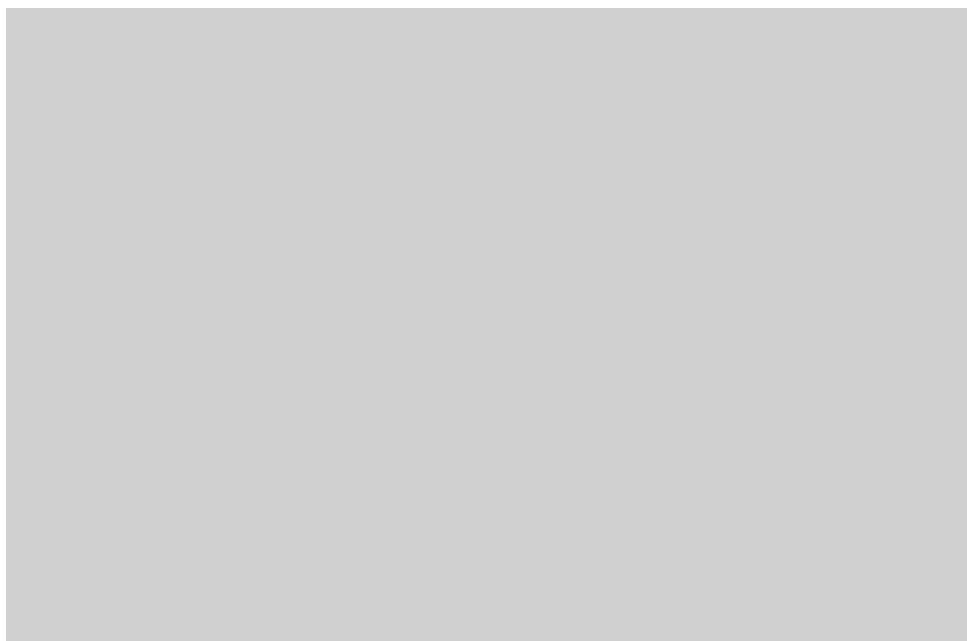
UNE HISTOIRE DE VENT

This leaves us, then, with the Later Works of those artists who have lived without ever ceasing to learn of life. The field is relatively narrow; but within it, what astonishing, and sometimes what disquieting treasures! [...] It is a progress from light-hearted 18th-century art, hardly at all unconventional in subject matter or in handling, through fashionable brilliancy and increasing virtuosity to something quite timeless both in technique and spirit – the most powerful of commentaries on human crime and madness, made in terms of an artistic convention uniquely fitted to express precisely that extraordinary mingling of hatred and compassion, despair and sardonic humour, realism and fantasy.

– *Aldous Huxley on Goya, 1943*

The *Yukong* aftermath was very hard on Ivens and Loridan. But the now ageing couple bounced back and started developing new projects.

We have already seen how Loridan's response to the post-Mao fluctuations in their artistic, political, and personal status was more public and apparently more extreme than Ivens's, who had already been bitten by the teeth of history, as he put it, many times (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 15). In respect to Loridan, whom Schoots ([1995] 2000, 275) describes as being 'marked forever'



118. *Une histoire de vent* (1988): Italian poster by the film's Italian distributor, the state documentary and educational outfit. The Méliès-inspired 'old-man-on-the-moon' sequence is the film's most iconic. Original in colour, courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen.



119. *Une histoire de vent*
(1988): production photo of
filmmakers and crew in Dazu
cave before the Buddha of the
thousand comforting hands
and eyes (translator Lu Songhe
is directly behind Ivens).
Original in colour, courtesy
coll. EFJI, Nijmegen © CAPI
Films, Paris, and Marceline
Loridan-Ivens.

by ‘erratic mood swings, vulnerability, and insecurity, which changed into unreasonable severity at the least sign of threat’, it might be thought that no longer being able to watch the *Yukong* films and feeling ashamed are strong reactions, not incomprehensible, but turning green and wanting to die surely take things a step further. Coupled with her dogged support for – and protectiveness of – her chronically ill and increasingly fragile husband and artistic collaborator, her public repudiation of an entire decade of their joint career together commands a certain awe, which swells as one follows her intense sprint for the rest of the 1980s across increasingly rocky terrain towards the elderly pair’s final epic enactment of the creative process. Loridan turned 55 in March 1983, two months after the final scuttling of the Florence project that had been on the drawing board for more than three years, and Ivens would

turn 85 that fall. *Histoire* occupied the next five years, bowing at the Venice festival in the fall of 1988, and the 90-year-old 'Flying Dutchman' finally touched down for good on 28 June 1989.

I would like to persist with this angle on shame, not as a biographical line (for Schoots has squeezed that dry), but as a textual hermeneutic. For I think the creative processing of shame through art is a compelling explanation both of the intergenerational artist couple's resilience after two cataclysmic humiliations in the last decade of Ivens's life, and also of *Histoire* as a cinematic text. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1993a, 14) classic delineation of the affect of shame has definitively marked two decades of queer and cultural theory. Not only 'shame is simply the first, and remains a permanent, structuring fact of identity: one that has its own powerfully productive and powerfully social metamorphic possibilities', but also for our purposes, her link of shame to creativity is as fitting as it is well known. Building on the work of psychologists and anthropologists about the processing of stigma and spoiled identity, she undertook a pioneering case study of late-19th-century American novelist Henry James (1843-1916) in the last decade of his career. Indebted to this work, I am making on the one hand the simple point of the therapeutic operation of the art-making process. This point seems patently obvious at several points in the Ivens filmography in relation to those fresh spurts of creative energy after moments of interruption, renunciation, and trauma, represented for example by *Spanish Earth* (after the frustrating idleness and danger in Moscow), *Indonesia Calling* (after the Netherlands East Indies debacle), *La Seine* (after the inertia at DEFA and the failure of *Till* – not to mention the *shame* of de-Stalinisation), the Cuban and Chilean work (after the Italian humiliation), etc.

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On the other hand using Sedgwick's psychoanalytic and deconstructionist parsing, I would be tempted furthermore to delve deeper and in more detail into the process between *Yukong* and its complement *Histoire*, were space available in this study, which it is not. Suffice it for now to contemplate *Histoire*'s rich summation and synthesis of Ivens's life and career: notably the film's opening reconstitution of a juvenile scene with its performative invocation of a child aviator who is the father of the globetrotting filmmaker man is breathtakingly poignant, as are the excerpts from one of his earliest works as a young apprentice, *Branding (Breakers)*, 1929, Netherlands, 42). The film's reparative operation with regard to the traumas of the last decade or so of that career is not hard to extrapolate.

One discovers thereby astonishingly fruitful and uncannily detailed parallels between the *Histoire* project and Sedgwick's take on what she calls the 'queer performativity' of James's testamentary prefaces to the re-publication of his life's work (the New York edition) in the first decade of the 20th century. I am so struck by the relevance of these parallels, that is both artists' 'strategy

for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma' (Sedgwick, 1993b, 58), that Sedgwick's reflections are worth quoting at length. James undertook this enterprise of

[C]onsolidation and revision [...] between two devastating bouts of melancholia. The first of these scouring depressions was precipitated in 1895 by what James experienced as the oblitative failure of his ambitions as a playwright, being howled off the stage at the premiere of *Guy Domville*. By 1907, though, when the volumes of the New York edition were beginning to appear, James's theatrical *self-projection* was sufficiently healed that he had actually begun a new round of playwrighting and of negotiations with producers [...] eventuating, indeed, in performance. The next of James's terrible depressions was triggered, not by humiliation on the stage, but by the failure of the New York edition itself: its total failure to sell and its apparently terminal failure to evoke any recognition from any readership.

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[... The prefaces are] a series of texts that are in the most active imaginable relation to shame. Marking and indeed exulting in James's recovery from a near-fatal episode of shame in the theatre, the prefaces, *gorgeous with the playful spectacle* of a productive and almost promiscuously entrusted or 'thrown' authorial narcissism, yet also offer the spectacle of inviting (that is, leaving themselves open to) what was in fact their and their author's immediate fate: *annihilation* by the blankest of nonrecognizing responses from any reader. [...]

At least two different circuits of the hyperbolic narcissism/shame orbit are being enacted, and in a volatile relation to each other. The first of these [...] is the drama of James's relation to his audience of readers, [...] the second and related narcissism /shame circuit dramatized in the prefaces is the *perilous* and productive one that extends between the speaker and his own past, [...] the intensely charged relationship between the author of the prefaces and the often much younger man who wrote the novels and stories to which the prefaces are appended. [...]

What undertaking could be more narcissistically exciting or more *narcissistically dangerous* than that of rereading, revising, and consolidating one's own 'collective works'? [...]

James, then, [...] is using reparenting or 'reissue' as a strategy for dramatizing and integrating shame, in the sense of rendering this potentially paralyzing affect narratively, emotionally, and performatively productive. (Sedgwick, 1993a, 8-11, my emphasis)

One might be tempted to imagine that such parallels occur because the dynamics Sedgwick points to must be intrinsic to most testamentary initiatives by elderly toilers in the arts, as Aldous Huxley demonstrates in the essay on Goya excerpted in the epigraph above.²² We will come back to this possibility slightly later when I situate *Histoire* within a fascinating intertext of first person work within the cinematic essay genre from the period of the late 20th century. But meanwhile, rather than leaping ahead to the details of the textual processing of shame in *Histoire*, let us come back to the early 1980s when *Histoire* was still a treatment in a drawer, and Ivens's 'self-projection', his processing of shame, was happening in the pages of his final autobiography *La Mémoire d'un regard*. Preparing the way for *Histoire*, this first 'narcissistic' iteration of Ivens's invocation of his childhood and his summation of his career climaxes in an intense and uncharacteristically personal and 'perilous' discussion of his special relationship with China, to which he and Loridan would soon return to 'do right by' after the shame of 'cheating' the Chinese (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 349). The discussion finally alights on friendship, both with their Chinese friends who have weathered the flux of the last two decades even more than the two outsiders, and with their friends, family members, and collaborators around the world who have travelled Ivens's six-decade career or parts thereof with him. The final pages of *Mémoire* are an uncharacteristically personal and tender litany of individual after individual, those whom he had fallen out with either politically or personally like Van Dongen and Wegner and those with whom he had maintained close bonds like the Chinese cadre, cultural bureaucrat, and film educator Situ Huimin, who had 'disappeared' during the Cultural Revolution and then like Ivens and Deng was rehabilitated. At this moment he embraced and elaborated a discourse and practice of friendship. This practice moved beyond the politics in the narrow sense that had recently covered him and Loridan in shame, including the brand of 'Stalinist' and public shunning on the streets of Paris (Seegers, 2008b). It seemed in addition to be trying to probe a broader form of politics, solidarity, and forgiveness, a politics of human relationships – a politics of filmmaking as human relationships – that would ultimately surface cinematically in *Histoire* alongside that film's soft-peddalling of earlier forms of solidarity politics.

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In the midst of this process of 'thrown authorial narcissism' and the post-Mao roller coaster ride, a new project on Florence was being developed beginning in the latter part of 1979. The artists, producers, and funders (including the region of Tuscany, the municipality of Florence and Ivens's old nemesis that had shamed him two decades earlier, RAI-Radiotelevisione Italiana) would draw out the process, ultimately in vain, for three and a half years. *Florence* was clearly intended to be both a reparative initiative and the kind of testamentary synthesis of Ivens's career that *Mémoire* was turning out to be

and *Histoire* would become. Although Florence had not been featured in *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (*Italy Is Not a Poor Country*, 1960, 112), this communist-dominated city had always been a special place for Ivens, and its annual left-leaning documentary festival Festival dei popoli had been almost a second home to Ivens since its founding in 1959. According to Stufkens, *Florence* was to be a subjective film with fictional elements rather than a classical documentary, a film in which Ivens himself was to play a role, and was to establish links with his youth in a sort of 'jeu de miroir', links with his love for rivers and with the city's wealth of artistic treasures. The film was intended as an art-historical film, but to focus primarily on the city's present inhabitants. The narrative of the history of culture, of the masterpieces of the Renaissance, and of the ever flowing river, is interspersed with images of tourists in their annoying droves, and of the garbage the city's refuse collectors had to deal with on a daily basis. In search of new technologies, Ivens devised a scene in which he talked about his life in front of a video wall screening, among other things, a profusion of fragments from his own films (Stufkens, 2008, 463-464).²³

Thus, *Florence* was to be yet another city essay film, a return to the 1960s in a way with its echoes especially of *Rotterdam*. The process went very far until the financing fell apart at the last minute in early 1983, thanks in part to shifts in the region's political winds from left to right, and Ivens and Loridan were howled off the stage, so to speak, in yet another seriously demoralising blow.

The germs of *Histoire* had already been sown during Ivens's three earlier China projects: the fascination with Chinese culture's iconographies of the wind in 1938, incarnated in that film's memorable shots of 'the great lions of China looking in the four directions of the wind' and references to artists who could 'paint the wind'. Ideas for specific teaching exercises during the Beijing interlude of the late 1950s no doubt shaped the wind motifs in *Before Spring* but did not lead to a hoped-for specific film on the wind itself. As we have seen, a French rendition of the concept saw the light as *Mistral* in the following decade, which incorporated stunning aerial footage embodying the point of view of the capricious Provençal wind but also aimed for other ambitious elements that could never be realised. A few years later, the wind concept resurfaced as a too-expensive, futile, and no doubt untimely proposal to incorporate aerial photography of the sublime geography of Western China into the strictly tripod- and shoulder-borne *Yukong* itself. The latter proposed treatment, called *Roof of the World* (referring to the common name for China's highest mountain range, the Pamirs, which extend from the western edge of the country into central Asia) reached its final form in December 1972, a project to be filmed entirely from the air, from the perspective of the clouds and wind, at four different altitudes. Each altitude was to have its own musical tempo (andante, adagio) and the perspective was to begin at the highest alti-

tude, from the highest mountain peak, to the lowest. The source and course of China's greatest rivers were to be followed, old cities and cultural monuments interspersed with revolutionary locations and scores of red flags to be filmed (Stufkens, 2008, 460).

As we have seen, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution had its own imperatives, and the urban earthbound logic of Beijing and Shanghai soon trumped the Pamirs. The only inkling of the future *Histoire* in *Yukong* is the festive cakes that appear in *Femme*, which Ivens the narrator informs us are made each year in memory of the mythological drunken poet who drowned, a tale heard perhaps for the first time that day by Ivens and which would be memorably dramatised in *Histoire*. Amid the couple's frequent visits to China around Ivens's eightieth and eighty-first birthday, after *Yukong* and after Mao, the treatment of *Roof of the World* sat in the drawer ready to be revived (Stufkens, 2008, 459-460). This time, well before the collapse of the Florence project, things began concretising around the new China wind idea. As narrated to Destanque in 1981, the year of the great Beijing retrospective (the autobiography was begun in 1979 and the book launched in May 1982), the new version of the treatment already had the *Roof of the World* title. This treatment for a 'great poetic fresco on China' contained two main elements.

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Firstly, a fleshing out of the earlier nature epic proposal, with new heightened emphasis on Chinese cultural history:

I think I will realize this dream, take off from the summit, glide towards the sea and dive all the while surveying space and the history of China.

Let me say that *Roof of the World* is going to be the most lyrical film I have ever made, a fantastic, epic film depicting the immensity of the universe and the dimensions of civilization, from cave dwelling to socialism. The clouds as backdrop. I have always been fascinated by clouds. When I travel by plane, I can spend hours watching their ever changing forms. In the sky there is infinite space, pure air, and a strange dizziness that draws me higher and higher. On the ground there are people. And in the thick tufts of cloud I see other forms take shape in my mind's eye, images from legends, battles, figures from the world of mythology. This is China's memory, its history.

I then descend with my camera from the roof of the world and fly [above the clouds. It's the plane and I am] elevated above reality. Suddenly I see the earth through a hole in the clouds. The contours of the cultivated landscape follow the lines of geographical relief and I dive to the surface. In a couple of seconds I descend to the level of humanity [in the rice paddy, at the level of his look and his hand. Two children play under a tree, an insect crosses a ray of sun, I am in] the microcosmos. I dally for

a moment and then I return, back to the sky, and my vista expands anew to the level of the cosmos. I am free of the laws of gravity and space. In my next dive, I penetrate the ocean, plunge to the depths of the China Sea. Silence all around, strange fish dart past. I linger for a moment in this underwater universe and then I return to the people, or to the sky, on the roof of the world.

I am the master of space, but also of time. Only film provides such freedom. I embrace the history of China and give the audience an impression of China's ancient past and boundless future. Four thousand years ago, the Chinese were already carving statues. Man was there with his intelligence and he remains. [...] When I move through the clouds, I see enormous projections of this civilization, in which mythology and reality coincide. (Stufkens, 2008, 463-464, my additional translation)

630 | Secondly, a depoliticisation of the discourse about China, the word 'socialism' notwithstanding, was in the works:

I committed myself and I had struggled very close to the Communist Party at a time when I considered that it was right to do so. If now I doubted this party and rejected it, in doing so I was affirming my commitment and confirming my will to struggle for my ideas. This struggle took another direction, but I had nothing to regret of my past. [...] If I make *The Roof of the World*, the partisans of 'Ivens the militant filmmaker' will have a basis to ask themselves questions and answer them as it suits them. [...] Today, before a commitment, it seems to me essential to do a tabula rasa of dogmas and ideologies that have disappointed us, to reconsider words that have obscured our intellects, and to come back to the reality of facts. Facts are hard, sometimes unbearably hard, all the more so for people like me, who have dedicated themselves to the struggle of socialism and revolution. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 279-280)

The vagueness of 'my ideas' and the 'reality of facts' is, needless to say, uncharacteristic of the earlier Ivens. *Roof* would continue Ivens's specialty genre of the 'China film' but would distance itself from the specificity of solidarity discourses, at least in the narrow political sense, retaining only vestigial traces of Ivens's erstwhile passion for Mao's revolution.

Once silent in the early 1970s about the 'ambiguities' of the Cultural Revolution (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 334), the couple would now be silent onscreen about the disconcerting neo-liberal course that the heirs of that revolution were now pursuing. The only possible exception would be ambiguous overtones about both Mao and Deng in one or two scenes, to be discussed

later, but both at this embryonic stage in the development of *Histoire* and in the finished product six years later, the politics that ‘the militant Ivens’ had devoted almost a half-century to elaborating were gone missing. The shame of non-recognition and subsequent disavowal is certainly a factor, but also obviously the continuing imperative of public loyalty to a Deng regime that was after all still welcoming the couple with open arms and whose support was needed to make all those aerial shots in *Roof*.

These and a few other teeth of history at this point (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 15) seemed to be relegating politics to discourses *around* rather than *on* the screen. That is to say, the symptomatic focus by both Ivens in his autobiographical text and Loridan in her interviews on the dissident communist writer Bai Hua (b. 1930), in trouble from the earliest points in his career and newly targeted by Deng for a contentious fictional film²⁴ the year Ivens finished his autobiography, symbolically kept the flame of politics burning:

Bai Hua is a communist, he adores his people, his country, and he wishes China to advance with socialism and in democracy. But Bai Hua is a man of truth, an artist who affirms his point of view and, affirming this, gives evidence of the contradiction that opposes the writer and political power. This contradiction has been there forever, but it is particularly violent in regimes said to be ‘revolutionary’. It’s an objective contradiction that we shouldn’t be scandalized by or deny, but on the contrary recognize it, shake it up, go beyond it. (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 336-337)

Ivens’s final sally forth, days before his death in 1989, in support of Paris students protesting the Tiananmen massacre, is a final vivid punctuation to this discourse of politics *around* (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 361).

After the final plug-pulling of the Florence project in January 1983, an important element of that film was added to the *Roof* project, namely the aspiration to use the city film hook as a framework for a personal synthesis of – an *apologia* – for Ivens’s career. Thus rounded out, *Roof* was on its way to becoming *Histoire*, the project acquiring a new momentum that would carry it through to completion five years later despite Ivens’s increasing health problems and all the interruptions and script changes these occasioned.

Along the way a new collaborator joined the team, Elisabeth D. Prasetyo (b. 1959), a journalist and screenwriter whom Loridan and Ivens had met on the set of Juliet Berto’s fiction feature *Havre* (1986, France, 90). Berto, an actress turned director, was a former Godard collaborator and ironically the supporting star of his *La Chinoise* but her Maoist aura had dissolved by the time she took on Ivens for a supporting role in her first feature. That film, shot in the summer of 1985, was a not very consequential art film otherwise notable for its

cinematic display of a very Ivensian port city as its set and for casting Ivens as Dr. Digitalis, a sort of spiritual guide for its tormented and aimless young characters. Ivens's four or so short scenes showed him improvising philosophical guidance for the characters and demonstrated his incontrovertible presence onscreen as a 'luminous' white-maned patriarch (Berto, 1985). This led the couple and Prasetyo to devise a similar role for the hitherto camera-shy documentarist in the still-evolving China project. Along with this persona, *Havre's* atmosphere of slightly fantastic goings-on in 'found' exterior sets would be recognisable in *Histoire*, and Schoots and Stufkens corroborate that it was the Indonesia-based Prasetyo responsible for mixing additional fiction and fantasy elements into the existing documentary-based project (Stufkens, 2008, 465-466). Prasetyo would also bond with Loridan as a long-term collaborator, sharing the writer credit with her on her 2003 feature *La Petite Prairie aux boulevards* (*The Birch-Tree Meadow*, France, 91), an autobiographical fiction based on her experience of deportation and internment in Auschwitz, and on her 2008 memoirs *My vie balagan* (as Elisabeth Inandiak).

Throughout the process Loridan's collaborator role swelled from that of facilitator and encourager to the apparent author of significant segments in the film – and in all likelihood surrogate author of Ivens's voice in the film – all the more since Ivens's bouts of illness, some very life-threatening, became more frequent as production got underway in earnest in late 1985 and continued into late summer of 1987. In fact, these last two months of production unfolded fully under Loridan's control as Ivens lay convalescing in Paris. Although the theme of memory and autobiographical performance is Ivens's, it may well have been Loridan who convinced her husband of the validity of first-person corporeal performance and more ominously to renounce his political legacy (or to allow these readings to be performed).²⁵ For example, it was she who almost solely developed in Ivens's absence in 1987 the studio setpiece that offered *Histoire's* only explicit though still ambiguous sendup of Maoism (see below). Editing was complete in time for Venice one year later, where the film and Ivens's entire career received special honours, and the Paris theatrical launch happened in March 1989, three months before Ivens's death.

Although Ivens was not overjoyed with the box office for the film in the final months of his life – except in the Netherlands where it did well – in fact the film was greeted enthusiastically everywhere, playing three of the most prestigious festivals in the world, Venice (awarded a career prize, although this honour was ignored by critics [Logette, 1989]), Toronto, and New York. Critics were unanimous from Paris ('*Une Histoire du vent* has touched us deeply, in that distant zone that very few works reach' [Logette, 1989]), to Chicago ('masterpiece' [Rosenbaum, 1992]). The critics in Montreal, where I saw the

film at the Festival du nouveau cinéma in the fall after its launch, were perhaps typical in their praise: from ‘a unique film, very beautiful, full of inventions, unclassifiable’ (Perreault, 1988) to what was perhaps the most fervent appreciation anywhere:

Reality or fiction, what does it matter? Joris Ivens invites us on the most beautiful voyage on the earth and in the sky – a superb homage to Méliès’s *Trip to the Moon* – that the imagination of an obstinate man can have creatures of reason make. Everywhere his almost divine will carries him, he instals his set and invents his world. The documentarist is not content with what he sees nor with what he hears. He must film the invisible and record the inaudible. And he does so with grace, beauty, and the elegance of creators who are no longer afraid of anything. In the face of death, Joris Ivens, a wise old atheist, is reconciled with the Gods. In a sublime impulse, *Tale of the Wind* makes the poetry of the soul resonate in the hearts of men. (Boulad, 1989)

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This said, most notices tended to synopsis or describe and relate it to Ivens’s career as a whole without analysing the film in detail, like *Variety* (‘a winning docu-fantasy by this great documaker [...] even more impressive is the way the work sums up a career that spans the 20th century’ [*Variety*, 1988]), and Perreault was not the only critic to use the word ‘unclassifiable’ (e.g. Garel, 1989). Of course, Ivens did not live to see the film canonised as a key plank of the growing literature about essay cinema (Scherer, 2001; Lopate, 1996, 261) in the 1990s and thereafter.

As a full-length intertextual, autobiographical, hybrid essay film, with a full claim to documentary status despite its significance reliance on dramatisation, *Histoire* commands an artistic and thematic spectrum of discursive and aesthetic resources rivalled by few of Ivens’s previous finished films (although the epic aspirations of *First Years*, *Das Lied der Ströme* [*Song of the Rivers*, 1954, DDR, 90], and perhaps *Yukong* arguably come close). Several never-realised projects had also anticipated the range and richness of the discourses marshalled by Ivens and Loridan in *Histoire*, mostly obviously the five-part *Mistral* from two decades earlier, but also the two large-scale proposals of the World War II era that never went beyond the drawing board, the proposal to Archibald MacLeish of 1941 and the Netherlands East India encyclopedia project. *Histoire*’s ambitious synthesising operation incorporates dramatisation, compilation, landscape, direct cinema observation, performance, and pastiche. It would be misleading, however, to think of *Histoire* as Ivens’s final untrammelled realisation of so many earlier, frustrated encyclopedic dreams. This film

too, as we have already seen, was frustrated in its own way, like so many earlier grandiose dreams, by the hurdles and detours of history – not the least of which was Ivens’s own waning health – and emerged as a distant and down-scaled relative of the original proposals.

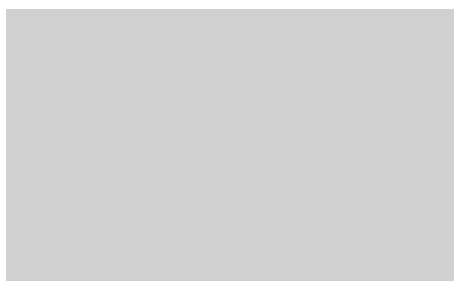
Histoire’s essayistic structure interweaves six major threads in a mosaic form that loosely coheres through the first of these as elaborated below, the narrative arc of the Ivens persona of the old filmmaker finally encountering – and taming? – his *oeuvre* and the wind:

1. in what the couple’s old collaborator Sergeant calls an ‘auto-fiction’, the dramatised narrative arc of the old filmmaker revisiting his youth and encountering the wind, is a loose descendant of the original thread in the treatment following a semi-fictionalised elder filmmaker filming China. Eight mediator characters (five of them dramatised, and three nonfiction) serve to hook up this persona and his narrative arc with present-day China. The fictional characters are: the mythological figure of the monkey king trickster, borrowed from Beijing Opera; a little girl astutely observing the shoot in the desert, the first female in Ivens’s long tradition of child mediator characters; a gap-toothed witch finally hired to bring forward the recalcitrant wind with her spells; the legendary moon princess who wants to return from her exile to the earth; and Ivens himself as the shame-conjured child aviator who wants to fly to China. Documentary characters include the elderly martial arts trainer befriended by the Ivens persona on an urban square, who counsels the asthmatic on his breathing; a sculptor commissioned by the filmmakers to create a dragon mask to help in the wind appeal; and the hapless Mr. Wang, custodian of the terracotta warriors that had been constructed by an emperor to protect his grave in the third century BCE (only a recent discovery, in fact in March of 1974 while the couple had been editing in Paris, and of which they probably saw samples for the first time in a post-Mao travelling exhibition in Europe in 1981 [Stufkens, 2008, 463-464.]) who stubbornly refuses the filmmakers access to the tomb site and suffers their cinematic revenge. Within this arc then, Ivens’s old objective of personalisation surfaces, but moves beyond the political instrumentalisation and exemplary dramaturgy it had always embodied, as per the socialist realism schema. This narrative arc is, as Sedgwick (1993b, 52) would put it, ‘gorgeously’ rich in shame, periodic instances of shame experience and processing cropping up intradiegetically throughout the film. On a literal level, I am referring to a comically foregrounded banana-skin pratfall suffered by the elderly life coach, to the Ivens persona’s melodramatic collapse in the desert waiting in the heat for the wind that won’t come, to the evocative

scene where a party cadre orating the triumphs of harvest quotas in a village rally is 'howled off the stage' (if not literally, at least by having his PA system unplugged by the supernatural simian trickster, disguised as the Ivens character), and to the protracted refusal of the Deng regime, in the guise of the bureaucratic Mr. Wang, to yield to the filmmaker's entreaties for his traditional privileged access. The latter episode leads comically to grandstanding and face saving on both sides, communication breakdown, rage and then perhaps the most memorably imaginative sequence of the film, the fantastic revivification in warrior suits of the unfilmable statues. Beyond these narrativisations, I am also referring to the basic narrative premise of this thread, the perennial capricious refusal of the wind to respond to the Ivens persona's maniacally hubristic Canute-like summons, the epic and monumental impotence of the autobiographical artist persona – paradoxically embodied in what some critics saw as one of Ivens's most potent works. Perhaps a key shame-rich moment, particularly in relation to the parallel with Sedgwick's James, is the brief dream scene where the elderly Ivens encounters the juvenile would-be pilot, holds his hand as they walk across a rocky shore toward a romantically high lit sea, the several shots misted with superimposition as if to spare the spectator the intensity of this confrontation of elder with his childhood. This personal narrative is set within the foil of five other threads.

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120. *Une histoire de vent* (1988): Ivens, the superimposed elder artist, encounters his childhood, holding the hand of the juvenile would-be pilot as they walk across a rocky shore towards the sea. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



2. Interwoven with this arc is a more documentary and self-referential intertext around Ivens's career and *oeuvre*. While it stops short of the systematic survey in front of a video screen that was anticipated for *Florence*, citations of several films are introduced, especially the obvious choice of *400 Million*, of which a compressed version of the Battle of Tai'erzhuang is included, notably its sneak attack over the mountain, infantry assaults and the eventual routs of the Japanese (supplemented by a few archival shots of presumably Red Army training activities from

the period, culminating in a generic explosion). Unexpectedly, the immature work *Branding* is also featured – anomalous because it is Ivens’s only pure fiction before *Till* and for this reason presumably hitherto neglected both in Ivens’s previous track record of self-referencing throughout his career (which have always emphasised *Philips-Radio* [1931, Netherlands, 36], *Borinage*, *Spanish Earth*, and *Indonesia*, now forgotten) and in critical overviews of his *oeuvre*. The visual tie between the 1929 film and the 1988 film is clearly the wind blowing across the surface of the sand and the turbulence of the wind-driven North Sea surf and shoreline backdrop, but in general its inclusion seems to be part of *Histoire*’s revisionist reassessment of 60 years of activist filmmaking, re-inserting the playful, childlike, and romantic into the trajectory of revolt.²⁶ A print of *Branding* is ceremoniously handed to the Chinese sculptor Yin Guangzhong towards the end of *Histoire*, as if this doomed love triangle narrative has suddenly become the symbolic bearer of Ivens’s artistic significance.

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3. The thread of China’s cultural heritage is also major, all the more since *Yukong* had accorded almost no attention to architectural and cultural monuments (not surprisingly in view of that Cultural Revolution’s literally iconoclastic track record). Stufkens and others have reminded us of the recurring motif of brooding silent statuary watching the unfolding of history in Ivens’s China *oeuvre* as a whole (for example the line of three idols that contemplate the massacre of Tai’erzhuang in *400 Million*), and this is fleshed out in three major sequences in *Histoire*. Two of these feature Buddha: the first is the giant Dazu cave Buddha of the thousand comforting hands, each eye emblazoned with a watching eye, presented high-angle in intimate encounter with the silent and contemplative Ivens figure; the second is the giant Leshan monolithic Buddha that presides over a confluence of three rivers in Sichuan, seen in sublime aerial shots and slowly disclosed from the foot upwards. Most memorably, the latter part of the film revolves around the aforementioned Xi’an terracotta army. The warriors animate a major sequence towards the end of the film, but first observational *vérité* follows the crew confidently entering the great hall of the archeological site-museum, where they immediately run into bureaucratic obstacles despite their much-vaunted ‘permit’, and then records their eight days of negotiations with the site director Mr. Wang. The latter’s obstinate refusal to allow the filmmakers more than the standard ten-minute stationery setup for filming the monument from three predetermined angles, and the filmmakers’ impatient but futile protests, create an ambivalence around what Wang reasonably and insightfully calls the ‘mountain’ between the disciplines of archeology and cinema, not to mention the confrontation

between uncharacteristically Parisian arrogance and Deng-era Chinese civil servant prudence, the clash between the mutually incomprehensible languages of 'I am fighting for my art and my freedom of expression' and of professional accountability. This explodes into Ivens's wheelchair-bound rage and creative obsession wherein he frantically assembles tourist-knockoff warrior replicas and marshals a precision procession of the stiff grey warriors towards the camera, the grave guardians escorting the stubborn elderly artist teetering on his cane, one of several sequences where Chinese cultural heritage comes to cinematic life.

4. Chinese mythologies are also reanimated. Other than the recurring mediator character of the trickster Monkey King, three legendary personas are staged as well, in stylised colour or monochrome presentational literalness: the archer Hou Yi who heroically shoots out the nine suns that threaten to burn up the Earth; the drunken romantic poet who drowns as he tries to embrace the reflection of the moon on the surface of a pond and is then commemorated in an annual fish-feeding ceremony; and most developed the mediator figure of the moon princess Change, with whom the filmmaker has an extended encounter, conversing about the windless boredom on the moon and entertained by the princess's circle of maidens dancing around them, sensuously swirling their ribbons.
5. Not only the foregoing synthetic studio landscapes, but exterior natural landscapes are also at the centre of the Chinese heritage that Ivens vowed to celebrate with aerial surveys in both of the final China films. Here the filmmakers finally get to indulge to the maximum, thanks to the Chinese air force. Eight aerial interludes, longer and short, punctuate the film, from the cloudscapes that introduce the opening credits scene of the Air France airliner heading toward Beijing to snowy high altitude terraced slopes, from anthill-like mountainous towers (the Yunnan stone forest, reminiscent of *Mistral*) to river-scapes both surging and graceful, and finally human-shaped landscapes, including glimpses of a bejewelled nocturnal urban shoreline and especially the Great Wall. *Histoire* may not fully be *Roof of the World* as conceived a decade earlier, but it is a fitting apotheosis to the dozen or so aerial excursions that propelled Ivens's *oeuvre* from *Zuiderzee* onwards. Ivens's aerial tropes usually proudly surveyed man's transformation of his natural environment but sometimes, as in *Mistral* and here, evoke nature's indifference to – or even resistance to – this domination. The earthbound landscapes are less stunning perhaps, but equally part of this discourse of natural heritage, borrowing from both Chinese pictorial iconography and European Romanticism in their breath-

taking horizons, both misty and sunset-illuminated, jagged and flat, resolutely pre-modern, even classical, in framing and composition. Departing from the materialist and modernist frameworks of earlier landscape work, the unabashed *Histoire* tropes clearly contribute to what Stuffkens (2008, 479-480) emphasises as the metaphysics in this final work – revived from the Catholic mysticism of his childhood and surfacing from an undercurrent extending throughout the *oeuvre*. One sequence positions the diminutive Ivens in profile atop a magnificent cliff, after an arduous climb for the entire exhausted film crew, with a sublime misty vista laid out before him: there with his microphone Ivens picks up the voices of the wind, universalised as a spiritual force in its cultural incarnations in specific places around the planet from Nebraska to Tunisia.

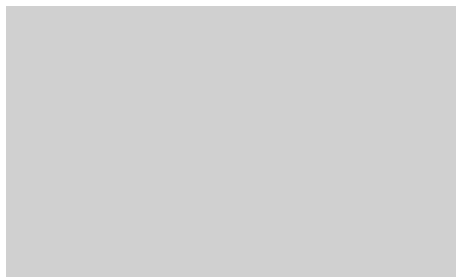
6. *Histoire*'s intertextuality embraces not only Ivens's own work but also in a standout moment a citation from and embellishment of Georges Méliès's *Voyage dans la lune* (A Trip to the Moon, 1902, France, 13). The convalescing filmmaker persona escapes from his hospital room, borne by a dragon at the command of the Monkey King, heads to the moon as evoked in the appropriated shot of Méliès's space capsule, and then emerges from the mouth-door of the pastiche Méliès moon-face onto an uncertain space landscape. The artifice of Méliès's 'primitive' special effects is stepped up, and Ivens's encounter with the drunken poet and the moon princess unfolds. While the photogram of the caped space traveller emerging from the moon door is *Histoire*'s most iconic still, in the context of the film as a whole the Méliès segue offers an unexpected oddity, perhaps due to Prasetyo's input or even Loridan's. Ivens was hitherto unknown for an interest in primitive cinema neither in his avant-garde days or in his final decade: the meaning of a 'ten best' list he compiled in 1988, played up by Schoots ([1995] 2000, 350) seemingly does reflect an embrace of Parisian New Wave cinephile paleontology as well as a return to some of the programming standards of his Filmliga youth.²⁷ If this playful turn also jibes with the shamed renunciations of the moment, a reversion to pre-political youthful innocence, it also productively cross-pollinates two heritages, early film history and Chinese mythology, and integrates them with *Histoire*'s filmmaker narrative.

7. If Loridan's participation in the above intertext is likely, her shaping of one final thread, during her partner's 'sick leave' in Paris during the final phase of the *Histoire* shoot, is according to Schoots ([1995] 2000, 356) a matter of historical fact. I am referring to the five-minute studio set piece located halfway through the film that offers a microcosmic mosaic of Deng-era

post-Mao Chinese society. The gigantic set is visualised self-reflexively as we are led through eight or so *mise-en-scène* corners within the bustling space, each performing simultaneously one typical capsule of contemporary social life: a Western-style wedding celebration unfolding in front of a big red heart; a Beijing opera scene confronting a king and a princess; male gymnasts demonstrating their prowess on a pommel horse and rings; a contemporary chanteuse singing a jubilant yet sentimental love ballad; a comic scene of a bungling photographer snapping a group of Chinese tourists at a cardboard Great Wall; a party cadre lecturing his rural audience on agricultural yields and the Eleventh Party Congress, complete with high platform and PA system; and finally a choir of uniformed schoolchildren enthusiastically and skilfully singing ‘We are the young Communist Pioneers’. The mischievous Monkey King is present monitoring it all, and is especially mocking of the orator whose performance is then sabotaged when the trickster unplugs his microphone and supplants his harangue with a kitsch English pop song. At the end the Monkey King leaves the now empty set disguised as Joris Ivens. The overall effect is complex, even ambiguous if not incoherent. Overall it seems to imply a mild critique of post-Mao Chinese society, post-revolutionary consumerism and all, while the two overtly ideological performances, notably those of the orator and the children’s choir, might be thought to embody a critique of the Cultural Revolution were it not that they are arguably characteristic of the PRC’s entire 40-year revolutionary history (it is thought that the irreverence of the studio scene accounts for the lack of a Chinese distribution green light [Zhang Jianhua, conference presentation Beijing, November 2008]). The performance style is hyperbolic and the sensibility of nonfiction has been left at the huge heavy doors of the studio – except perhaps for the performance of the children whose ardour and sincerity around their Maoist lyrics inject real-world truth value into the moment. Also injected is ethical ambiguity. Earlier Ivenses had their playful moments certainly, but would they ever have set up children as non-consenting bearers of satire?

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121. *Une histoire de vent* (1988): the Maoist children’s choir in the dramatised film studio sequence. Ardour and sincerity inject real-world truth value into an ambiguously satirical moment. DVD frame capture. Original in colour. © CAPI Films, Paris, and Marceline Loridan-Ivens.



The layers of dramatisation and performance in *Histoire* do not disqualify this self-presenting essay film as an autobiographical work of course. To help us understand this element of the film and bring additional resonance to it, let us situate it alongside an intertext of six other first-person films, arguably almost all if not all testamentary films in the literal sense, all by elder Euro-American male filmmakers like Ivens looking backward and forward at the same time:

Title of film	Author	Country	Date	Author's dates	Author's age at release
<i>Le Testament d'Orphée</i> (<i>The Testament of Orpheus</i>)	Jean Cocteau ²⁸	France	1960	1889-1963	70 years
<i>Love Sacrifice</i> (aka <i>Confession</i>)	Stan Brakhage	USA	1986	1933-2003	53
<i>Scattered Remains</i>	James Broughton	USA	1988	1913-1999	75
<i>Mr. Hoover and I</i>	Emile de Antonio	USA	1989	1920-1989	68
<i>Blue</i>	Derek Jarman	U.K.	1993	1942-1994	51
<i>JLG. Autoportrait de décembre</i>	Jean-Luc Godard	France	1995	1930-	64

Cocteau's *Testament d'Orphée* is a polished and expensive art film feature that ironically bears the most resemblance to *Histoire*. This final instalment in the artist's Orpheus trilogy presents the now elderly eponymous poet looking back on his life, time-travelling through fantasy epochs and landscapes, while reflecting on the orphic calling, his creations, and his younger and handsome male companions (which include his current and his former consort according to lore that is both extra-filmic and indispensable to reading the work). At the other end of the spectrum, Brakhage's *Love Sacrifice* is a silent diary-style experimental short, capturing spaces of yesterday's gold-lit familial kitchen and today's private bedroom, the fondly remembered past and the present of loss and masturbatory frenzy, archived journal and live performance, virtuosities of both intimate camera handling and subjective editing. Broughton's *Scattered Remains*, shot in part like *Histoire* in an exotic other space, Sri Lanka, co-authored like *Histoire* with the artist's younger spouse, assembles the artist's recited poems with seashore- and river-scapes with a mesmerising panoply of the bearded elder's frontal self-portraits, stroboscoped, voguing, dervish-whirling, accelerated, clapping, plain... De Antonio's feature-length *Mr. Hoover and I*, like all of these works a nonlinear assemblage, sets up the

eponymous FBI director as a perennial Javert-like nemesis who has structured the artist's career through his demonic pursuit. The film interweaves along the way the author's monologues and public speeches about his life, scenes with friends and younger spouse, and self-referential archival materials around the artist's childhood and career. Jarman's *Blue*, famous for its unwavering blue screen throughout its feature length, evokes the artist's blindness – an opportunistic condition derived from HIV, the most stigmatising or 'shameful' syndrome of his age. The film is striking for a rich soundtrack mosaic of voices, Jarman's and his friends', reciting his journal entries, poems, reminiscences, and reflections on career, life, and mortality. Godard's feature-length diary-style *JLG: Autoportrait de décembre*, more a self-portrait as the title indicates than an autobiography, shows the artist puttering around his idyllic lakeside home, taking notes, reading books, looking at art, reciting philosophy, and tending to his career with meetings and telephone calls, reflecting on current events and history, occasionally going out for walks or tennis, while his scantily clad nubile assistant talkatively busies herself with cleaning the house – all interwoven with gorgeous winter landscapes accompanied by characteristically serene Beethoven and contemporary music.

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While all seven artists foreground their subjectivity, Ivens and Cocteau tend towards the representational, as perhaps befits their generation – performing their first person narrative according to the codes of fiction, and never directly acknowledging the camera. In contrast Brakhage, Godard, Jarman, Broughton, and de Antonio are much more self-reflexive, tending towards the presentational, that is, confronting the camera either probingly or offhandedly, and thus confronting with their look or their voice the spectator, with the shame-processing intensity inherent in the testamentary and confessional modes.

The existence of these six other testamentary first-person films made approximately at the same time as *Histoire* (with the exception of Cocteau prophetically predating the others by a quarter century) suggests among other things that as usual Ivens was in the midst of the cinematic trends of his era, either consciously or unconsciously, both in terms of documentary and avant-garde work (though it is unlikely that he would have seen more than one or two of these six works). German scholar Christina Scherer (2001) has already insightfully connected *Histoire* to the last two of these directors (though to earlier titles by Jarman) in relation to essayistic practices of memory and montage, but I would like to take another angle and broaden the field. Of the six films, four are by other elderly auteurs (Brakhage's should be described as a mid-career work) and the sixth is by Jarman, a younger artist about the same age as Brakhage but knowingly terminally ill. *Mr. Hoover and I* rubbed shoulders with *Histoire* at the 1989 Toronto International Film Fes-

tival, three months after Ivens's death at the age of 90, three months before de Antonio's death. The release of Cocteau's *Testament* in 1960 preceded the artist's death by three years, while *Blue* was released in 1993, the year before Jarman's death. While Brakhage and Godard both still had prolific decades ahead of them, their works still have the sensibility of a memoir and *apologia pro sua vita*, and add considerably to this collective comparison. What juxtapositions the winds of film history blow upon us, both poignant and felicitous!

Let's start with Ivens and de Antonio, and the felicitousness is compounded when one recalls that two of the most productive Marxist filmmakers of the century marked the last year of their lives – the year the Berlin Wall fell, don't forget – with a first-person testamentary work that seemed to bracket yet arguably reinvigorate at the same time earlier ideological fervor, as well as thereby jointly closing a chapter of documentary history. (Nichols grasped the momentous synchrony in dedicating *Representing Reality* to the two men jointly in 1991). Both Ivens and de Antonio scrupulously avoided referring to the tectonic shifts in Eastern Europe in their final works, though one infers from Ivens's brush with incipient Chinese capitalist bureaucracy and de Antonio's despair at the erosion of the US constitution in the first Bush presidency, that emerging mythologies of the so-called 'end of history' were very much on their minds. One fascinating convergence is that both artists had hitherto shyly eschewed any onscreen appearance, and suddenly in their last films burst in from the wings for a corporeal performance of intense cinematic palpability, the elder filmmaker frail, sight-impaired, diminutive, and asthmatic and the younger one corpulent and sanguine, both bodies and careers ravaged by shame and by history. The two filmmakers' self-dramatisations perform a Benjaminian bi-directional retrospection, combining childhood memories coloured by regret, ambivalence, and exhaustion with narcissistic self-mythologisation, pride, and defiance. *Histoire* is as rich, exotic and over-the-top as *Mr. Hoover and I* can be called minimalist, domestic, and quotidian, but like the other films in this group both present the filmmaker's body as the crux of its poetic synthesis of the artist's *oeuvre* and of the historical arena in which his works unfolded.

For me, Ivens, de Antonio, and Jarman command a particularly intense affect because of their contribution as Marxists in the first two cases, and as queer activist in the last. Jane Gaines, in her sustained effort since the 1990s to probe the encounter of radical cinema with Marxist ideology and aesthetics has developed the concepts of 'pathos of fact' and 'socialist melodrama' (Gaines, 1996, 64, 67), 'sensuous struggle' (Gaines, 1999, 91), and 'realism beyond realism' (Gaines, 2007, 19), in order to theorise cinematic narratives of class conflict and revolutionary struggle, and our engagement with them as spectators. Though her essays do not apply to my argument in the narrow and

literal sense, these explorations of ‘the compatibility of intellect and affect’ (Gaines, 1996, 64) may have bearing on de Antonio’s, Ivens’s, and Jarman’s documentary *mises-en-scène* of geriatric or corporeal disempowerment, autobiographical melancholy and testamentary passion. With *Mr. Hoover and I* seen alongside *Histoire* and *Blue*, another melodrama, this time disguised as Shakespearean tragedy, *King Lear*, cannot be kept out of the picture – all the more so with Ivens’s flaring white locks and his clouded corneas. Like Lear, none of these filmmakers is willing to go quietly, and de Antonio, Ivens, and Jarman construct an individual pathos in their backward look upon a life’s work of cinematic critique and solidarity, and in their performances of verbal and gestural defiance toward an unknown future – a ‘post-communist’ one in the case of the two Marxists. Each film vividly expresses in its way a moving personal sensitivity to and artistic confrontation with the betrayals of the realms of material relations and of ideology, frustration at the uncooperativeness of history, flirtations with renunciation, apostasy and compromise, fascination with the unexpected detours in what Eisenstein (1942, 32-33) termed the road to truth, true investigation and the creative act. All three films ultimately embody rage and then a persistence that is obstinate but serene in the face of the Revolution still deferred. Neither *Histoire*, *Mr. Hoover and I* or *Blue* should be seen in isolation from the larger filmographies, of course, *oeuvres* all structured by cycles of affirmation and renunciation, in short by a melodramatic roller coaster arc and revolutionary pathos.

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All seven of these final or late works were greeted respectfully, with only a tinge of the slight embarrassment that greeted the last works by the septagenarians Ford and Hitchcock and the octagenarians Bergman and Antonioni – if only in the sense that they were exempt from criticism. All except Ivens’s and Jarman’s seemed to be indulged as unnecessarily inconsequential in comparison with the world-historical weightiness of the filmmakers’ *oeuvres* as a whole, and even the Ivens film was usually described rapturously and related to the *oeuvre* as a whole without the critic ever dwelling unduly on the task of evaluating the single film *qua* film. The Godard and Brakhage films have symptomatic availability problems, unusual for such canonical figures – no doubt the latter deriving from the family and estate’s discomfort with such a frank and explicit sexual discourse. I have admitted with regard to both de Antonio and Ivens that I was experiencing a kind of fatigue in the 1980s, and hesitated about some of the artistic and discursive choices of either – a lack of loyalty that shames and puzzles me in retrospect (Waugh, [1976] 2011) when I remember the exasperating deserts of cancelled projects and recalcitrant budgets both filmmakers were traversing throughout the decade (seven years for de Antonio between his second last film and last, eleven years for Ivens). At the same time, I was personally fully caught up in the life and artistic tra-

jectory of fellow gay activist Jarman, whose death removed him from arguably the most prolific momentum of his career, and of course I personally identified with the queer iconic status of Cocteau and Broughton. Fatigue might also describe my personal attachment to the two remaining heterosexual autobiographers, for I had never belonged to the altogether too mystical Brakhage cult and lost interest in Godard after the mid-seventies, if only because of his persistent sexism and his own reverential cult.

Filmmakers don't often get to choose their testamentary utterance. It is unlikely that de Antonio sensed the tolling of the bell as clearly as Ivens, Broughton, Cocteau, or Jarman, or knew how little time he had to accompany his film on its rounds, and it is unlikely that Brakhage and Godard had any sense at all of the need to put their affairs in order. Nevertheless, despite my varying degrees of attachment to this corpus, I feel a strong sense of the 'radical pathos' of the films, in the artists surveying their toil in the superstructural vineyard, their efforts to intervene in the world through art, and in their life choices, with such contradictory feelings. Cocteau, Brakhage, Broughton, and Godard all came from avant-garde traditions of self-referentiality, belonging to a tradition of first-person discourse from their earliest utterances, and shared none of the others' reticence to represent themselves onscreen throughout their respective previous *oeuvres*. Nevertheless, I feel a consistent pathos in the face of the six worn authorial bodies (and one disembodied voice) occupying the screen so unforgettably – especially with regard to Ivens and de Antonio who did so for the first and last times.

All of these films, as autobiography and testament in relation to their male filmmaker personae, are also *de facto* by virtue of their authorship about masculinity – and even, one could argue in comparison to Broughton, Cocteau's and Jarman's flaunting of their queerness, about the spectrum of sexual orientation as well. Another comparison I made retroactively – and perhaps idiosyncratically if not whimsically – pertained to the concept of *Vanaprastha*, which is according to Hinduism, the third 'hermit' stage of the four stages of life. After the duties of the 'student' and 'householder' stages are complete, a man, now a grandfather, renounces physical, material, and sexual pleasures, retreats from social and professional life, and goes to live in prayer in a forest hut. This construction, read in the 21st century, is clearly about masculinity as well as the human condition in general, and masculinities are cultural constructions, of course, East and West. My small, eclectic transnational corpus of Euro-American elder-male-authored 'documentaries' converge in crystallising, not *Vanaprastha* per se, but some of this Judeo-Christian culture's scripts for senior masculinity and an obligation of renunciation that is only oblique and partial in comparison to the Sanskrit prescription. As I've indicated, in these autobiographical hybrids the core indexical referent and expos-

itory trope is the authorial male body: his body as text, his face, his voice, his posture, and gait; his corporeal disempowerment and shame as document, the 'foul rag and bone shop of the heart' (Yeats, 1939). Unlike the Hindu template, these films do not inscribe honour, retreat, and renunciation in a metaphysical forest (although Broughton is on the beach, Ivens in the desert and on the mountaintops, and Godard on an idyllic lakeshore). Rather they enunciate tenacity, play, rage, and desire, in short the shame of corporeal winding down, and instead index the processing of masculine decrepitude and impotence through the winding up of documentary performance.

Upon a welter of hegemonic and dissident scripts of masculinity from Western and Eastern culture, these seven documentary intersections of corporeal scripts of ageing and masculinity all layer over a particular performative script, the vocational model of the male outsider, romantic artist, the orphic bard. Ivens had never really played this role except perhaps as the socialist realist herald of utopias, but he finally embraces it in his last work, complete with wild hair, dark cape, obscured eyes, and visionary mountaintop *mise-en-scène*. The implied metaphysical bent of such a vocation plays out of course in tension with the corporeal text.

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In the interest of illuminating the testamentary nature of Ivens's final work and its processing of shame, I would like to further develop the complicated and precarious comparison of this corpus in relation to the three terms I have listed. The affect-systems of play, desire, and politics come together in each text in a triangulated performance matrix. Each is indexically manifest onscreen in its own way in literal terms of authorial embodiment.

First look at 'play'. In contrast to the Hindu model of meditation, abnegation, and renunciation, and notwithstanding the impending sentence of the decrepitude of the body and of mortality, our corpus is counter-intuitively bursting with play, filmic and pro-filmic, corporeal as well as affective and intellectual, as if to deny and challenge the shame of ageing body and planet. The films may well be world weary with the AIDS pandemic (Jarman), the war in the Balkans (Godard), the erosion of American democracy (de Antonio), the creeping tide of bureaucracy and consumerism in post-Mao China – not to mention asthmatically clogged lungs (Ivens). But it is as if the whole corpus is presided over by Ivens's Monkey King trickster, mischievously mugging for the camera, throwing banana skins, unplugging electrical circuits and exulting in disguise and sudden acrobatic appearances out of nowhere, hamming it up in extreme close-up in complicity with the lens and the spectator – as if in recompense for the author persona's scrupulous obedience to his own old rule 'don't look at the camera'. The queer filmmakers engage with this spirit most blatantly, camp oblige, even Jarman on his deathbed with his fierce and assaultive linguistic version of play, but especially Cocteau and Brought-

on with their charming, childlike, and simple special effects, for example the former's motion reversal that catapults the beautiful Cégeste back up from the ocean into the lover-bard's cliffside presence and the latter's stop-motion and lighting effects that playfully transform his own body into shapes, shells, silhouettes, and surfaces. But even the self-important heterosexuals Godard and de Antonio evince this spirit, with their wryly staged performance scenes – albeit with a slight lugubrious edge – from the former's self-consciously and dysfunctionally performed tennis match to the latter's literally John Cage-ian play with indeterminacy and bread-making. As for Brakhage's intense riff on the notion of 'playing with oneself' on camera, enough said. This playfulness may well be about the 'second childishness' (Shakespeare's *As You Like It*) we stereotypically ascribe to old age, but I think it is also about the license for the carnivalesque, as explored by Bakhtin ([1940] 1968) and his successors Huizinga (1955) and Shepard (2011), irreverent reversals of norms that have a social dimension as well as the more psychic operation of individual bodily pleasure and recreation. Ivens's joyous reanimation of the warrior replicates, defying through a kind of slapstick choreography his shaming at the hands of bureaucracy, is a case in point, but the play among his peers is variously linguistic, cinematic, vestimentary, musical, and dramatic.

Next look at 'desire'. It is not only Brakhage's frenzied onanism, enacted with admirable but painful literalness, that figures this affect. The other six artists do so as well with the intense sensory texture of their performances and cinematic excess, as if defying the Hindu prescription of abstinence and the Shakespearean diagnostic of 'shrunken shank', with its implication of impotence. Queer Jarman, Broughton, and Cocteau all match Brakhage with the literal enactment of arousal and jouissance, though with greater discretion and at the same time greater joy shaping their eruptions of eros. Jarman embraces and celebrates shame with both the gleefully explicit obscenity of his hyperbolic self-branding:

I am a mannish
 Muff diving
 Size queen
 With bad attitude
 An arse licking
 Psychofag
 Molesting the flies of privacy
 Balling lesbian boys
 A perverted heterodemon
 Crossing purpose with death...

and the amorous tenderness of his eulogistic appeals to the drowned departed:

Deep love drifting on the tide forever
The smell of him
Dead good looking
In beauty's summer
His blue jeans
Around his ankles
Bliss in my ghostly eye
Kiss me
On the lips
On the eyes. (Jarman, 1993)

Cocteau and Broughton both offer ribald and athletic *mise-en-scènes* of priapic animality and queered pantheistic sensuality enunciated through the clichés of Greco-Roman iconography, respectively the artist figure's two loin-cloth-clad boy toys playing horsey (centaur?) in an otherwise insufferably dignified art film, and a beachfront choreographic dalliance between two satyrs with masks, a giant phallic prosthesis and a flute as the only costumes. This is far from the hermit's forest, but so is Ivens's desert, and the images of his persona obsessively commanding the elements and then beaming radiantly in the face of the at-last-come wind, white hair streaming against the sky are among the most sensuous in his sensuous *oeuvre*. Compared to this pantheistic sensuality the pastiche eroticism of de Antonio's young spouse cutting his hair as patiently as lovingly (in homage to his friend Warhol's tease in his snail-paced *Haircut* [1963, USA, 27]) is decided low-key. And Godard's compulsive objectification of his housecleaner, and later of an unqualified job applicant who gets the *monteuse* job on a basis other than qualifications, has more in common with Brakhage's shamefully mundane everyday – until a lucid self-awareness bursts onto the screen when after looking through a pile of canonical high art cheesecake (from Rubens and Fragonard to Renoir and Kirchner), Godard comes across the nude self-portrait of Egon Schiele (1910), gnarled and shriveled despite his ripe old age of 21 (only a decade from his grave), whose premature rags and bones Godard stares upon as if into a mirror. Metaphysical or materialist, transcendent or quotidian, queer or heterosexual, all seven male filmmakers are staging fantasmatic performances of desire, working through the richness of stigma and spoiled identity, not only of corporeal decay, but also of loss of gender identity, adult status, and sexual power, queering old age through asserting desire in a disconnect of body and libido.

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My third term, politics, builds on Sedgwick's notion of shame as a 'socially metamorphic' dynamic, and all seven filmmakers marshal cinematic memory in the production of that potential transformative dynamic of shame. Of the seven only de Antonio and Jarman maintain the discourse and affect of traditional radical politics, of King Lear's refusal to 'bear it tamely' and his 'noble anger'. Godard's anger at Srebrenica is deftly channeled into philosophical problems rather than political ones – in a replay of his immobilising introspections in *Loin* and *Ici et ailleurs* – while Ivens's unpolitical anger at Mr. Wang is as peevish and pathetic as it is uncharacteristic of the gentle and respectful cross-cultural communicator of yore (it is telling that the Chinese film crew members were torn and sided with Mr. Wang). In fact in a recourse that the younger, materialist Ivens might have shunned, all seven artists resort to opening doors to the mystical resolutions of landscape and what Jarman calls 'the universal Blue'. Are they halfheartedly and intermittently grasping the serenity and renunciation of *vanaprastha* after all? As with the six other filmmakers, Ivens's engagement with memory is selective, and he forecloses the metamorphic utopias of the past whether revisionist or Marxist or post-colonial – a brief citation from *400 Million* showing the coalitional military riposte against Japanese fascism is identified with symptomatic vagueness by the ideology-avoidant title 'China at war with the Japanese invader filmed by Joris Ivens in 1938'. His engagement with Deng-era China is no less selective: is an archeologist doing his job of protecting 2000-year-old clay artefacts from a 25-member film crew (Euvrard and Marsolais, 1988) really the only thing encountered in post-Mao China worthy of anger – in fact ignoble petulance – in Ivens and Loridan? Part of me shares the shock, as recounted by Schoots ([1995] 2000, 358), of old socialist co-worker Henri Storck and communist co-worker Catherine Duncan at the couple's disavowal of even their shared past as political militants. The latter did not hold back in her old age any more than she had in her Old Left youth, asking,

Is it possible to divorce Joris from his revolutionary past? Are we to think of him as a reformed Red, now devoted to the wider issues of art? Do we return to *Rain*, *The Bridge*, *Breakers*, as our points of reference, to which perhaps should be added the French films on the Seine and the Mistral? Setting aside all the major films (and quite a number of the minor) as the aberrations of a young idealist? [...] The Joris we knew is almost absent from the film [...] an official portrait for posterity.

But the other part of me wants to read *Histoire* as an affirmation of the place within a more broadly defined politics of culture, friendship, space, subjectivity and memory, both personal and collective, or as I put it elsewhere, as 'a

poetic meditation on the artist's career and legacy and on the historical arena in which his works unfolded' (Waugh, 2011, 151). Does such a poetical politics nudge these artists' mystical gestures towards the *vanaprastha* tropes of serenity and the invisible as explored by Ivens in and around *Histoire*, or simply clash incoherently and unresolvedly with the turbulent excesses of defiance, corporeality, and individualism also written into these films? Perhaps, like the six others I have pointed to, and like myself, Ivens himself was of two minds in the last years and utterances of his life, and rather than evincing what Schoots uncharitably calls 'confusion', embraced both transformation and transcendence.

This parting section has yoked together a heterogeneous if not eclectic, small corpus of autobiographical, performance-based hybrid documentary by elderly or dying men that raises for me issues not only of masculinity and ageing but also of the life cycle, the gendered body and its play, desire, and politics, and of the way the shame of decrepitude and mortality invests in the testamentary creative process. Although first person documentary is a very rich corpus, as Elisa Lebow, Jim Lane, many others make clear, testamentary films by elders are relatively rare – even rarer for women filmmakers than for men (in contrast to the corpus of literary autobiography where testaments by elder women are arguably privileged, though perhaps still not fully assuming gender parity). My narrower corpus of seven films crystallises all of the problems that we are faced with as we watch *Histoire*, not only the dialectic of transformation and transcendence but also authenticity and performance, desire and transgression, corporeality and affect – for author and spectator alike.

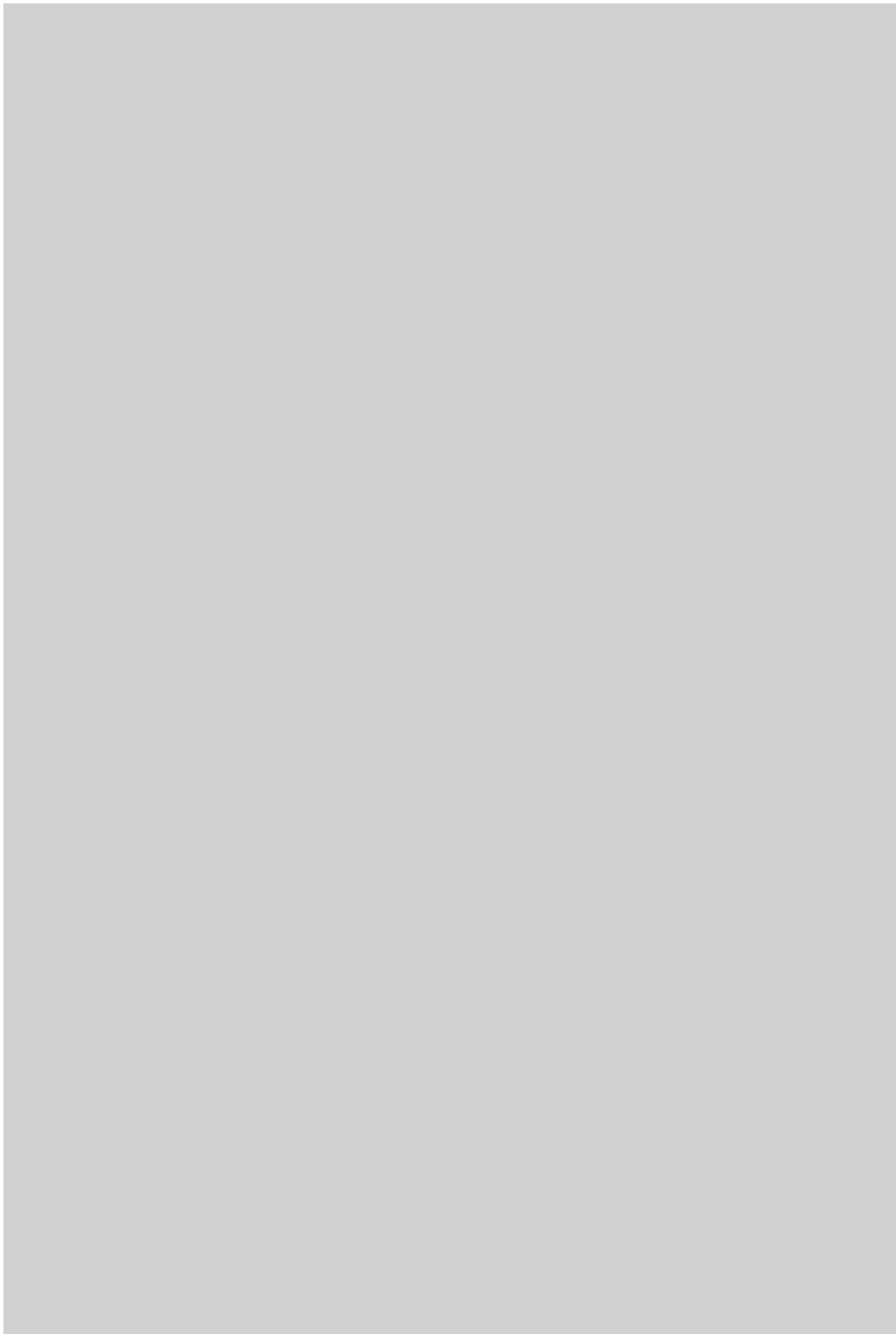
I embarked on this final chapter by narrating my own personal discovery of Ivens and should conclude on a similar note as well. Personally speaking, as the turbulent decade of the seventies in which I discovered and championed Maoist Ivens recedes into ancient history, I feel my own kind of shame in harping nostalgically on the lost heritage of that era's New Left and social movements, and clinging to my 'slightly naive and overly laudatory' youthful utopias (Rosenthal, 1988). It is not that, now entering the baby boomer senior demographic, I am tempted to suddenly subscribe to a new social movement of little interest to me previously (Seize grey power! Seize grey power! Seize grey power!), and shamefacedly to champion a cinema of elder introspection on that account (however tempting that might be). It is simply that linking *Histoire* to an intertext is essential for understanding – historically and culturally – this shameful film and Ivens's artistic trajectory as a whole, as has been the case at each stage throughout this book.

It is no less essential to linking *Histoire* to the Ivens intertext, to the Maoist Ivens, to the documentary Ivens also – in short to *Yukong* – as we wrap up this final chapter spanning the China films of Ivens's last decades, and not only in

the spirit of Duncan's raging recrimination. Is the documentary Ivens as missing from *Histoire* as the 'idealist', 'Red', 'revolutionary' Ivens? 'We had made the rounds' of documentary, Loridan declared in more than one post-release interview, with the implication that they had 'done' documentary and moved beyond it with *Histoire* ('nous avons fait le tour') (Sergent, 1988; Euvrard and Marsolais, 1988). Would one be justified in perceiving in *Histoire* with all its mythological detours and eruptions of fantasy a dilution, even renunciation, of Ivens's documentary legacy? In addition to the renunciation of oppositional politics, has the pioneering experiment of direct cinema of fifteen years earlier has also been more or less shamefacedly jettisoned – the renunciation of cinematic Maoism as well as of political Maoism? Every critic savoured *Histoire*'s studio-based microcosm sequence with its celebration of artifice, histrionics and scripted cinematography, which is far from the only passage in this eclectic work to set aside the heritage of direct cinema of course. At the same time, every critic also referenced the above-described *vérité* entrance to the Xi'an warrior site, and the film's bountiful heritage and landscape moments. How could it be denied that much nonfiction resonance remains in the film? This resonance arises primarily from the autobiographical Ivens persona, body, and physiognomy (and with respect to Ivens's infinitely fascinating face this film has much in common with the transcendently narcissistic Broughton among our testamentary corpus). It rests also to a large degree in his encounter with real-world spaces and with mediator characters performing themselves therein, for example the martial arts master or the mask-sculptor (the only episode in the film where Ivens showcases his legendary talent for observing manual labour). A most wonderful case in point is a small child who is held by Ivens upon his return from the moon to earth, his return from fantasy special effects to the truly special effect and affect of documentary. The child seems dazed by all of the attention as well as by the white-maned, white-skinned elder's improvised address in a language he does not understand: 'I've come a long way. I can't speak your language. It's a pity, isn't it? I can feel your hand. Your hand is gripping my fingers. That's good, isn't it? I understand you. We're speaking the language of hands'. Such nonfiction interactions – pity (shame at the futility of 70 years of verbal and visual language?) and understanding, affect, and intellect – extend of course to the film's broader politics of interpersonal relations, and bring us back to a reading of *Yukong* itself as an epic of interpersonal relations between the filmmakers and their social subjects who are performing – vainly, as it turned out, or at least temporarily – revolution.

Ultimately, the two final epics, *Yukong* and *Histoire*, together constitute a strange diptych cohered primarily by the outsider's gaze upon the site of both belief and shame, upon the entity, construct, place, population, and nation state that is China. This diptych is truly dialectical in its exploration of transfor-

mation and transcendence, truth and imagination, politics and poetics. The intensity of this encounter of political passion – for the Cultural Revolution, for the citizens who declared its utopias to the camera – with renunciation – of tenacious belief, of innocence, and of revolutionary cinematic commitment – brings us back to the concepts of both radical pathos and the metamorphic possibilities of shame. Have any other major filmmakers ever carried us through such seismic shifts in affect and form within less than two decades? Have any other parting filmmakers ever offered such an ‘astonishing,’ and ‘disquieting’, such ‘extraordinary mingling’ (to come back to Huxley’s words)? Have any other artists ever performed such a profound intervention, such a radical disavowal, and such a creative self-re-invention within their *oeuvre*?



122. Poster, Ivens retrospective, Paris 2003. 'A filmmaker in the torment of the 20th century'. Original in colour. Courtesy coll. EFJI, Nijmegen.

Conclusion: *Qui s'arrête se trompe*

This happens to all artist – artisans excellent style, their [work] continues same style all life. This is the graveyard of artists and writers. But must choose – make clean break; Huxley on Goya's later life and works
– *Desastres de Guerra*
– *Joris Ivens, notes for The Camera and I, c.1943*

In a stroke of programming inspiration, the New York Film Festival showed *Une histoire de vent* in 1989, preceded by Ivens's short poetic city film, also about a natural element, *Regen*, completed 60 years earlier. The programmer wheels in me start spinning and I wonder what other felicitous pairings might be imagined? *Borinage* and *Autour du pétrole*? *Nieuwe Gronden* and *Demain à Nanguila*? *Branding* and *Lied der Ströme, Power and the Land* and *Le Peuple et ses fusils*? *Power and the Land* and *The Grapes of Wrath*? *Komsomol* and *Doctor Zhivago*? *Borinage* and *Norma Rae*? Prolific genius that he was, Ivens's *oeuvre* will never exhaust possibilities for such synchronies.

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Unfortunately, Ivens had died three months earlier and did not live to bask in the inspiration of this moment of synthesis. The decades-long process of taking stock of this prolific and polarising *oeuvre* as a whole had already been launched by Ivens and Loridan themselves in their last film, and now was to begin in earnest, as is normal, continuing to this day. I hope this book makes a contribution to that process, alongside the stupendous efforts of the European Foundation Joris Ivens and its tireless and inspired director André Stufkens, who is as earth-moving as an Ivens crane operator in *Zuiderzee*.

Ivens's last two decades marked by cycles of triumph and shame, affirmation and renunciation, he mercifully did not live to experience an ultimate act of shaming embodied in two spiteful obituaries delivered by Paris's 'progressive' daily, *Libération*, once his ardent supporter. The long article by erstwhile anarchist Édouard Waintrop (1989) contained the word 'Stalinist' six times in the body and headlines, and seasoned the diatribe with 'light-footed [*swingant*] and short-sighted' and 'bad faith/guilty conscience'. It was supplemented by a shorter piece by distinguished resident film critic Serge Daney who writes better but was no gentler:

Little known, rarely seen, Ivens's films don't seem to belong to film history. They are formidable documents on an intrepid young cameraman who put his immense talent as a journalist at the service of Moscow (and then of Beijing). Nothing else. Nothing, in any case, of what makes Flaherty or Vertov still timely even today.

If one dared this paradox, one could say that Ivens is a great filmmaker of a very particular type, someone who sees nothing. Or rather one who, between the pre-established scenario (which was most often Stalinist) and the images gathered, will always choose the scenario. Strange filmmaker who always knows what he films, who never doubts the direction of what is being imprinted on film, who imagines with difficulty that humans serve for anything else than to compose the epic and friendly picture of peoples in struggle for communism. Even *Une histoire de vent* is the whim of someone who knows in advance what he will film. (Daney, 1989)

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It is obvious that 'little known, rarely seen' applies specifically to the author's own personal deficient knowledge of the *oeuvre* (Daney, spearheader of *Cahiers du cinéma* in its post-political 1970s, had offered a six-page piece on *Yukong* in 1976, but specialised in television, art cinema, and auteur fiction rather than documentary). However *Libération* retained some infinitesimal semblance of professional journalistic balance in accompanying the two tirades with a gentle and dignified reminiscence by an Ivens devotee, Claire Devarrieux, who had published a series of long interviews with Ivens in the 1970s (Devarrieux, 1979) and left a glimpse of the humanity of a great artist for her readers:

Joris Ivens, always moving, never renounced. Even very old he stayed available to people. [...] He was always in movement. [...] In the 1970s, when one asked him where he would go today, what revolution he would put his camera in the service of, he said that it was henceforth much harder to choose his camp. Ten years later, travelling backwards over his path as a militant, he remembered that at the moment when they were signing petitions in Paris, he himself would take off. He who hesitates is lost. Joris Ivens in any case continued... To make films. He always lived. He always fought. He alone (all alone) was the proof that wise old men are not so crazy, that western society sends them too quickly out to pasture. Bit by bit, Joris Ivens had discovered metaphysics. He saw peaks following on peaks, he knew that the horizon has no limits, and that science's answers only make questions dig in deeper. In the last film he made, with Marceline Loridan, *Histoire de vent*, you see men carry statues and other men surging up behind, and others again, and so on. That was his lesson

of life. Because he did not renounce. Because he accepted infinite complexity through refusing to lose his soul. And we, what do we look like, with our doubts that make us drop the pedals? [...] It was the great history of the century and of art that animated him. He wasn't high-talking, he could observe this history of humanity through the anguish of his neighbours [...] that form of intelligence that is courage when it stubbornly confronts unhappiness. (Devarrieux, 1989)

This book has tried to rise above Paris turf wars and factionalism as well as the perennial redbaiting and mudslinging exemplified by the above two diatribes, but also to resist the temptation to defend and exalt – which admittedly Devarrieux narrowly avoided. I have done so simply by looking closely at the films that are indeed little known and rarely seen. In the foregoing eight chapters, I have endeavoured to examine their vitalities and their paradoxes, their historical contexts and contradictions, the materialities along their trajectory from concept to reception. In short, to poach DeVarrieux's wonderful language, I have parsed their refusals and embraces, their ultimate courages and intelligences, surgings and confrontations, their observations of anguish and of 'tomorrows that sing'.¹

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The Foundation and the estate have done us an immeasurable service in providing 20 of those films in the 2008 DVD package, restored with such professional rigour and love. Both of the Paris polemicists used the concept of 'aestheticism' to denigrate Ivens's work. This surprised me since in my mind the artist seldom deployed the cinematic apparatus's potential for unleashing ineffable beauty on the screen without uncompromisingly rooting that beauty within his foremost missions of discovering worlds and the world, natural and human, of understanding human labour and everyday life, struggles and utopias. That said, one essential dividend of the prizewinning DVD box is an overdue reminder of the breathtaking formal beauty of this *oeuvre* and its missions, beauty that my generation had too often forgotten in the face of faded and shredded 16mm prints and VHS tapes – or even of a tantalising film still in *The Camera and I*. I am encouraged all the more by the restoration and re-release of the full *Yukong* series and of the 1950s DEFA productions from East Berlin, and of course the Foundation's ongoing programme of facilitating screenings, retrospectives, research, and festival spotlights worldwide.

French moral authorship and intellectual property law and its contempt for the principle of fair use has crippled the process of Ivens reaching his deserved 21st-century audience. Nonetheless, the ongoing activities of the Foundation and the various institutional restoration projects are allowing thousands of fans, students, teachers, researchers, activists, and historians to make progress in finishing what is an unfinishable job, closing the last gap in

the dike around the most prolific and iconic documentarist of the 20th century. Indeed, the most exciting frontier of ongoing and future research on Ivens is among German researchers like Günter Jordan and others using DEFA and other East German archives. I will be gratified if my chapter on the Iron Curtain period, of which I am proud, the only one not to incorporate at least some work from earlier in my career, will be a small player on that frontier.

This book addresses English-language film enthusiasts, students, researchers, and fans, the constituency that has unfortunately been least well served by the stewardship of the Ivens estate despite the fact that Ivens made five of his greatest films in our language in three different countries between 1936 and 1946. I hope that *The Conscience of Cinema* can be a modest catalyst in the process whereby we will access the fullness of this vital artistic and political heritage. And not only we English-readers but all citizens of the full constellation of six continents that Ivens graced with his vision of human struggles and tomorrows that sing.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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- 1 As this book nears completion, the restoration of Ivens's Cold War-era DEFA films and their DVD release under the supervision of the filmmaker's former collaborator Günter Jordan, together with Ralf Schenk, has been announced (2015).
- 2 The policy change coincided with the installation as IDFA Board Chair of Derk Sauer, a media magnate with a background as a Dutch Maoist activist.
- 3 The Mannheim list was (in descending order of votes cast by their international panel of documentarists, archivists and critics): *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1920, USA-Canada, 79), *Night Mail* (Harry Watt and Basil Wright, 1936, UK, 25), *Turksib* (Viktor Turin, 1929, USSR, 57), *Berlin – Symphonie einer Grosstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, Walther Ruttmann, 1927, Germany, 65), *Chelovek s Kino-aparatom* (*Man with a Movie Camera*, Dziga Vertov, 1928, USSR, 68), *Louisiana Story* (Robert Flaherty, 1948, USA, 79), *Farrébique* (*Farrébique – The Four Seasons*, Georges Rouquier, 1946, France, 90), *Staroye i novoye* (*The General Line*, Sergei Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov, 1929, USSR, 121), *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, Alain Resnais, France, 1955), *Drifters* (John Grierson, 1929, UK, 61), *The Spanish Earth*, and *Las Hurdes* (*Land Without Bread*, Luis Buñuel, 1933, 30) (Talman-Gros, 1964). Rotha's list, for which he shared responsibility with MOMA film curator Richard Forsythe and Sinclair Road, included five Ivens documentaries, *Borinage*, *New Earth*, *Spanish Earth*, *400 Million*, and *Power and the Land*, and only Grierson and Flaherty matched the Dutchman's level of visibility with five or more films.
- 4 The estate's shortsightedness is not the only factor in Ivens's lamentable disappearance from the view of international tastemakers and gatekeepers as symbolized by this poll, the efforts of the Ivens Foundation notwithstanding: aside from the obvious bountiful problems with populist polling itself as a canonizing

mechanism, the overwhelming anglophone provincialism of the voters was clearly responsible for the American preponderance in the two lists (followed distantly by France) and the total invisibility of most 'minor' documentary cinemas (from the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Italy to India and of course that crucible of direct cinema itself, Canada!). It is worth noting that, despite the obvious 'present-centrism' of the process, Ivens and Soviet compilationist Esfir Shub were the only ones of the 'founding parents' of the classical (pre-1960) documentary to be missing, Flaherty, Grierson, Vertov, Riefenstahl, Vigo, Buñuel, Franju and Jennings all being present (compilation itself was largely absent, and even as canonical an American artist as Emile de Antonio nowhere to be seen). Approximately 225 critics, academics and programmers voted and approximately 100 filmmakers (*Sight & Sound*, September 2014). *The Spanish Earth*, once on the top ten, received only two votes, this author's and one other. The Ivens Foundation offered a different spin on the process and celebrated the votes received by eleven Ivens films in the process (in descending order of votes received): *Regen, ...à Valparaiso*, *Histoire*, *Borinage*, *Le 17^e Parallèle*, *Spanish Earth*, *La Seine a rencontré Paris*, *Loin du Vietnam*, *Pour le Mistral* and *Yukong* (<<http://ivens.nl/en/home/179-poll-greatest-documentaries-ever-with-11-ivens-films>> accessed 14 October 2014).

- 5 Not to mention the pitfalls of deploying transcriptions of Chinese proper nouns through two distinct sets of Dutch, French, and English transcription conventions derived from the Wade-Giles system used until the mid-seventies (Mao Tse-tung) and the pinyin system used officially thereafter, at least for PRC sources (Mao Zedong).
- 6 Projectionists' notes for parallel screenings of Ivens's Canadian documentary *Action Stations* or its shorter 16mm version probably exist in the archives of the National Film Board of Canada, but the Conservative regime in Ottawa (2005-2015) imposed crippling cutbacks on federal archives and labourious research protocols on research that have disastrously impeded film historians from exploring such resources.
- 7 Organisations that attracted Ivens's alliance and participation ranged from the Amsterdam Filmliga (1927-1933), Association of Documentary Film Producers (1939-1942), and the World Union of Documentary (1947-1950) to the Association internationale de documentaristes (1964-c.1980) (Campbell [1978] 1982, 162; Alexander 1981, 256-258n; Ellis and McLean 2005, 101; Stufkens 2007, 17).
- 8 Cf. Nichols's (2011, 70-171) similar comparison of contrasting iconographies in these two films, using production stills and frame captures, echoing my detailed analysis in my 1981 dissertation.
- 9 The correct date is 1955.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 'Wigwam' is of course a perfectly respectable English word, and it is not known when or why the English title used on the DVD box set, *The Tipi* (a variant of the more usual 'tepee'), first began to be used.
- 2 By 'formalism' I mean the aesthetic strategy by which a work's primary motivation is the analysis of its own forms. Though an anonymous Soviet reviewer once used this label pejoratively with regard to Ivens's work (*Vechernie Izvestiya* 4 March 1930, quoted in Grelier 1965, 157), no such connotation is necessarily intended in the present analysis. 'Realism' is of course not to be confused with socialist realism, a historical movement to be examined beginning in Chapter 2, nor with a use of the term in early documentary historiography by Paul Rotha (1952, 75-104), as one of his four categories describing traditions in the classical documentary: the naturalist (Flaherty, Epstein), the realist (Ivens, Cavalcanti, Ruttmann), the newsreel (Vertov, *The March of Time*), and the propagandist (Grierson, *Turksib*, Riefenstahl).
- 3 The 'Flying Dutchman' legend would continue to have a great fascination for Ivens until he incorporated it into *Rotterdam-Europoort* in 1965, and it has become a motif of this book.
- 4 Henri Storck first showed me Krull's book in Brussels in 1976 and spoke of the two artists' reciprocal influence. The Ivens-Krull marriage was primarily one of convenience for Krull, who, like the hundreds of Eastern European refugee intellectuals and aristocrats on the European cultural scene between the wars, resorted to one means or another to secure a passport; Ivens was reportedly happy to provide her in this way with a Dutch one. Marriage was an institution that Ivens would continue to be ambivalent about, except for practical reasons, for much of his life.
- 5 Spearheading a commercial feature industry during World War I, Filmfabriek Hollandia had achieved short-lived success with a series of dramatic features, mostly adaptations, notable chiefly for naturalistic accents. According to Bert Hogenkamp (interviews and personal correspondence with author, December 1980 – January 1981), the Dutch film historian, Pathé, the French film giant, was deeply involved in this venture in order to use neutral Holland as a means of ensuring the continuation of its distribution network cut off by the war. More recently, political and religious groups such as Social Democrats and Catholics had begun exploring the possibilities of using film in their work, following earlier examples in France and Germany; it was in this atmosphere of awakening interest in film that the Amsterdam intellectuals began gathering and eventually formed Filmliga. Ivens would be involved in the eventual spread of this interest to the Dutch unions at the end of the decade.

- 6 *Brug* played at Studio 28 and *Regen* at the Ursulines. Rotha (1960, 296) mentions these two theatres as being instrumental in the formation of the French avant-garde of the twenties and adds the name of a third, Studio Diamant.
- 7 Grelier (1965, 68-70) and Stufkens (2008) provide fairly detailed accounts of the three major non-extant exercises, *Zeedijk-Filmstudie, Schaatsenrijden (Ice Skating, 1929, Netherlands, 8)*, and *Ik-Film (I-Film, 1929, Netherlands)*.
- 8 The Maas is also known as the Meuse and is part of the Meuse-Rhine-Scheldt delta.
- 9 A further modernist touch in *Brug* may be a shot of Ivens with his camera filming the bridge. This should probably be read as a self-reflexive inscription of the artistic process within the work of art, in the manner of Vertov's *Chelovek s kinoapparatom (Man with a Movie Camera, 1929, USSR, 68)*; but on the other hand it could conceivably be read as a naive, unselfconscious insertion in manner of Herbert Ponting's images of his camera fastened to the hull of his Antarctic vessel in *The Great White Silence (1910-1924, UK, 108)*.
- 10 It is conceivable but unlikely that Clair's *Tour*, the closest contemporary parallel to *Brug*, was influenced by Ivens's film, which was first shown in Amsterdam about the same time as Clair was shooting his film on the Eiffel Tower. *Brug's* Paris premiere, however, occurred in January 1929, one month after the first Paris showing of *Tour*.
- 11 Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, a nineteenth-century French Romantic *poète-maudite*.
- 12 This translation is based on Balázs's 1945 Moscow text in *Iskusstvo Kino (The Art of Film)*, which is virtually identical to his 1930 text, *Der Geist des Films*, in its treatment of *Brug*.
- 13 Interestingly, Mannus Franken would also continue working with non-professional actors, arriving at a form of semi-documentary narrativity with his Indonesian film *Pareh, een Rijstlied van Java (Pareh, Song of the Rice, 1935, Netherlands/Indonesia, 92)* quite independently of Ivens's efforts in the same direction.
- 14 Vredenburg (1929) made his own contribution to that same issue of *Filmliga*, a description of his collaboration with Ivens and Franken detailing his attempt to imitate the sound of the indigenous popular music of the region. He also invokes a standard theme of contemporary avant-garde film theory, that is, the analogy between film editing and musical composition.
- 15 Dulac's *La Coquille et le clergyman (The Seashell and the Clergyman, 1928, France, 28)*, scripted by Antonin Artaud, was reviewed in the same number of *Filmliga* as *Branding* (van Ophuijsen, 1929).
- 16 Ivens would remember having been struck by *Nosferatu* early during his studies in Germany (Destanque, 1983).
- 17 There is some debate as to whether Dovzhenko's works had already appeared in Holland by this time, and, if so, whether Ivens would already have studied them.

Bert Hogenkamp (personal communication, December 1980) thinks that this is unlikely but Jan de Vaal (1977), director of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, referred to a presentation of *Zvenigora* by Filmliga on 5 May 1928, one month prior to the *Branding* shoot.

- 18 *Images d'Ostende* is a very useful companion film to *Regen*, since it is almost exactly contemporary to Ivens's film, the work of a fellow director from the Low Countries, the artisanal product of a similar film society milieu, and a treatment of a similar subject. It suggests, among other things, what *Regen* might have looked like had Ivens persisted in his modernist orientation of *Brug*.
- 19 *Drifters* also incorporates certain narrative structures into its continuity. Grierson is also notable for having studied the Soviet filmmakers before embarking on his career.
- 20 The last sentence is apparently a 1945 addition to Balázs's original analysis, no doubt legitimising my invocation of Stalin's infamous 'propaganda tsar' then presiding over Soviet culture.
- 21 That Ivens would refer to Buñuel's famous shot simulating the slicing of a woman's eyeball with a razor in *Un chien andalou* (1928, France, 16) as an example of his own past modernist orientation in *Regen* confirms the extent to which Ivens himself regarded his early work as partaking in the cosmopolitan avant-garde of the late twenties. Interestingly, Storck ([1954] 1965, 138) claims that Buñuel's own evolution beyond 'certain surrealist ornaments and symbols' towards an 'often very scathing social criticism' was due to Ivens's influence. Indeed the two filmmakers' paths would often cross during the thirties.
- 22 Van Dongen produced the first sonorised version of *Regen* in 1932, using a score by the young Surinamer composer Lou Lichtveld, who was shortly to score *Philips-Radio* (1931, Netherlands, 36). The second version employed a score written especially for the purpose by Hanns Eisler in 1940 as part of his film music research for the Rockefeller Foundation. The dissemination of *Regen* received a new boost during the seventies due to the market of bootleg Super 8 prints of classic films and during the 21st century, thanks to the DVD box set and its offer of three different versions, and the Internet, mercifully still free of charge as we go to press.

CHAPTER 2

- 1 I am grateful to Bert Hogenkamp and André Stufkens for suggesting some factual aspects of the foregoing analysis of the Dutch context of *Wij Bouwen*.
- 2 According to Bert Hogenkamp (personal correspondence, December 1980), an eleven-reel print of *Wij Bouwen* found in the vaults of the Bouwvak Arbeiders Bond had *Heien* situated as the first reel and reels 8 to 11 devoted to *Zuiderzee*.

Although the original Dutch title for the latter is *Zuiderzeewerken* I am referring to it by the standard English title *Zuiderzee*, following the practice of Ivens in *The Camera and I* (1969).

- 3 The shot discussed by Wegner does not appear in the MOMA version of *Wij Bouwen*; it does appear, however, in both *Zuiderzee* and *Nieuwe Gronden*.
- 4 Although in the 1970s Ivens denied his membership in the CPH at any time (interview with author, April 1978), Jan de Vaal (1977), founder of the Joris Ivens Archives at the Nederlands Filmmuseum, as well as Schoots ([1995] 2000, 70) affirm it unequivocally, the latter dating his membership to 1931, based on Soviet archival documentation.
- 5 As Hogenkamp (n.d., 6) suggests, Ivens's memory of the exact date should be read with caution. (n.d., 6). Analogous editing experiments were being conducted at the same time by Henri Storck in Brussels: his montage of 1928 newsreels entitled *Histoire du soldat inconnu* (*History of the Unknown Soldier*, 1932, 11) is still extant. The influence of such work is also visible in Vigo's *À propos de Nice* (1930, France, 45). The Japanese invaded Manchuria in September 1931, a fact that helps date this activity.
- 6 Hogenkamp's original citations.
- 7 A further epic form discussed by McConnell is the 'self-conscious' epic (Virgil's *The Aeneid* and Eisenstein's *Ivan Groznyy* [*Ivan the Terrible*, 1944-46, USSR, 187]). This is not directly relevant to this study, inasmuch as Ivens's imminent taking up of 'self-conscious' forms, like direct address, coincides with his engagement in non-epic genres (agitation, for example).
- 8 For example, Herbert Reynolds (1976) states in the MOMA Program Notes that *Zuiderzee* appears more 'modern' than the more explicitly political *Nieuwe Gronden*. Another reason for the film's 'universal' appeal is suggested by Stuffkens (personal communication, 2014), namely that it is bereft of the provincial, local iconography that dominates other Dutch cinematic renditions of the project, from flags to folkloric costumes and handicrafts.
- 9 Compare Griffith's apocalyptic, seaside flash-forward to 'Liberty and Union ... Now and Forever' at the end of *Birth of a Nation*, Virgil's flash-forward to Imperial Rome in *The Aeneid* and Milton's flash-forward to Christ in *Paradise Lost*.
- 10 Grelier's (1965, 22) analysis is the most substantial using this method.
- 11 Compare my use of the conceptual binary 'presentational/representational' within the context of documentary performance in direct cinema in Waugh (1990) and in subsequent chapters of this book.
- 12 The point of view of *Zuiderzee* as epic film continues to be pertinent to this discussion of the film's modes of discourse inasmuch as the epic is a literary form that is quintessentially narrative, and primarily indirect in its address.
- 13 In 1933, Van Dongen and Bon would collaborate on the experimental studies of the latter: 'hand-coloured geometrical forms – abrupt change from square to

- triangle to circle with simultaneous changes into primary colours' (Van Dongen, 1976).
- 14 Voice-over narration had already been commonplace for as much as three years in the commercial newsreels (Fielding, 1972, 159-188), and by 1933, the voice-over narration convention in travelogue films was apparently already common enough for Buñuel's satire on this convention in *Las Hurdes*, an effect heightened by the no less satiric use of a Brahms symphonic score.
 - 15 In addition to the French coverage of the film noted below, the Rotterdam daily *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* (30-31 May 1931) ran a long two-part article on the sound mixing process used in *Philips-Radio*.
 - 16 René Clair imitated this sound gag in *À nous la liberté* (Freedom For Us, 1931, France, 104), which was shot in the Paris studio where the Philips sound recording was being completed in 1931. According to *Camera* (Ivens, 1969, 63), Clair showed *Philips-Radio* to his crew before the shooting of his feature fiction and the closeness of Clair's gag to Ivens's supports this claim. In the light of this 'borrowing' by Clair, it is appropriate that Clair was to halt the plagiarism suit brought against Chaplin by his producers when Chaplin imitated *Liberté* in his turn in *Modern Times* (1936, USA, 87). To complete the circle, Ivens would refer to *Philips-Radio* in subsequent presentations as a documentary *Modern Times*.
 - 17 The Dutch film journal *Skrien* chose the poster in 2001 as the most beautiful Dutch film poster of all time (Stufkens, 2008, 103).
 - 18 Gunning (2002, 23-25) also dwells on the fundamental ambiguity of the film.
 - 19 One earlier use of the term in French, cited in the previous chapter, 'actualités documentaires', clearly employs the French usage of the period, namely 'newsreels', rather than the film genre intended in his discussion a few years later.
 - 20 The descriptions of this film (which has only recently become available) in Wegner (1965, 39) and Grelier (1965, 74) seem to be taken from Ivens's recollections in an early manuscript of *Camera* and from contemporary reviews of the film.
 - 21 The original Russian title is *Pesn o geroyakh*. The film was commonly known in French as *La Jeunesse a la parole* (literally, 'Youth has the floor'). In German and English the film was commonly called *Song of Heroes* (*Heldenlied*), a translation from the Russian. The other common title *Komsomol*, which I have used in this study, has the advantage of being an original Russian alternate title, comprehensible to English-speaking readers, and the choice of Ivens (n.d. [c.1970], JIA) in the Dutch version of his autobiography.
 - 22 In fact, Mezhrabpom (Mezhdunarodnaya Rabochaya Pomoshch) is the Russian acronym for the Workers International Relief. The studio itself was officially called Mezhrabpom-Russ in 1924-1928 and Mezhranpomfilm thereafter. I use the shortened version Mezhrabpom when referring to the film studio and the English acronym WIR for the Workers International Relief. The WIR is also sometimes known in English-language scholarship as the International Labour Defence

(ILD), though this was strictly speaking an American communist organisation connected like the WIR to the Comintern. The exact configuration of relationship among these organisations remains murky.

- 23 Vertov ([1931] 1972) bitterly discusses the critics of his film in 'First Steps'.
- 24 Pudovkin would have discussed his first sound project, the aborted *Life's Very Good*, during his visit to Holland two years earlier. It was eventually released as *Prostoy Sluchay (A Simple Case, 96)* in December 1932, a complete debacle (Leyda, 1960, 279-280, 292-294). Eisenstein's first sound film was still a long way off – Ivens was already on location in Magnitogorsk when his old friend arrived back in Moscow in April 1932 from the Mexican misadventure.
- 25 *Kulaks* were a class of higher-income peasants targeted by Soviet authorities for resisting collectivisation in the agricultural sector. Many were sent to remote work camps including in the Magnitogorsk region beginning in 1931. Kulaks were satirised as obese class enemies in *The General Line* and ambiguously 'personalized' in *Earth*.
- 26 Vertov (1972, 248) must surely have shared this view, considering the 'furious' criticism that he describes having suffered from RAPP just prior to his preparations for *Tri pesni o Lenine (Three Songs About Lenin, 1934, USSR, 62)*. Stefan Morawski ([1957] 1974, 258), one of the few reliable and objective insider historians of socialist realism accessible in English, does likewise.
- 27 This view is supported by Morawski ([1957] 1974, 260) and by the evidence of Soviet films themselves, which often continued to be relatively fresh and lively throughout the late thirties and the War.
- 28 The British school may also have served as a conduit for the Soviet influence, their experiments with 'personalized' documentary being largely concurrent to those of Ivens. Grierson was always well informed of Soviet developments and Paul Rotha (1952, 142) cites some of the debate about the need for more individual characterisation in documentaries at a Soviet conference attended by him in January 1935. Several of the 'personalized' British films of the next few years had input from Rotha, and were also widely seen in the US.
- 29 *Komsomol* was also inspired in part by still photographic work reflecting similar dynamics. See work by Maks Alpert and Georgi Petrusov as collected in Ddewitz (2009). Stufkens (2008, 109) has determined that Alpert's photo essay, published abroad, on the shock worker Kalmykov, was a specific model for *Komsomol* and that film's own 'personalized' role-model character Afanaseyev. Emily Joyce Evans says Kalmykov was 'probably fictional' (Ddewitz 2009, 18), but Dutch filmmaker Pieter Jan Smit found his widow in 1997, and heard of his 1938 execution for 'counter-revolutionary' activities (Stufkens, 2008, 117-118).
- 30 One of Vertov's many colourful phrases for the bourgeois acted cinema.
- 31 This said, not all of Ivens's plans for Afanaseyev's characterisation made it into the final film, for example a scene of the riveter interacting and sharing domestic

tasks with his barracks co-inhabitants (Stufkens, 2008, 121). Also deleted was speechmaking by local politicians.

- 32 Many of these structural characteristics are visible in the socialist realist novels of the thirties as well, for example, Valentin Katayev's *Time, Forward!* (1932), also set within the industrialisation of the Five-Year Plan, and Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1932), set within the collectivisation of agriculture.
- 33 In fact most of the 'newsreel' footage of the dumping of surplus food was re-enacted by Ivens and his collaborators on location in the Paris region and in the Joinville studios.
- 34 Ferguson's rave was dampened by an uncharacteristically obtuse dismissal of the coda as 'incidental'.
- 35 Storck's original French title of this film is *Misère au Borinage* (*Poverty in the Borinage*), and this is the title of the Belgian's later sound version of the film. I use the more convenient title *Borinage* because it was Ivens's choice from 1934 onwards (Stufkens 2008, 165), in preference to Storck's, because: 'Poverty was one thing, it was obvious, but I didn't want to foreground it. I was aware of poverty and of the destitution in which these people lived, but it wasn't misery, not really. These men, these women were dignified. Beyond the conditions that were imposed upon them, beyond their desire to surmount them, waiting for better days, they accepted these limits and tried to live and be happy. The problem was ideological. We had come to Borinage to make a film on the miners' living conditions. We needed to go beyond poverty, forget the lost strike, look beyond immediate evidence. The most engaged miners made us become aware that a lost strike is not a defeat after which there's nothing to hope for.' (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 117)

The title also appears in this shortened form in non-French-speaking literature and in traditional Ivens scholarship, including the definitive 1978 filmography. I am grateful to Hogenkamp and Storck (1983), as well as Stufkens (2008), for several factual details in the production and distribution history of the film, and in the history of the Borin struggle. These are not individually cited except where Hogenkamp's interpretative judgments enter my analysis.

- 36 Four critics and filmmakers from the Netherlands, the UK, Austria, and France voted for *Borinage* as one of the ten best documentaries of all time in the 2014 *Sight and Sound* poll. <<http://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-sound-magazine/greatest-docs-full-poll/#/?poll=combined&film=4ce2b6a21d217>> accessed 16 October, 2014.
- 37 For account of artistic convergences of Von Gogh and Ivens see Stufkens (2002).
- 38 This anecdote related by Storck (interview with author, January 1976), but now thought to be apochrophal (Stufkens, personal correspondence, May 2014) has an interesting ending even if it may be untrue. Borinage's wealthy sponsor was never to see the film he had made possible – he died on a train en route to the

premiere and was subsequently buried with a hammer and sickle engraved on his tomb.

- 39 This text appeared in Dutch (*Links-Front*, 11 October 1933), Russian, German, French ('Notes de Travail sur *Borinage*', *Commune* [Paris] no. 7-8, March-April 1934), and English ('Jottings of a Film Producer', *International Theater* [Moscow] no. 3-4, 1934). This citation is the author's translation from the French, rather than the Moscow English version.
- 40 The Borinage summary comes immediately after the montage introduction in one version, but is situated somewhat later in the version shown at the January 1934 Paris avant-première.
- 41 Subsequent research has provided historical names for most of the anonymous characters in the film so that 21st-century DVD viewers with Stufkens's (2008) accompanying book in hand heighten their affective identification with the film's characters across the chronological chasm of eight decades.
- 666 | 42 Not surprisingly, this shot breakdown from the 2008 restored DVD version differs slightly from the 1934 mimeographed document of the original film screening personally provided by co-director Henri Storck (1976).
- 43 Ivens's criticism of the British film may not be entirely fair: he could not have been unaware that both Lorentz's and Storck's 'conquest of this particular problem' was due in part to their use of studio sets, but that *Housing Problems* is unique for its pioneering use of on-location sound recording. You may not have been able to smell those London slums, but you could hear them for the first time in film history. In any case the British were also wrestling with this same aesthetic and ideological problem. Grierson had a special pejorative word 'aestheticity' and Rotha (1952, 153) discussed the problem at length in *Documentary Film*: 'Beauty is one of the greatest dangers to documentary: it is not only insufficient but frequently harmful to the significant expression of content. Beauty of purely natural things, of sunlight and flowers, of the ceiling of the sky, is unimportant unless related to purpose and theme. Beauty of symphonic and rhythmic movement is, as we have seen nothing in itself. What is important is beauty of idea, fact, and achievement, none of which have anything to do with the actual filming of individual shots'.
- 44 As further confirmation of Ivens's relationship with interwar European photographic culture, *Regen* was screened during the epochal 1929 FiFo (Film und Foto) exhibition in Stuttgart in 1929, presumably selected by the curator of the Dutch representation, the photographer and designer Piet Zwart, associated with the New Objectivity and other avant-garde currents in Holland (Stufkens, 2008, 75).
- 45 Kracauer (1947, 233-234) has similar criticisms of New Objectivity in *From Caligari to Hitler*.
- 46 Elsewhere, by a curious coincidence, Benjamin ([1931] 1978, 72) names Krull as an example of the tendency he is criticising.

- 47 The Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL) in the US also employed variations of this form at this time. Russell Campbell (1978, 148-149) provides a detailed breakdown of one extant film that does so, *Bonus March* (Leo Seltzer, 1932, 12).
- 48 The Ivens-Shub admiration was mutual. She devoted a chapter of her autobiography to Ivens (Shub, 1972).
- 49 A WIR-sponsored Paris screening (private, since public screenings were forbidden) was mentioned in the WFPL organ *Filmfront* (15 February 1935, 18); Hogenkamp (1979, 16) provides this information about the Dutch distribution.
- 50 Storck, letter to Joris Ivens, March 1934. Shown by Storck to the author, January 1976. Though Storck and Ivens would never work together again, they remained friends. Storck would contribute one of the finest homages to the 1963 East German Festschrift in honour of Ivens's 65th birthday, and their jovial reunion in their eighties in Katwijk (Cinémafia [1981, 33] together with and shot by Jean Rouch) is a lovely extra in the 2008 DVD box set.
- 51 Van Dongen studied with Eisenstein, Vertov, and Pudovkin at the Moscow Academy of Cinematography, according to her later recollection, and lectured on editing at the Academy (Van Dongen, filmography).
- 52 Hogenkamp reveals that the 1960 version was distributed in England by both the British Film Institute and the Workers' Film Association, symbolic evidence of the film's continuing bifurcal constituency.

CHAPTER 3

- 1 Campbell ([1978] 1982) is the most detailed and reliable account of the ideological context of the films of the American Popular Front, to which I must acknowledge my indebtedness. Alexander (1981) is a less comprehensive, more easily available treatment of the same subject.
- 2 It is unclear how this arrangement could have continued after Mezhrabpom was collapsed into Soyuzdetfilm in June of that year, also as part of the new political reality, but this has not been confirmed.
- 3 A compact 1934 statement of Hurwitz's position, 'The Revolutionary Film – Next Step', is anthologised in Jacobs (1979), from which the quotes in this discussion are taken.
- 4 It was not Ivens's first encounter with Spain, nor specifically with Spanish left film culture. Juan Piqueras Martinez, editor of the left-wing Spanish film magazine *Nuestro Cinema* (Madrid), published a detailed account of Ivens's work and an interview with Ivens on *Komsomol* in the June-July 1933 issue of his magazine, complete with three production stills from Magnitogorsk (Piqueras 1933). They apparently met in Paris, and the issue in the Biblioteca nacional de España bears Ivens's autograph upon the still of his *Komsomol* crew. Piqueras was dispatched

by a Franquist firing squad in July 1936. I am grateful to Enrique Fibla for this link.

- 5 This village, now on the southeastern outskirts of Madrid near the Valencia highway, is not identified in the film.
- 6 This incomplete and misleading description of the classical sound documentary could be found even in such otherwise groundbreaking articles on documentary as Nichols (1976) and Kuhn (1981).
- 7 Ivens did not bow to pressure to cover elsewhere industrial production and women working in factories, as well as the literacy campaign, received from the Italian communist 'Carlos', political commissar of the communist Fifth Regiment featured in the film, and production consultant (Stufkens, 2008, 198). According to *Diario de la guerra española*, the memoirs of Mikhail Koltsov (1938, quoted in Stufkens 2008, 198), *Pravda* correspondent and reputedly Stalin's personal delegate on the Spanish front, Koltsov consulted with Ivens on the film, along with Carlos, and the two advised a focus on family life, worker-peasant unity, and the defence of democracy and culture. Koltsov, who appears heavy-handedly as the murderous Soviet commissar in *Hemingway & Gellhorn* (Philip Kaufman, 2012, USA, 155) was liquidated in the purges when he returned to Moscow.
- 8 For an account of the newsreels' coverage of the Sino-Japanese War see Fielding (1972, 207-210).
- 9 Pinyin transliteration of Chinese words is used throughout for the purpose of consistency, including in citations originally using the Wade-Giles system. Where a proper name more familiar in its Wade-Giles form is used, this version follows the Pinyin form in brackets at first use.
- 10 Tuttle has gone down in history as one who named names during the postwar Red Scare.
- 11 Poll cited by Campbell (1978, 294). Roosevelt's speech was given in Chicago on 5 October 1937 and greatly encouraged pro-Chinese elements: 'When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease' (Guerrant, 1950, 137).
- 12 Leyda (1972, 110-112) vividly demonstrates how untruthful and incomplete earlier American film visions of China had been. A more detailed but less forthright version may be found in Jones (1955).
- 13 Ivens's playing along with the Guomindang's game may also have been a ploy.
- 14 According to legend, Dunham smuggled his precious footage out of China in ginger jars (Campbell 1978, 292); newsreel operators often had to resort to similar tactics (Fielding 1972, 208).
- 15 The English writers were completing a book assignment on the war, *Journey to a War*. The two excursions crossed paths at several points. Isherwood's ([1939] 1972, 165) account of their April meeting in Xi'an relates that Capa found Chinese

faces less satisfactory for the camera than Spanish faces, that the filmmakers were then still counting on going to Yanan, and that the Englishmen took photos back to the US with them to skirt the censors.

- 16 According to Ivens's own brief account of his itinerary (Ivens, 1939).
- 17 According to this account, it was Nichols who dissuaded Ivens from destroying the negative.
- 18 For a catalogue of the content of Dunham's footage see Campbell (1978, 301-304).
- 19 Ivens ([1938] 1969, 176) also remembers avoiding 'picturesque' images that his audience would have already encountered in 'travelogues', 'so I concentrated more on the less exotic things'.
- 20 Leyda (1972, 8) tells of some of the first such filmmakers; Susan Sontag (1978, 167-180) discussed another 1970s example, Michelangelo Antonioni, revealing the enormous complexity of the subject. The fact that Antonioni encountered attitudes from the heirs of Mao during the Cultural Revolution that are similar to those 30 years earlier of the minions of Jiang would suggest that cultural factors are indeed the determining factor. However, the fact that the BBC was expelled from India about the same time in a cloud of rhetoric that resembles the Beijing criticism of Antonioni implies that this aesthetic of photography is common among Westernised postcolonial elites and is thus more properly ideological. The fact that Ivens's exercise with his Beijing students, *Six Hundred Million With You* (1958, China, 12), virtually reproduces the Guomindang *mise-en-scène* style of 1938, while his *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*, 1976, France, 718) successfully introduced the diametrically opposed aesthetic of direct cinema to China, warns that the subject is perilous terrain for armchair cultural analysts.
- 21 The Lintong (Xi'an) incident of December 1936 was an attempted coup mounted by the Guomindang's northern commanders in a successful attempt to force Jiang to negotiate an alliance with the Communists against the Japanese.
- 22 The filmmakers did in fact have some primitive sound-on-disk equipment with them and recorded some 'wild' sound effects used on the soundtrack (Ivens, letter to author, 19 October 1980). Some of the folksongs recorded by the crew in the Yellow River valley ended up on the soundtrack of the National Film Board of Canada's 1942 production on Chinese culture, *Flight of the Dragon* (Leslie Thatcher, 13) (Morris, 1965, 29).
- 23 Both Grelier and Zalzman claim, apparently on the basis of conversations with Ivens, that some of Harry Dunham's shots from Yanan were also used. This seems to be in error: none of those appearing in *China Strikes Back* is visible, and there is no credit given to Dunham.
- 24 Baddeley's (1963, 35) 'recommended' shooting, ratio is 3 or 3 ½ to 1 but it can 'unexpectedly' reach to 15 to 1.
- 25 See also Barnes (1939) and *400 Million* (1939).

- 26 Three versions of the commentary exist at JIA: a first undated typescript version entitled 'We, the Chinese People!' (22 pages); a 'final' version prepared for the recording; the final version as it appears on the final film, which reflect numerous further short excisions.
- 27 Ivens himself would not narrate a film, except for the Dutch version of *Nieuwe Gronden*, until the Vietnamese film of 1966, *Le Ciel, la terre* (*The Threatening Sky*, France, 28).
- 28 The outcome was *Composing for the Films* (Eisler 1947), which the composer later produced, fresh off the presses, before the inquisitors of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) as evidence of his ideological propriety – in vain (Bentley, 1971, 73-109).
- 29 As such, the symposium on 'Music in Films' (Eisler, 1947, 5-21) that gathered together most of the prestigious film composers of the last half of the decade can be seen as the summation of a period at its close rather than the harbinger, as its organisers may have imagined, of future trends.
- 30 Adorno 'conducted the music division of another Rockefeller undertaking, the Princeton Radio Research Project. The problems with which he concerned himself were those of a social, musical, and even technical aspect, closely related to the moving picture. The theories and formulations presented here [in Eisler's *Composing for the Films*] evolved from cooperation with him on general aesthetic and sociological matters as well as purely musical issues' (Eisler, 1947, xx). Adorno was the chief cultural critic of the refugee Frankfurt School of Social Research. His Marxist cultural analysis was apparently too highbrow for HUAC.
- 31 This concept 'strengthened' (my retranslation) comes from Ivens's lecture at Columbia University (13 December 1939).
- 32 Capra's composer, Dimitri Tiomkin, would provide Ivens with less 'detestable' service in *Our Russian Front* (1941, USA, 38).
- 33 Ivens's handwritten suggestions for Eisler on this document are very suggestive of the origins of the score.
- 34 Ivens remembered the isolated violin in *Hervo* (1978).
- 35 This admittedly speculative analysis is supported by at least one case history: upon first being introduced to 'serious' modernist music as a late adolescent, the author's first and lingering response was that it sounds like educational film music.
- 36 The concept comes from Eisler (1947, 34), undoubtedly deriving it from his former collaborator, Brecht. Eisler (1947, xx) declares that 'traditional resources long since frozen into automatic associations [...] can be used meaningfully again if they are clarified and "alienated" in the light of advanced practice'. However, this is not Eisler's method in any of his scores with which I am familiar.
- 37 Ivens would fulfil his long-standing ambition of 'filming the wind' in the early sixties during his 'lyrical essay' period with *Pour le Mistral* (*For the Mistral*, 1965, France, 33) and of course with his final autobiographical essay *Histoire*.

- 38 Jiang was a newsreel favourite (Fielding, 1972, 201) and an even greater favourite with the Luce media: he was *Time's* 'Man of the Year' (with his wife) for 1937. Halberstam (1979, 102, 109-122) details later developments in the honeymoon between Jiang and the US media.
- 39 All the same, Ivens succeeded in resisting the extreme hagiography of the Guomindang and Jiang urged upon him by his American backer, Li; a late editing decision cut all reference to the Lintong incident, the Jiang kidnapping, the site of which near Xi'an Ivens had been shown by his hosts as if it were 'a kind of Lourdes' (Ivens, 1969, 176). The Jiang kidnapping had been recreated for *The March of Time* (Fielding 1972, 167), but Ivens (15 December 1938, JIA) made a note to himself to play this incident 'down or out' and the final decision was the latter.
- 40 The small-scale mobile industries in the interior were part of the Guomindang's 'New Life' Movement to revive China and resist the Japanese.
- 41 Ivan Pyryev would be Ivens's co-director on *Freundschaft siegt* (*Friendship Triumphs*, 1952, USSR/DDR, 100).
- 42 Miriam Hopkins made at least one other contribution to the Chinese cause, joining the anti-Japan boycott by wearing cotton stockings instead of silk (Ceplair and Englund, 1980, 126).
- 43 Ivens was not alone in encountering French censorship problems in the first months of the war: Malraux's film *L'Espoir* (*Days of Hope*, 1945, 88) also had difficulties in September.

CHAPTER 4

- 1 As many as one-third of the officers of the League of American Writers resigned as a result of the Pact (Caute, 1973, 189). Ceplair and England (1980, 120-153) report similar defections from Hollywood leftist groups.
- 2 Ivens's role as president was mostly honorary. The functioning administrator was secretary Mary Losey, a former *March of Time* researcher, director of the American Film Center, and leading spokesperson for the American documentary movement. Losey was active in the left milieu frequented by Ivens, the sister of Joseph Losey, and the wife of Frontier Films member William Osgood Field.
- 3 Ornitz's father, Samuel Ornitz, the Hollywood scriptwriter, was one of the Hollywood Ten. Arthur Ornitz later became president of the Cameraman's Union.
- 4 Ferno would collaborate with Julian Roffman on *And So They Live* (1940, USA, 24) for the Sloan Foundation, and *A Child Went Forth* (Joseph Losey, USA, 1941, 20), both films on childhood in underprivileged social strata, as well as a beautiful 1941 film for the National Film Board of Canada, *High over the Borders* (Raymond Spottiswoode, 1941, 23), an essay proposing the migration of birds as a metaphor

for international cooperation. At the end of the war, he returned to the Netherlands to make two films on the liberation and post-war period, *Gebroken dijken* (*Broken Dikes*, 1945, 15) and *Het laaste scot* (*The Last Shot*, 1945, 16).

- 5 Lorentz had however refused Strand and Hurwitz's earlier radical script for *Plow* (Snyder, 1968, 31).
- 6 Agee and Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) is one such reaction in the view of Stott (1973, 259-314).
- 7 *Variety* (1940), however, no authority on 'stix pix', found the well-fed, hard-working and well-equipped Parkinsons exaggeratedly primitive.
- 8 Lorentz's roots in that part of Ohio were also a factor in the Parkinsons choice (Snyder, 1968, 123).
- 9 This prescription is present in all three versions of this 'manual' (Ivens, 1940, 33-34, 36; 1942, 298-299; 1969, 217-218). This specific wording comes from 'Collaboration in Documentary'.
- 10 Snyder's sources are interviews with both Lorentz and Crosby.
- 11 Snyder recounts Crosby's recollection of the episode. The incidents included a nearby field being set ablaze, an extra's heart attack, and the business manager's being overcome by smoke.
- 12 Zalzman (1963, 69) is the only author to mention this.
- 13 This recollection does not coincide precisely with Snyder's account, though it does not necessarily contradict it.
- 14 Snyder (1968, 127) cites the letter in part.
- 15 Alexander (1982) suggests that Lorentz's suppression of the barn-burning sequence, with its implied indictment of the utility companies, was an attempt to remove as much controversy from the film as possible, in view of the ongoing debate in Congress over the future of the US Film Service. The debate, however, did not get underway in earnest until February 1940. This would suggest that this specific factor could not have been a major one at the time of Lorentz's letter, though Lorentz must certainly have felt that he had already made enough enemies.
- 16 A retroactive feminist rewriting of the credits for this and several other films, both by Ivens and Flaherty, is in order. Van Dongen's contribution to Flaherty's *Land* and *Louisiana Story* (1948, USA, 78) is discussed in Achtenberg (1976, 48).
- 17 These overtones are presumably what MacCann (1973, 103) means by the film's 'shortcomings of informational structure and of plot'.
- 18 In *Fight for Life*, Lorentz was able to avoid this hitherto unavoidable structural requirement of dramatised, didactic documentary by using the original device of a film-within-a-film, motivated within the narrative.
- 19 I use the term 'identification' as Ivens and his contemporaries used it, that is innocent of the complexities that both Freudian and Brechtian film criticism of later decades brought to it. While this use is not inconsistent with the Brechtian

notion, it is clear that Ivens's and his contemporaries' evolution towards characters with which their audience could 'identify' at the same time took them away from their Brechtian strategies of the early thirties.

- 20 In the light of several precedents and contemporary examples, Ivens's 1967 recollection appended to *Camera* (Ivens, 1969, 228) must be read with caution: 'Before the war, it was so exceptional to direct documentary material in this way that there would be big arguments each time one of us tried it, as in Pare Lorentz's *Fight for Life* or in my *Power and the Land*'. Few of the 'big arguments' took place in print, apparently.
- 21 Pudovkin ([1949] 1968, 170) discusses such tactics in *Film Technique and Film Acting*. One of his methods for filming Mongolian extras during the production of *Potomok Chingis-Khana* (*Storm Over Asia*, USSR, 1928, 127) was to have them distracted by a conjuror.
- 22 I reflect in more detail on these issues and their subsequent play in documentary history in Waugh ([1990] 2011).
- 23 Dyer (1979, 53-68) is building on the conceptual model of O.E. Klapp.
- 24 One of Moore's other scores was for *Youth Gets a Break* (National Youth Administration, Joseph Losey, 1941, USA, 20).
- 25 The customarily imaginative programmers at New York's Rialto Theatre outdid themselves for the premiere engagement of *Power*: although the feature attraction was Allan Dwan's undistinguished western, *Trail of the Vigilantes* (1940, USA, 75), the cartoon depicted Disney's Donald Duck in *Modern Inventions* (Jack King, 1937, 9) where he is considerably less in control of the automatic barber-shoeshine combination machine than the Parkinsons are, fortunately, of their new electric milking machine.
- 26 Alexander (1981) offers a psychoanalytic study of Ivens' characterisation of Bip.
- 27 Compare the reference in the commentary for Flaherty's *Land*, another commission for the Department of Agriculture, to 'problems that no longer one man can solve alone'.
- 28 Rotha (1952, 316-317) has a slightly different version: 'The aesthetic effects [of *Valley Town*] on the audience were as nothing compared with the impact on the sponsors. [...] It seemed a bitter indictment of the roundabout solutions of classical economics. The Sloan Foundation thus felt moved to finance a "companion piece" to redress the balance, but *Machine: Master or Slave?* was slick and unconvincing. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the soliloquy sequences in *Valley Town* overwhelmed and obscured its general theme, and that the price paid for this technical experiment was the withdrawal of a sponsor on whom so many American documentary hopes were based at that period'.
- 29 These accounts are based on assorted *New Frontiers* notes and outlines in JIA.
- 30 Zalzman (1963, 70) says that Ivens's collaborator on the *New Frontiers* script was Wieland Herzfelde, brother of German anti-fascist artist John Heartfield and an

important publisher, then a refugee in New York. Leyda (interview with author, January 1981) said that this cannot be true. Ivens never having replied to my query on this, I want to believe Zalzman, for this would be yet another fascinating intersection of Ivens's career with international left cultural workers as well as a confirmation of General Motors' evident suspicions that the project was riddled with reds.

- 31 A contemporary filmmaker's alarm at this ominous development may be found in Rotha (1973, 233).
- 32 The future victims ranged from Morris Carnovsky, who was involved in the post-synchronisation of *400 Million* and would be blacklisted, and Carl Foreman, co-director with Ivens of the aborted *Know Your Enemy: Japan* (1942, 62), who emigrated to England, to John Grierson, Ivens's sponsor for *Action Stations*, who would be linked to a Soviet spy scandal by the Canadian equivalent of the Red Scare. The biggest star of all, of course, was Eisler. In his appearance before HUAC, Eisler's work with Ivens on *Komsomol* was discussed and he professed to being flattered by the charge that he was the 'Karl Marx of Communism in the musical field'. Had he been readmitted to the US, Ivens would not have escaped a similar star appearance: Eisler's interrogator's comment, 'We will get to Mr. Ivens later', sounds intriguingly ominous (Bentley, 2001, 76, 84, 86).
- 33 The Dutch government did however accept his offer of the use of the film *Nieuwe Gronden*, which they re-edited for the purpose of wartime propaganda, minus, needless to say, the montage coda, but with a narration by Irving Jacoby stressing the parallel between the struggle for earth and the struggle for freedom (Böker, 1978, 280, 289).
- 34 *Oil* is not lost, contrary to the opinion of Shell Oil (letter to author, 6 October 1975), but extant and in good condition in the National Film Archives of Canada, Ottawa.
- 35 On Ceplair and England's (1980, 437-438) lists of 'Key Political Activists' in Hollywood in the thirties and forties, Ivens's associates figure prominently: among the 31 'liberals' appear March, his wife Florence Eldridge, Hopkins, Lewis Milestone, Nichols, Welles, and William Wyler; among the 52 radicals appear Dashiell Hammett, Hellman, Parker, Stewart, Foreman, and Maddow, plus other well-known writers, including later members of the Hollywood Ten with whom Ivens worked in the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization.
- 36 Information on Ivens's teaching at USC comes from the following: assorted lecture notes, JIA; interviews with the author, February 1976 and April 1978; Wegner (1965, 110).
- 37 Only 38% of the US public was in favour of aid to the Soviets (Dallek, 1979, 296). Dallek goes into some detail on how religious affiliations and the Church hierarchy intervened in these attitudes. Further evidence of US isolationist attitude at this point, which must have alarmed pro-Soviet filmmakers in particular, is

- a resolution introduced into the Senate that August condemning Hollywood's alleged pro-war propaganda (Sklar, 1975, 245).
- 38 *The Herald Tribune* ran Milestone's photo alongside their review of the film (Barnes, 1942).
- 39 One other possible explanation for this sudden preponderance of commentary is the absence of Van Dongen from the project, for the first time in Ivens's sound-era career. Griffith's (1952a, 329) account of Van Dongen's own project, *News Review No. 2* (1944-1945) suggests that she had her own personal distaste for overbearing commentaries. The film was 'an even vaster account of events on all fronts round the world during two years of war. This binding together of human beings in a common experience was achieved almost without the aid of commentary, which was in both cases [that is, in her earlier film, *Russians at War* (1943, 61) as well] negligible'.
- 40 Simonov's play opened on Broadway in January 1943, a Theater Guild production. This play may be the source of Leyda's (1972, 64) apparently erroneous account of a film of this name by Ivens and Van Dongen in 1942. Roger Manvell (1976, 182) repeats the apparent error. Leyda is presumably thinking of Van Dongen's *Russians at War*, or even *Front* though Van Dongen denies having had anything to do with this film.
- 41 A fuller account of the controversy surrounding *Mission to Moscow* is Culbert (1979, 121-146).
- 42 MacCann's (1973, 123-128) vivid account of this period includes the well-documented suggestion that MacLeish's short career in wartime information was due to congressional antipathy to him both as a presidential favourite and a poet.
- 43 Among WFPL veterans and other filmmakers with radical or liberal sympathies employed at the OWI were Maddow, Lerner, Hurwitz, Meyers, Jacoby, Hammid, Henwar Rodakiewicz, Van Dyke, Philip Dunne, Waldo Salt, and Roger Barlow.
- 44 Set in Canada, this film stars Laurence Olivier as an anti-Nazi French-Canadian trapper!
- 45 Ivens himself ascribes these reservations to Grierson (interview with author, April 1978).
- 46 Another NFB left-winger was famed animator Norman McLaren, who became friends with Ivens when they crossed paths in Ottawa, no doubt on the basis of their shared Spanish Civil War history and imminent shared solidarity with the Chinese Revolution; Ivens later invited McLaren to participate in *Pour le Mistral* (*For the Mistral*, 1965, France, 33) – to no avail.
- 47 This phrase, now a cliché of Canadian film history, originates in a 1950 'Act Respecting the National Film Board' of the Canadian Parliament (repr. James, 1977, 709).
- 48 Rodney James (1977, 90) describes this tripartite structure as giving the 'impression of three short films cut together to make a long one', erroneously, in my opinion.

- 49 Applebaum went on to a distinguished career in Canadian and American film music. One of his scores would be for another project associated with Ivens, *The Story of G.I. Joe* (William A. Wellman, 1945, USA, 108).
- 50 *Action Stations* may have been upstaged by a Hollywood dramatic film on the same subject, Universal's *Corvette K-225* (Richard Rosson, 1943, 98). This film, praised for its 'virtually documentary treatment' by Crowther (1943), was also derived from location work on a Canadian Corvette, and appeared on Crowther's 'ten best' list for 1943.
- 51 It is difficult to establish the time span of the project. Leyda (1964, 59) describes the project as having been 'more than a year' under Ivens's direction. Van Dongen (interview with author, 1976) remembers Ivens's involvement as having been much less than that. It seems plausible that Van Dongen was actually involved in the mechanical task of screening footage for as much as a year and that Ivens was similarly engaged for a shorter period but with a general supervisory role for most of the duration of the project.
- 52 The treatments are entitled respectively: 'Outline for *Know Your Enemy: Japan*' (16 August 1943), inscribed 'First revised outline' in Ivens's handwriting; 'Know Your Enemy Japan' (26 August 1943) inscribed 'Short outline by US Signal Corps' in what appears to be Van Dongen's handwriting; 'Restricted War Department Photographic Scenario, The United States Army Presents *Know Your Enemy: Japan*, A Special Service Orientation Film No. 19' (23 November 1943)', all JIA.
- 53 One possible antecedent is Esfir Shub's project of reconstructing the character of the historical Leo Tolstoy for *Rossiya Nikolaya II i Lev Tolstoy (The Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tostoy*, Esfir Shub, 1928, USSR)
- 54 Contemporary catalogue description of *Mask of Nippon*, quoted in Peter Morris (1965, 82).
- 55 This version of *Know Your Enemy: Japan* is deposited in the Joris Ivens Archives despite Ivens's disavowal of the film. It was eventually released in 1980 by the National Audio Visual Center (NAVC) of the US National Archives and broadcast over PBS, whereupon one viewer termed it 'one of the most racist films ever made' (Pappas, 1980, 48), erroneously attributing it to Ivens. NAVC researcher William Blakefield was more accurate in his rendition of the credits (Ivens is listed as one of five scriptwriters; there is no credit for director, but Capra is listed as 'supervisor'), and gentler in his description of the film: 'Students of Japanese history and culture will undoubtedly take exception to many of the ideas promulgated in the film; it should be noted in fairness that such views were almost universally held by Americans at the time. Perhaps these attitudes are merely representative of the xenophobia historically present at meetings of East and West, understandably heightened by the hostilities of war. [...] The film is considered of historical value and does not necessarily reflect current policy of plans of the Department of Defence.' (Blakefield, 1980, 27-28)

- 56 This version of the discontinuation of *Know Your Enemy: Japan* was proposed by Zalzman (1963, 76) and is repeated by Delmar (1979, 40).
- 57 This treatment may be incomplete since its ending on page 22 seems abrupt.
- 58 Ivens's panel on documentary film was chaired by Hurwitz and featured Howe, Maddow, and Kenneth MacGowan, the film theorist and teacher (UCLA) and producer for Twentieth Century-Fox.
- 59 Dogged research by the author has not been able to corroborate this much-repeated factoid of Ivens lore.
- 60 Stott (1973, 141-210) notices important analogies of approaches in documentary expression in journalism and the arts to evolving methods of enquiry in the social sciences during the thirties. By extension the analogies with specifically cinematic documentary approaches are quite striking, for example between 'participant observer' research and candid observational filming, between 'case history' research and personality-oriented filmmaking (or as Ivens would call it, the 'personalised' documentary), and between 'informant narrative' research and the 'internal narrators' that became popular in documentary during the forties.
- 61 Flaherty spent fifteen months with Nanook and two years on Aran (Calder-Marshall [1963] 1970, 62-87, 141-157). Storck lived among his peasant subjects of *La Symphonie paysanne* for two years (post-screening discussion, 16 October 1980). Kopple lived intermittently in Harlan County for four years, including continuous residence for the thirteen-month duration of the strike (Kleinhans, 1977).

CHAPTER 5

- 1 The archives of loyal East German collaborator and biographer Hans Wegner took decades to move from Berlin to the Ivens Foundation in Nijmegen after all, thanks largely to bureaucracy.
- 2 Some of the foregoing factual material is indebted to research conducted by Schoots ([1995] 2000), though interpretations and contextualisation are my own.
- 3 Ivens later remembered burying the Yugoslav reels in a basement of the Prague documentary studio, never to see them again (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 233).
- 4 The Bulgarian cinematographer Zachary Zhandov (1911-1998) had directed two documentary shorts immediately after the war in 1946 and would move into features in 1951 with *Trevoga* (*Alarm*, 115); Czech cinematographer Ivan Fric (1922-2001), known for having shot part of and edited *Theresienstadt* (*The Führer Gives the Jews a City*, Kurt Gerron, Germany/Czechoslovakia, 1944, 23), the notorious 1944 Nazi propaganda film about the showcase camp Theresienstadt, would maintain his place in the Czech film industry until the mid-sixties; Polish-Jewish cinematographer Wladyslaw Forbert (1915-2001) had been active since a Zionist/Palestinian documentary in 1934, had just finished the documentaries *Budujemy*

Warszawę (*Warsaw Rebuilds*, Stanislaw Urbanowicz, 1945, USA/Poland, 15) and *The Jewish People Live* (*Mir, lebngelibene*, Natan Gross, 1947, Poland, 80), and would continue his collaboration with Ivens on *Peace Will Win*, followed by a prolific career in camera.

- 5 Zhdanov died in 1948, but his influence cannot be said to have receded until well after the death of Stalin five years later.
- 6 Ivens evoked socialist realism explicitly only four times in the texts that have been preserved from this period, twice explicitly and twice by implication. Was he scarred by bureaucracy in USSR and Eastern Europe, and provided only the minimum talk of the talk?
- 7 Schoots ([1995] 2000) accuses Ivens of exaggerating the extent to which Dutch official harassment affected his decision to stay behind the Iron Curtain for almost a decade, an exile without papers. Still Schoots's research reveals that Ivens woke up to being a target for Dutch retribution for the Indonesia episode in the summer of 1948 when they forced the withdrawal of *Indonesia Calling* from the Locarno festival, and thereafter he was faced with obligatory passport extensions every three months rather than the usual two years, motivated also by a made-in-Holland Red Scare. This led to the May 1950 confiscation of his passport, purportedly due to a public screening of the 'communistic ending' of his seventeen-year-old *Nieuwe Gronden* (*New Earth*, 1933, Netherlands, 30). Following Ivens's protests against 'the idea that I am a politician, whereas I am an artist' and against 'obstructing the freedom of travel of leftists', the three-months extension resumed in October and continued until 1957, the year of his Paris cinematic 'comeback', replaced by six-months extensions until a full thaw in 1961 (the thaw with the US did not come until 1979 [Waugh, 1995]). Schoots points to inconsistencies between Ivens's aggrieved persecution narrative and the fact that he travelled frequently, seemingly everywhere except Holland and the US during those years. Regardless of whether the inconsistencies can be explained by the resourcefulness of Ivens's East German sponsors in procuring *laisser-passers* within the socialist world as well as Finland, Italy, Belgium, and France, the inconsistencies hardly matter. As we now understand (Walker, 2005), there are no such things as inconsistencies in traumatic memories, rather symptomatic gaps. The reality of Ivens' perception of persecution and ostracism, based on regular shamings at the hands of his compatriot diplomats for almost a decade, gives him posthumous moral prevalence over his latter-day compatriot nitpicker and denialist. Passports were weapons during the Cold War, as Ivens's friend Paul Robeson also knew, and the two artists engaged resourcefully in the process of healing of their traumatic wounds.
- 8 Up until this moment, it had been the Poles who had inaugurated almost single-handedly the fledgling Holocaust cinema, the Yiddish-language film *The Jewish People Live* surfacing in 1947 though denied exhibition, completed just as Ivens

and crew were about to set foot in Warsaw for *First Years*. One expects, though I cannot verify this, that cinematographer Forbert, who had already made documentaries on Zionism and the Holocaust, and perhaps even Bossak, who used the nom de plume Szebulski apparently to play down his Jewish heritage (Ivens 1978), may have had input into this remarkable scene in the ruins of the ghetto.

- 9 The congress film's generic siblings, the rock concert film, the 'march' film, and the sports event film, have historically confronted the same dangers and fared somewhat better than the congress film.
- 10 Clergy were well represented at the Congress, not only cynically silenced Soviet Orthodox and Muslim representatives, but also a US delegate, the courageous pacifist Rev. Willard Uphaus (Methodist Federation for Social Service), who would be jailed as a HUAC victim. This presence reminds us how the conscience of civil society was configured as the voices of the clergy during the Cold War, even as late as the Vietnam anti-war movement.
- 11 The Bandung conference, harbinger of the Non-Aligned Movement and of 'third world' solidarity, took place in 1955.
- 12 I came into the possession of two well preserved 16mm prints of *Peace Will Win* thanks to the preservation efforts of progressive Washington teachers Kay Powers and Randy Rowland in 2010, who found the reels in a barn in Idaho, where they had perhaps been stored after use in the anti-war movement of the 1960s or even earlier during the 1950s. They are now archived at Concordia University and a digitised version of this rare language version is deposited at the Ivens Foundation.
- 13 Another example of the cycle, in cheerful 16mm, is *They Chose Peace* (1952, Australia, 29), produced by Melbourne's Realist Film group on a similar event, the 1952 Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship in Sydney, lovingly restored by John Hughes (2006).
- 14 According to Jordan (1999), DEFA had been founded in 1946 by 'reform communists' but the ruling East German communist party took it over the following year.
- 15 Among major filmmakers of Ivens's generation, Ford had broken into colour in 1939 with *Drums Along the Mohawk* (USA, 104), Powell in 1940 with *The Thief of Baghdad* (UK, 106), Eisenstein in 1944 with *Ivan Grozny (Ivan the Terrible, Part I, USSR, 95)*, Hitchcock in 1948 with *Rope* (USA, 80), Ivens's old Popular Front friends Milestone and Renoir in 1949 with *The Red Pony* (USA, 89) and in 1951 with *The River* (France/India/USA, 99) respectively.
- 16 According to Schoots ([1995] 2000, 238, 249), Michelle got Ivens's permission to lop off the Stalin material for the Paris screening.
- 17 Nonetheless the film was revived in the 21st century for a London celebration of the Friedensfahrt champion, Scottish cyclist Ian Steel, and for a French sports film festival.
- 18 Various gargantuan and often contradictory numbers float through the secondary literature around *Lied*, which become confusing and occasionally seem

apocryphal, though not necessarily false: 800 delegates attended the congress, representing 79 countries (commentary) and 188 million workers (Wikipedia), though it is said elsewhere that WFTU had 60 million members in 1945 (<http://www.wftucentral.org/?page_id=79&language=en> accessed 8 March 2014); 32 cinematographers were involved (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 241), Schoots ([1995] 2000, 244) says in eighteen countries while Ivens says 32 countries (Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 241) and the Ivens Foundation website says ‘eighteen’ in one window and ‘36’ in another; 120,000 metres of film were allocated (cf. 100,000 metres colour stock for *Freundschaft*), while post-production processed 75 hours or 12,000 metres of rushes (Grelier, 1965, 97), and the first version was 4575 metres (166 minutes). Grelier (1965, 56) says the film was seen by 250 million spectators in 28 different languages, a figure corroborated by the website (Ivens said eighteen languages [Ivens and Destanque, 1982, 243]), while another claim puts the audience at 500 million (Ivens and Pozner, 1957); such audience figures include the of course unverifiable Chinese figure of 40 million (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 245). I usually presume the conservative version of each statistic and am still awestruck.

- 19 Between World War II and its 1960 independence, Cameroon was a hotbed of communist-led organisation and insurgency under the Union des populations camerounaises (Union of the Peoples of Cameroon).
- 20 The Nigerian shots emphasise child labour and hungry kids lining up for food, under the commentary revelation that 95% of the colony’s children do not go to school, and are difficult to identify definitively as archival or new in-the-field imagery.
- 21 I cannot identify such shots if they are included: the only explicit shot referencing the country is a *mise-en-scène*, probably made at the Congress, of a black man and a white man in suits, conversing around a desk, identified in the commentary as a Brazilian and a Cuban unionist, seen once the Cuban (Lazaro Peña) had been released from jail. Another Cuban shot late in the film shows not prison material but street action in what is probably Havana.
- 22 One shot from Iran is identified by the voice-over in the German version but not the English version, an extreme long shot, not very sharp, of workers leaving what could be an oil refinery plant, as part of the global concatenation of workers’ strike actions; in the English version this unfolds under the commentary’s list of translations of the word ‘unity’ in various languages, including ‘Persian’.
- 23 All eyes were on postcolonial struggles in Korea and Vietnam as the film was being made, but also on Egypt, with the ‘1952 Revolution’ taking place in July of that year, the declaration of the Republic in June 1953, and Nasser’s confirmation in power just around the time of the premiere; the film clairvoyantly anticipates the continuation of the country as a flashpoint and its eruption in the Suez crisis two years later.

- 24 Leyda was of course not only Ivens's ghostwriter on the original version of *The Camera and I*, not only his collaborator in the New York communist documentary scene during the Popular Front, but also the editor/translator of Eisenstein's *Film Sense* and *Film Form*, the two books that were basically the bible for English-language progressive film editors for a whole generation after their publication in 1942 and 1949 respectively. His pioneering study of compilation documentary *Film Begets Film* (1964) is sadly neglected.
- 25 One or two shots depicting the Ku Klux Klan, derive from fiction rather than document, calling into question editorial intelligence in this sequence, if not ethics.
- 26 I find Robeson's official account of his involvement less than fully plausible, i.e. that he received a commission unidentified for security reasons, and assigned the translation and made the recording of the song, all without knowing for whom or for what it had been assigned.
- 27 Cavalcanti, one of East Berlin's stable of senior expatriate artists, like his scriptwriter Jorge Amado a Brazilian exile, veteran of the 1920s French avant-garde and the 1930s Grierson 'firm', went on to make a second German-language feature, the successful Brecht adaptation *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* (*Herr Puntila and His Servant Matti*, 1960, West Germany/Austria, 97).

CHAPTER 6

- 1 Ivens had interacted with that milieu as well as with the Parti communiste français (PCF) and its international patron, Moscow, since the late 1920s. In the interwar years, Ivens was a regular of the Paris left avant-garde, commuting regularly from Amsterdam and elsewhere. He collaborated with artists ranging from Éli Lotar, Luis Buñuel, and Jean Renoir to his sometimes wife, the constructivist photographer Germaine Krull, and he contributed to the debates in Paris left periodicals around the nature of art and politics. During the Cold War what I call the *Humanité* constituency of Paris leftists was an even more ardent audience for Ivens's ongoing film work than the fractured audiences east of the Curtain.
- 2 It is here necessary to repeat my frequent cautionary note on the fluctuations of terminology since the early seventies around 'direct cinema' and '*cinéma vérité*', on certain contradictions and inconsistencies due to errors that have become institutionalised within English-language film studies and a certain insularity among unilingual scholars and media practitioners that has compounded the problem. Readers may nonetheless need to accommodate a certain inconsistency in my own use of the terms 'direct cinema' and '*cinéma vérité*' in my discussions of documentary history. Within francophone film studies in general, from Marcorelles (1970) and Marsolais (1974) to Gauthier (1995), 'direct cinema' is a huge umbrella category that included both the interactive aesthetic inaugurated by

Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1961, 85) – hybrid formats variously channeling Flaherty's catalytic process or marshaling kinds of interactivity refined by directors as diverse as Marker and Perrault – and the American 'fly-on-the-wall' subgenre usually naively called 'vérité' and sometimes 'direct cinema'. (For about 20 minutes in 1960, the French followed Rouch and Morin in toying with the moniker 'cinéma vérité' for their self-reflexive, interactive documentary method tried out in *Chronique d'un été* – a translation of Vertov's *kino pravda*, of course – and this, unfortunately, caught on across the Atlantic like *foie gras*, with some critics and practitioners taking it up and some not, and some like Robert Drew taking up the more logical 'direct cinema' and some not.) The mistake and confusion was compounded by Erik Barnouw (1974) in his canonical *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, who, not reading French, was not familiar with the lively complex French language debates on the new documentary forms, and had not even read the English translation of Marcorelles, and moreover made the mistake of interviewing Drew and taking his idiosyncratic and atypical adoption of the 'direct' moniker as a universal category. Whole generations of equally insular Anglophone scholars have passed on this error and there has been no way out of this mess for generations. I wish we'd had Nichols's distinction between 'observational' and 'interactive' documentary at the very beginning instead of only with *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* in 1991, for this nomenclature is clear and definitive (even his complicated 1976 advancement of the 'direct discourse' and 'indirect discourse' dichotomy would have helped). We didn't, and I had not yet discovered what a quagmire this had already become for historians and critics of the documentary as I started publishing in the 1970s. At a certain point in the 1980s I would give up my crusade to convert Anglophone film studies to a historically correct signification of 'direct' and 'vérité', and simply switched to the more descriptive 'interactive' vs. 'observational'. In this book I rely on the most accurate thrust of 'vérité' to mean the American observational school, except when referring to historical French debates following Rouch and Sadoul's flirtation with Vertov's term for a couple of years in the early sixties, prior to the definitive abandonment of the term in French-language film culture at the Lyon conference in 1963 (ironically the same conference where a one or two Americans mistakenly picked up 'direct' and thought it meant observational). Proof of the 21st-century crisis in nomenclature is the influential National Film Board of Canada documentary *Cinéma Vérité: Defining the Moment* (Peter Wintonick, 1999, 102), which circulates in three different versions, crammed with interviews with pioneers and practitioners, each blithely indifferent to the parallel terminology and featuring, for example, American documentarist Jennifer Fox enthusiastically equating the term *cinéma vérité* with fly-on-the-wall observational practice. When required I follow the French practice of using 'direct' to refer to the umbrella rubric that incorporates both

American-style observation and Rouch-style interactivity (including the legion of interview-based styles that followed, including that adopted by Ivens and Loridan in China). Mostly however, I follow a practice I adopted in the 1980s of avoiding the whole mess altogether by using Nichols's 'no fuss no muss' distinction, 'observational' vs. 'interactive' – without forgetting the prevailing standard, the 'hybrid'.

- 3 Montand would narrate the French version of *Rotterdam* a decade later.
- 4 Akerman, Antonioni, Arlyck, Bitomsky, Buba, Cocteau, Demme, Fisher, Jost, Julien, Malle, Mekas, Moore, Moretti, Morris, Riggs, Rouch, Ruiz, Syberberg, van der Keuken, Wenders.
- 5 Allen, Akomfrah, Andersen, Baldwin, Benning, Berliner, Clarke, de Antonio, Debord, Folman, Friedrich, Godmilow, Green, Guzman, Kiarostami, Macdonald, Makavejev, McElwee, Monteiro, Moss, Nemeč, Ophuls, Parajanov, Peck, Pollet, Rosler, Rossellini, Rubbo, Sachs, Solanas, Sukorov, Tahimik, Viola, Visconti, von Trier, Wang.
- 6 Corrigan's (2011) otherwise insightful discussion of Marker's 1950 photo essay *The Koreans* avoids any consideration of the significance of his subjects being North Koreans in that particular geopolitical context and time, while Ivens's film of 1951, *Peace Will Win*, directly situates its North Korean subject in relation to the Korean War.
- 7 Including *Les Enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*, Marcel Carné, 1945, France 190), whose luminous and worldly heroine Garance lent the production company her name.
- 8 Though he had been trained by Ravel and Stravinsky.
- 9 The French brought out their own translation of Abramov in 1965 (*Premier plan*); 1968 saw both a special Vertov issue of *Avant-scène du cinéma* and the Soviet film experts Jean and Ludmila Schnitzer's short monograph from *Anthologie du cinéma*; Sadoul's unfinished monograph on Vertov was assembled in 1971 (four years after the author's death), and *Cahiers du cinéma*'s publication of Soviet film scholar Sergei Drobashenko's 1966 selection of Vertov's *Articles, journaux, projets* came in 1972.
- 10 Although Ivens was on record as disliking *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949, UK, 104) (Schoots, [1995] 2000, 236), it is uncertain whether he is referring to the genre that retroactively became known as film noir, used in a scholarly French monograph first in 1955 (Borde and Chaumeton, [1955] 2002).
- 11 I am taking slight liberty with chronology in emphasising the contemporaneity of these seven 1957 films: Varda's film was undertaken in the winter of 1957-1958 and released in 1958. It could be argued that the 'life-caught-unawares' revival tendency had been heralded as early as the end of World War II, with Helen Levitt's 16mm *In the Street* (USA, 14), shot at the end of the war but released only in 1948: its views of Harlem street life were often obtained thanks to a perpendicu-

larly swiveled viewfinder that deceived subjects as to the direction the camera was pointing.

- 12 In addition to this citation, Ivens's major pronouncements on *cinéma vérité*, as referred to in this discussion, are as follows: interview on *Ciel for Image et son* translated and reprinted in *Camera* (Ivens, [1965] 1969, 257-261), plus two interviews in French – in *France nouvelle* (Ivens, 1965) and in *Lettres françaises* (Ivens, 1963).
- 13 '*Clochard*', meaning literally someone who loiters under the town clock, is less pejorative than the English equivalent, 'wino' or 'rubbie'.
- 14 Anderson's *Every Day Except Christmas* was much more explicit in this respect, no doubt due to both authorial interest and the refusal of the culture of Wilde to take sexual diversity for granted as the culture of Genet and Cocteau did.
- 15 Also the French writer André Verdet in *Mistral* and the Cuban Henri Fabiani in the Cuban films, a scriptwriter and director. Not to mention honorary writer Chris Marker, whose extraordinary contribution to *Valparaiso* arguably bests them all (Marker also wrote the French version of the *Rotterdam* commentary).
- 16 Varda also indulged in a *haute-couture* product placement in *Du côté de la côte* (1958, 25).
- 17 The 1958 short film jury at Cannes included Parisians Edmond Séchan and Jean Mitry as well as Ivens's old Polish colleague Jerzy Toeplitz.
- 18 There exists confusion about the English title of the film because Ivens's autobiography uses *Early Spring* (Ivens, 1969, 274) but all subsequent references indicate *Before Spring*. Even though *Early Spring* is a more accurate translation of the original Chinese title, *Before Spring* is now standard in the English-language scholarship.
- 19 Ivens would try to revive elements of this idea a decade later with his Rotterdam producer Joop Landré and then again in the 1980s.
- 20 The charismatic Mattei's suspicious early death in a plane crash in 1962 added to the legend, as did left-wing director Franco Rosi's 1972 biopic starring Gian Maria Volonté *Il caso Mattei* (*The Mattei Affair*, 116).
- 21 Orsini had collaborated with the brothers on their only directed project heretofore, *San Miniato, luglio '44* (1954), a documentary on their eponymous hometown (Tuscany) in 1954, together with communist neorealist scriptwriter-godfather Zavattini.
- 22 Documentarists would begin varying the benign androcentrism of this exemplary boy figure going out into the world only decades later. Ivens himself finally did so in *Histoire* with that film's girl mediator character.
- 23 The National Film Board of Canada's *Back-Breaking Leaf* (Maurice Bulbulian, 1959, 30, probably shot in 1958) also included important onsite interviews, also relatively static and stiffly addressed to the camera. The cutting-edge government studio however included a breakthrough synch-sound interview with a taxi driver

- on his night-time rounds in the dead of the Montreal winter, with a portable unit and excellent sound, a year earlier in *Bientôt Noël* (*The Days Before Christmas*, Georges Dufaux et al., 1958, 29). Marceline Loridan's famous monologue as she walked through Paris wired to the Nagra in her handbag was shot in the summer of 1960 (*Chronique d'un été*) by Michel Brault, the Québécois cameraman!
- 24 *Nanguila* was first revived in February 2007 at FESPACO's retrospective of Malian cinema (Ouagadougou), then in subsequent African film festivals in Tarifa, Spain, in 2010 and Cordova, Spain, in 2012.
 - 25 Details of the production were received with much thanks from Varlin's son and granddaughter, Pascal Winter and Claire Winter, email correspondence, October 2013.
 - 26 As the project took shape in the fast-evolving geopolitical environment of 1960, the applicable jurisdiction for the shoot, with whom the Société had contracted the film, was the Fédération du Mali, an entity within the so-called Communauté française that had been fashioned out of the former French Sudan the previous year (the working title of the film had been *Soudan*). The Fédération was to become fully independent on 20 June 1960, just as the *Nanguila* shoot was being wrapped up in time for the tropical rains, but fell apart two months later as Senegal seceded. This left the Republic of Mali on its own, which was proclaimed one month later and promptly withdrew from the Communauté. This transition registers on the soundtrack of the film itself, where the adjective '*soudanais*' is heard early in the film, replaced by the name of the new republic, Mali, in its film-within-a-film coda.
 - 27 The two men had not crossed paths during the Malian's extended clandestine visits to Beijing a few years earlier, but they would do so later according to Bouyaté (interview with author, January 2013).
 - 28 Rebillon would become one of the more interesting producers of the 1960s French New Wave, notable in particular for Resnais's communist-themed *La Guerre est finie* (*The War Is Over*, 1966, 121), starring Ivens's friend Montand. Varlin (also known by her married name Catherine Winter, maiden name Judith Hait-Hin), took her *nom de générique* from a leader of the Paris Commune. She had left the party four years earlier over Budapest, and after *Nanguila* would make one of her next marks as co-writer of Marker's *Le Joli Mai*, shot in 1962 about among other things another African 'great event' – Algeria. *Nanguila*'s three credited editors were also journeywomen of the New Wave *rive gauche*: Suzanne Baron, collaborator of Rouch and Tati and future collaborator of Malle, and director of two shorts in the Sofracima Africa series; Hélène Arnal, previous collaborator of *Windrose* contributor Yannick Bellon and who would edit Ivens's Cuban films the following year; plus Gisèle Chézeau, veteran of *La Seine* and future Chabrol associate.

- 29 As documentary director, Sidibé is known for *Chants et danses du Mali* (1969, 20). See Bachy (1983, 32).
- 30 Sidibé is co-credited for the film's music on the Ivens Foundation website, but this is neither corroborated nor disproven by the actual credits of the film.
- 31 Seemingly the French urban crime drama *Délit de fuite* (*Hit and Run*, Bernard Borderie, 1959, 95).
- 32 Stufkens (2008, 401) argues that Santiago Alvarez, who as a young director in his early forties was getting started in ICAIC newsreels as Ivens was teaching there and showing his films, shows a palpable Ivens influence in his work, for examples echoes of *Nieuwe Gronden* in *Hanoi, martes 13* (1968, Cuba, 38).
- 33 *Yanki, No!* urged more US sympathy towards their ex-colony (whose khaki-clad leader had just created a sensation at the UN) before it was too late, i.e. Before Cuba Went Over to Communism. The Frenchmen Claude Barret and Claude Otzenberger also gathered some rather superficial journalistic impressions of the Revolution, which were broadcast in France and on CBS in the United States.
- 34 *I Am Cuba* was revived for the DVD art cinema market in 1995, after the collapse of the USSR.
- 35 Ivens and Loridan appear in Varda's 1963 footage of a Cuban musical solidarity gathering in Paris.
- 36 According to the *European Foundation Joris Ivens Newsletter* (2001), the original length of the film was 37 minutes, a version shown on the 2002 US tour. The version on the official DVD box set lasts 27 minutes, based on the definitive 1964 version trimmed by the director.
- 37 For example, the Australian Adrian Danks (2009), published a glowing affirmation of the film in 2009, positing it as an 'extremely revealing film about the nature of collaboration', seemingly timed with a screening at the Melbourne Cinémathèque.
- 38 François Reichenbach (1921–1993), the Oscar-winning, gay Americanophile French documentarist was known for commercially viable documentaries on travel and cultural themes. Although he would collaborate with Marker on the anti-Vietnam War film *La sixième face du pentagone* (*The Sixth Side of the Pentagon*, 1968, 28) in 1967, he was not part of Ivens's PCF-friendly Paris circle. The printmaker-caricaturist-social critic Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) was along with Goya, van Gogh, and Brueghel the pre-cinematic European visual artists who had been a reference for Ivens throughout his career.
- 39 That Ivens added in his memory two difficulties to Brecht's famous five reflects no doubt deficiencies in the vagabond's travelling library.
- 40 Many of the Santiago students would indeed speak the truth in the future, as per the future prominence of several of them in the Chilean film industry, both domestic and diasporic. As for Bravo, after *Train de la victoire*, he maintained an

intermittent, low-visibility career as maker of documentary and fiction both in Chile and in exile over the next three decades.

- 41 Original notes in French, with a small amount of English; punctuation and format adjusted for reasons of space.
- 42 Other pertinent commentary/image-track ratios are 58% for Marker and Resnais's *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (1953) and 81% for Varda's *Salut les Cubains* (1963).
- 43 Becerra, like so many of Ivens's Chilean collaborators, would go into exile in 1973; Montero, like everyone else involved in the Paris end of the production, was a stalwart of *rive gauche* left-wing society.
- 44 Anticipating Louis Malle's damning iconography in *Calcutta* (1969, France, 105).
- 45 In the black-and-white art film feature fiction *Testament d'Orphée* (1960, France, 77), Jean Cocteau's brief colouring of a rose into a bright red flower is no doubt a precedent for *Valparaiso* but as one of the 1960 film's several magical special effects it does not *really* constitute a shift to colour.
- 46 This is plausible since the Paris premiere was 8 June 1963, two weeks after the closure of Cannes.
- 47 At the time of writing in 2013, Neruda's body was being exhumed to verify reports that the poet was poisoned by the Pinochet regime two months after the 1973 coup, rather than dying of cancer as traditionally reported.
- 48 My favourite anecdote in Panizza (2011, 43) recounts the academic eyebrows raised at the expenses incurred during the sequence shot in the famous port brothel.
- 49 Prudhomme seems to be the laughingstock of French literary history, first Nobel laureate in 1901 yet forgotten, due largely to his reactionary aesthetics in the age of Mallarmé and Verlaine.
- 50 Ivens's footage appeared in *Salvador Allende* (Patricio Guzmán, 2004, Canada, 100) (*Ivens Yearly* 2006a).
- 51 Stufkens (2008) speculates that this commissioned work, not likely classifiable as a major link in Ivens's filmography, was lost in one of the Cinémathèque's many fires.
- 52 That 13th century Chen Rong's Chinese representations of the wind as a dynamic character were inspiration for both *Mistral* and *Histoire* confirms the kinship of the two projects made a quarter-century apart. Perhaps misinformed by the research commissioned for *Mistral*, Ivens's proposals focused on cutouts, though this medium is not associated with Chen (Tim Rice, personal correspondence 2013).
- 53 Evidence of this correspondence exists in the National Film Board of Canada archives. After an initial conversation on the Champs-Élysées, the negotiations went nowhere, due to the last-minute nature of Ivens's follow-up request and other communications and logistics problems: 'At such a short notice I have no immediate inspiration about the subject and would certainly have taken quite a

deal of time to mull it over in my mind' (McLaren, letter to Ivens, 9 October 1963). I am grateful to Glyn Davis for sharing this discovery. The two men seem an odd couple but in fact shared not only their history of working for the NFB during World War II but also their communist roots and sinophilia. They had probably reunited at the Venice Film Festival in 1959, when Ivens was on the jury and McLaren won an award for *Short and Suite* (1959, 5).

- 54 Stufkens (2008, 373-375) refers specifically to van Gogh's 1888 *The Sower*, notable for its tilted, gnarled foreground tree towering over the stooped and twisted farmworker, as a source.
- 55 Tholen would go on to make his own 'cine-poem' on the port, incorporating outtakes from *Rotterdam*, encouraged by Ivens, *Toets (Touch, 1967, 18)*.
- 56 Van Ammelrooy is best known outside of the Netherlands for her starring role in the Oscar-winning *Antonia's Line* (Marlene Gorris, 1995, 102).
- 57 Why did 1960s European Marxists from Pasolini to Ivens fasten on baby-boomer marriages as a tragic image of the ravages of capitalism?
- 58 Ivens missed this opportunity to dialogue with his Renaissance compatriot; Stufkens (2008, 356) reveals that one of many subsequent never-realised film ideas was an ambitious feature-length project about Erasmus, to be composed of eleven short films inspired by everyone from Michel Foucault (!) to Peter Weiss and the Marquis de Sade. It would have a more critical edge in relation to Dutch society than *Rotterdam*, and Stufkens speculates that it was abandoned out of a combination of tact towards the filmmaker's newly welcoming homeland and the urgency of the geopolitical situation in Asia.

CHAPTER 7

- 1 Dovidis, founded in 1950 by Pierre Neurrisse, a socialist veteran of the Resistance, specialised in television documentaries (Michel, 2010, 87).
- 2 Excerpts from the *Ciel* commentary are from Ulrich [Chris Marker] (1966).
- 3 Varda's leadership in the project and her exemplary resourcefulness as team player are beyond dispute. After putting together much of the project, she left for her famous 1967 sojourn in California and returned only to discover that Marker had deleted all but a few shots of her fictional episode of 'a woman who lives in Paris and experiences delirium, confusing the demolition of the old neighbourhoods in the 20th arrondissement with the US bombing of Hanoi, and the manhole covers with the "man holes" where the Vietnamese were hiding. In a mental panic, she becomes aware that this distant war contrasts tragically with her modest and well ordered milieu'. Some of Varda's material was however retained by Marker, namely shots of Vietnamese repairing dikes she had set up and filmed in a vacant field near Paris's *Porte dorée*; it would serve as a transition from the compilation

history of the conflict narrated by Varda, and Godard's monologue 'Camera Eye'. On her return to Paris Varda was not even able to view her episode that had already been fully edited before her departure, but she apparently did not unduly resent the decision of her collaborator who had after all been assigned the final cut. Rather she 'would take a leaf out of his book' and declared the final result a respectful rendition of the group's thinking, but 'without warmth': 'Strong and intelligent personalities gathered together in a group are not necessarily the most likely to transmit a feeling, nor the most efficient for indicating the urgency of taking a stand'. Varda returned to Los Angeles and participated in anti-war demonstrations there (Varda, 1994, 92-93). It is likely that Varda also was imitating Ivens's style in her shots retained for the final film – so much so that this Ivens expert was sure he recognised in the footage of files of workers moving clods of wet earth from hand to hand a classic trope from over 30 years of Ivens's documentary work – until he read Varda's memoir. There is in any case a lesson here for facile auteurs.

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- 4 Schoots's ([1995] 2000, 292) account has Loridan handling the *Loin* shots because Ivens was teaching at the film school in Hanoi. Stufkens (2008, 387) also notes Loridan's role soon after in providing material for and appearing before the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal in Copenhagen in 1967-1968.
- 5 Was Sarris making an erroneous unconscious connection between *Loin* contributor William Klein and the Paris painter/performance artist Yves Klein whose famous blue nude body paintings were depicted sensationally in *Mondo Cane*?
- 6 The English version of *Loin* seems to have been cut for its US release by 25 minutes, down from its original 115 minutes, but further details are not available at this time. The revived version (2009), and the subsequent 2013 DVD, are the original length.
- 7 Lelouch was not the only *nouvelle vague* who found himself offside. *Rive droite* auteur Truffaut is an interesting case study, immersed in the late sixties in various apolitical cinephile activities, but who would join other New Wave filmmakers including Lelouch at the superstructural barricades the following year when film institutions came under attack from the Gaullist government. Nevertheless, the previous year, with his Hitchcock riffs, *La Mariée était en noir* (*The Bride Wore Black*, 1968, 107) and *La Sirène du Mississippi* (*Mississippi Mermaid*, 1969, 123) both in the pipeline, Truffaut's response to *Loin* in *Cahiers du cinéma* (Truffaut, 1967) was an *ad hominem* attack on Ivens who seemed to represent for him the vile combination of *cinéma du papa* and the PCF, an attack that also baited Marker in the process: 'the pseudo-poetic career of Joris Ivens, sponger off of festivals, who ambles around from progressive palace to progressive palace, filming water puddles with municipal funds and much aestheticism. Next, upon these decorative images – thus right-wing images – his pal also devoted to the genre, Chris Marker, will try to veneer onto it a left-wing commentary'. By an interesting coincidence,

Ivens had been on the jury of the Venice Festival the previous fall and Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966, UK, 112) had been in the running for the Golden Lion but had lost out to *La battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle of Algiers*, 1966, Italy, 121), by Ivens's former collaborator Gillo Pontecorvo. Hell hath no fury like the revenge of an auteur narcissist scorned.

- 8 Citations from the text of *Parallèle* are from Ivens and Loridan (1968).
- 9 The definitive version of the film in the 2008 box set restores Loridan to the co-director credit.
- 10 The Hanoi version of the USSR Communist Party organ *Pravda*.
- 11 It has been remarked over the years that *Parallèle* makes no explicit acknowledgement of Soviet and Chinese aid to the North Vietnamese, though the former is visible on the screen in terms of hardware (Dolmatovskaya, 1968, quoted in Stufkens, 2008, 408).
- 12 Quotations from *Peuple* are from the official English-language découpage of the film distributed in the 1970s by CAPI Films.
- 13 For Ivens's involvement with these activities see Mundell (2006).

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CHAPTER 8

- 1 To be fair, Antonioni had directed six or so documentary shorts in the pre-direct years of the late 1940s, before entering the fiction feature industry, which may explain his lack of interest in direct sound.
- 2 The original 1976 Paris release was announced as 17 minutes, while both the MOMA print and the 2008 DVD version inexplicably measure 21 minutes.
- 3 The four programs combined *Autour du pétrole* with *Impressions d'une ville – Changhai, Une répétition à l'Opéra de Pékin*, and *Le Professeur Tsien* (total running time 192 min.); *L'Usine de générateurs* with *Une histoire de ballon* and *Les Artisans* (total 165 min.); *La Pharmacie* with *Une femme, une famille* (total 189 min.); and *Le Village des pêcheurs* with *Une caserne* and *Entraînement au Cirque de Pékin* (total 175 min.).
- 4 My translation from the French titles. The French/English title text in *Yukong* is an abridgement of the official English translation from Mao's concluding speech at the Seventh National Congress of the CPC on 11 June 1945 (Mao Zedong, [1945] 1967).
- 5 Approximately 30% of *Yukong* was shot with natural light, according to the Yukong lighting engineer Guo Weijun (2008).
- 6 Liu would resurface 35 years later in a Beijing Normal School media studies classroom, invited by Professor Zhang Tongdao, as relayed in Seegers's *Een oude vriend*. Although Seegers sets up the episode to expose the falsity of the original filming context, the upshot is contradictory. Liu, speaking in Mandarin,

a language he apologises for not knowing, in fact utters nothing incriminating and simply reveals what is obvious, that both 1973 and 2008 filmings build on Chinese culture's ingrown values of hospitality, and subjects' and facilitators' instinctive desire to please foreign guests, filmmakers, and fellow citizens. Professor Zhang also organised the colloquium honouring Ivens's 110th birthday, held at his institution in November 2008, and at that time hosted the conferees at a screening of *Ballon* together with several original participants, to similar effect, at worse ambiguous and contradictory and at best nostalgic and celebratory.

- 7 This character was later claimed by a right-wing Dutch columnist to be an impostor, a security guard familiar to touring foreigners for his impersonations of exemplary revolutionary citizens, which Schoots ([1995] 2000, 335) claims was corroborated by third-hand reports of National Film Board of Canada still photos from several years later. Ivens convincingly refuted this charge (Stufkens, 2008, 452).
- 8 The autonomous region and its flagrant incarnation of internal Han imperialism had not yet become the flashpoint of world pressure on the People's Republic's international relations. | 691
- 9 The reference reflects the 'Criticize Lin Criticize Confucius' campaign orchestrated by the Gang of Four. The Daqing shoot took place in the summer of 1973 well after the September 1972 fatal 'crash' that ended Lin Biao's Vice-Premiership, but during the campaign orchestrated as a kind of political damage control for the catastrophe. Roland Barthes's one-month tour of China along with Kristeva and others of the *Tel Quel* group of sympathetic Parisian intellectuals, beginning in April 1974, featured daily bombardment with critiques of the curious bedfellows, the late ex-heir apparent and the sixth-century BC philosopher (Barthes, [2009] 2012).
- 10 Author of the influential UNESCO-funded *Éléments pour un nouveau cinéma* (1970).
- 11 Originally, that is, '*prendre la parole*'. Unfortunately there is no valid English equivalent for this phrase other than 'take the floor' or 'go to the mike' which are inadequate for this context with their connotation of a public meeting, so I use the awkward 'take up speech'. Similarly, '*donner la parole au peuple*', one of the basic slogans of direct cinema and of Loridan in particular, more literally means 'giving speech to the people', but should be translated as 'letting the people speak'.
- 12 To be fair, one of *Yukong's* twelve parts, *Impressions*, a medium-length study of Shanghai, does suggest the travelogue vein of the Antonioni film, and as such contains hidden-camera material taken from a truck in the streets of the city. The problem was in Ivens's mind the tendency of Chinese crowds to stare at foreigners, especially filmmakers, in public places. However, Ivens's use of a hidden camera is more of the exception than the rule in *Yukong*, entering palpably into

only one out of twelve films, whereas it characterises (in my opinion) Antonioni's voyeuristic approach in general. Sun Hongyun (2009) has explored similarities between the two films in this respect.

- 13 Interestingly, Western documentary culture already took for granted this long-take synch-sound style in 1970 to the degree that Godard felt the need to de-familiarise it in *See You at Mao* (aka *British Sounds*, UK, 52) where his scene hovering around a circle of British automobile workers sharing beefs diabolically flouts convention by only showing participants who are listening and not speaking.
- 14 In interviews Loridan would repeatedly complain about impassive and silent group responses encountered after screenings and meetings in China.
- 15 Zhang is quoting Ivens and Destanque (1982, 15). My preferred translation: 'In 50 years, my relations with the different communist parties have evolved a lot. History has sharp teeth and I can say that I have been "bitten by history"'.
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- 16 The career of the Chinese version of the book is not known.
- 17 I am aware that *Yukong* collaborator Alain Badiou has also used this cliché in reference to the disavowal of Maoism, but the reader is assured we came up with it independently.
- 18 Badiou probably had in mind the long sequence in *Usine* where workers debate the politics of productivity premiums, which they associate with the fallen Liu Shaoqi and which have been abolished.
- 19 Seegers (2008a) intercuts archival shots, almost certainly of the 1966-1967 Tiananmen rallies of thousands of Red Guards chanting in unison in homage to the Chairman, with shots of Ivens and Loridan, though he must know full well that such rallies had not occurred for several years and that during the couple's work in China the atmosphere was completely different and they almost certainly never witnessed such a thing. Why did no one tell him?
- 20 Lin Xu-dong (2005, 29) supplements the cultural explanation with a pragmatic one for the stylistic tendencies that so frustrated the Parisians at the outset, specifically around shot duration: 'One great cause of consternation among the Chinese crew members was the ratio of film shot to film used. For Chinese filmmakers accustomed to working in an environment in which resources were extremely scarce, the vast amount of film consumed in the process of making a foreign documentary was scandalous. For many years, due to the unreliable quality of domestically produced film, film had to be imported from overseas. However, the national economic crisis of the early 1960s and China's policy of isolation from the international community meant that foreign currency was in extremely short supply and subject to stringent internal controls. Chinese cinematographers, allotted as little film as possible to accomplish their task, sometimes found themselves working with a film ratio as low as 1:1. So ingrained did this practice become that, as late as the 1980s, students in Chinese film schools were

still being admonished to allow only eight seconds for panorama, six seconds for medium-range shots, and three to four seconds for close-up’.

- 21 The 2008 Beijing conference produced several amusing anecdotes about Jiang’s vain efforts to lure Ivens into her orbit and to end up with an Ivens-authored biopic about her (Lu Songhe, interview and conference presentation, 2008).
- 22 As we have seen in Chapter 2, Ivens had prophetically and enthusiastically discovered Huxley’s (1943) work on Goya during the American phase of his career, and it can be argued that all of his war films resonate with this inspiration, though not with the essay’s insights into the art of elderly artists, not only visual artists like Goya and Piero della Francesca but others from Beethoven to Yeats.
- 23 Bringing Ivens into strange bedfellowship, no doubt for the first and last time, with none other than Annie Sprinkle. The American feminist porn star used this device in her 1999 autobiographical work *Herstory of Porn: Reel to Real* (USA, 69).
- 24 *Ku Lian (Portrait of a Fanatic, 1982, Taiwan, 105)* was never shown in public in China. In this film, Bai depicted an oversea Chinese painter who returned to China to devote his life to his motherland only to face prosecution and death. The painter’s daughter asks him a telling question: ‘You love your motherland, but does the motherland love you’?
- 25 According to Stufkens (2008, 467) it was Loridan who removed the sole implicit reference to the Indonesia episode of Ivens’s political trajectory.
- 26 The reassessment did not extend to the DVD box set, which does not include *Branding*, and presumably not for any of the usual reasons, either budget or availability.
- 27 According to Schoots ([1995] 2000), Ivens’s list included Cavalcanti’s *Rien que les heures (Nothing But Time, 1926, France, 45)*; Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North (1922, USA, 79)*; Clair’s *Le Chapeau de paille d’Italie (Italian Straw Hat, 1928, France, 60)*; Ruttman and Eggeling’s abstract films (1921-1925); Pudovkin’s *Potomok Chingis-Khana (Storm over Asia, 1928, USSR, 74)*; Eisenstein’s *Stachka (Strike, 1925, USSR, 82)* and *Bronenosets Potemkin (Battleship Potemkin, 1925, USSR, 66)*; Clair’s *La Tour (The Eiffel Tower, 1928, France, 14)*; Buñuel’s *Las Hurdes (Land without Bread, 1933, Spain, 30)*; the silent films of Charles Chaplin; the films of D. W. Griffith. Other than Griffith, these directors had been mentioned in *The Camera and I* (alongside with Berliners Murnau, Pabst and Dupont [Ivens, 1969, 18, 21]), but there is almost no evidence that he had thought of any of them since first drafting the autobiography in the 1940s. Whether or not this idiosyncratic list-making, with its exclusion of non-Soviet political filmmaking and of any sound films other than Buñuel’s – indeed of any documentarist other than Buñuel and Flaherty – is part of the renunciatory thrust of the last years of the life of this politically committed pioneer of the sound documentary, a fleeting polemical gesture advocating for cinematic heritage at the cusp of the digital era, or a hasty and ill-conceived whim of second cinephile childhood, it certainly helps

provide a context for the anomalous invocation of Méliès in *Histoire*. There is also the possibility that a communication glitch on the part of Schoots (who is not a reliable film historian), his source Tineke de Vaal, or Ivens himself, contaminated or decontextualised this information, twice transmitted orally.

- 28 Jonathan Rosenbaum (1992) has also made a comparison between *Histoire* and Cocteau's *Testament*.

CONCLUSION

- 1 '*Les lendemains qui chantent*' is a popular slogan of traditional French communist culture, first popularised in the 1937 poem 'Jeunesse' by Paul Vaillant-Couturier (*Wiktionnaire*, 2014).

APPENDIX: FILMS ON IVENS

*A Filmography Compiled by André Stufkens,
Director European Foundation Joris Ivens.*

A

NONFICTION FILMS “REVISITING” OR INSPIRED BY PARTICULAR FILMS BY JORIS IVENS OR BY IVENS AND MARCELINE LORIDAN (CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

| 695

1967	<i>Toets (Touch)</i>	Tom Tholen	Netherlands	17	<i>Rotterdam Europoort, 1966</i>
1968	<i>Masters of the Rain</i>	Marion Michelle	Bulgaria	25	<i>Pierwsze lata [The First Years], 1949 (Bulgarian episode)</i>
1976	<i>Railroad Turnbridge</i>	Richard Serra	USA	19	<i>De Brug, 1928</i>
1978	<i>À chacun son Borinage</i>	Wieslaw Hudon	Belgium	83	<i>Borinage, 1934</i>
1980	<i>Ciné-mafia</i>	Jean Rouch and Robert Busschots	Netherlands	35	<i>Branding, 1934</i>
1981	<i>Over de brug</i>	Hans Keller	Netherlands	100	<i>De Brug, 1928</i>
1988	<i>Borinage: das Verratene Land</i>	Helmut Brügel	West Germany	60	<i>Borinage 1934</i>
1996	<i>Ivens in Joegoslavië</i>	Roelf van Til and Heidi van Barne- velde	Netherlands	12	<i>Pierwsze lata [The First Years], 1949 (found Yugoslav footage)</i>
1996	<i>Magnitogorsk. jeugd van de hoogovens</i>	Pieter van Smit	Netherlands	60	<i>Komsomol, 1933</i>

1996	<i>Der Windsbraut</i>	Daniela Schulz	Germany	30	<i>Une histoire de vent</i> , 1988
1997	<i>Bruggen</i>	Dick Rijnke and Mildred van Leeuwaarden	Netherlands	13	<i>De Brug</i> , 1928
1997	<i>De Brugwachter</i>	Dick Rijnke and Mildred van Leeuwaarden	Netherlands	42	<i>De Brug</i> , 1928
1998	<i>Quando l'Italia non era un paese povero</i>	Stefanio Missio	Italy	43	<i>L'Italia non è un paese povero</i> , 1960
1999	<i>Les Enfants du Borinage. Lettre à Henri Storck</i>	Patric Jean	Belgium	54	<i>Borinage</i> , 1934
2001	<i>DEFA und die Windrose</i>	Hans-Dieter Rusch	Germany	15	<i>Die Windrose</i> , 1957
2004	<i>Salvador Allende</i>	Patricio Guzman	Chile	100	<i>Le Train de la victoire</i> , 1964
2005	<i>Power for the Parkinsons</i>	Ephraim K. Smith	USA	57	<i>Power and the Land</i> , 1940
2006	<i>A Piece of Heaven</i>	S. Luisa Wei	China	83	Ivens and China
2006	<i>Il Mio Paese</i>	Daniele Vicari	Italy	113	<i>L'Italia non è un paese povero</i> , 1960
2007	<i>Rain</i>	Lawrence Martin	UK	15	<i>Regen</i> , 1929
2007	<i>Retour à Vinh Linh. 40 ans après.</i>	Xuan Phong	Vietnam	c. 50	<i>Le 17^e Parallèle</i> , 1968
2008	<i>The Parkinsons</i>	Ephraim K. Smith	USA	61	<i>Power and the Land</i> , 1940
2008	<i>See You at the Eiffel Tower</i>	Valtin Valchev	Bulgaria	95	<i>Pierwsze lata [The First Years]</i> , 1949 (Bulgarian episode)
2008	<i>Een oude vriend van het Chinese volk</i>	René Seegers	Netherlands	53	<i>Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes</i> , 1976
2009	<i>Indonesia Calling. Joris Ivens in Australia.</i>	John Hughes	Australia	90	<i>Indonesia Calling</i> , 1946
2012	<i>Hollow City</i>	Andrea de Sica	Italy	18	<i>L'Italia non è un paese povero</i> , 1960 (Matera sequence)

B
FICTION

1992	<i>Heimat (Part 2 Chronik einer Jugend)</i>	Edgar Reitz	Germany	1	1961 biographical episode
1996	<i>Beyond the Bridge</i> <i>Mirages-Poem-Navigator</i> <i>Utility S(h)elves</i> <i>META</i> <i>La siesta-The Nap</i> <i>Ice Skating</i> <i>Wind-force</i>	Merel Mirage Istvan Kantor Didier Lechenne Muntadas Fiona Tan Kees Aajjes	Netherlands USA France Spain/USA Netherlands Netherlands		Installations at Nederlands Filmmuseum, Amsterdam
1996	<i>De vliegende Hollander</i>	André Stufkens, with high school students	Netherlands	50	
2009	<i>Keine Kohle, kein Holz</i> (animation)	Erik van Lieshout	Netherlands	c.15	<i>Borinage, 1934</i>
2012	<i>Hemingway and Gellhorn</i>	Philip Kaufman	USA	155	<i>The Spanish Earth, 1937</i>

C
NONFICTION ABOUT IVENS (GENERAL)

1964	<i>Joris Ivens. Er Filmte auf 5 Kontinente</i>	Joachim Hadaschek	DDR	23	
1973-1982	<i>Diary (Yoman)</i> , part 3	David Perlov	Israel	330	<i>Chagall</i> , 1962 <i>...À Valparaiso</i> , 1963 <i>Pour le Mistral</i> , 1965
1999	<i>Passages. Joris Ivens en de kunst van deze eeuw</i> (introduction to exhibition "Tijdgenoten")	Mireille Kooistra	Netherlands	30	
2003	<i>China through the Eyes of Ivens</i> (伊文思眼中的中国, 6-episode TV series, multiple broadcasts as 2-episode "Documentary Master" programme – "Ivens in China" and "Ivens in the World" as well as in 4-episode version).	Shao Zhen-tang with Sun Hongyun/CCTV	China	90	

D

FILM AND VIDEO INTERVIEWS WITH JORIS IVENS (SELECTED)

1963	<i>Menschen am Pullschlag der Zeit: Joris Ivens</i> (2-part TV series)	Alfons Machalz	DDR	110	
1968	<i>Interview with Joris Ivens</i>	Gordon Hitchens	DDR/USA		Leipzig Film Festival
1970	<i>Joris Ivens Rediscovered Holland</i>	Hans Keller	Netherlands	50	VPRO network (Netherlands)
1973	<i>Grierson</i>	Roger Blais (National Film Board of Canada)	Canada	58	
1981	<i>Conversations with Willard Van Dyke</i>	Amalie R. Rothschild	USA	59	
1981	<i>Too Much Reality</i>	Sarah Boston	UK	60	BBC
1981	<i>Interviews with Ivens, Van Dongen, Gellhorn</i>	Peter Davies	Canada	60	
1983	<i>Témoins: Joris Ivens</i>	Robert Destanque with Marceline Loridan-Ivens	France	100	

FILMOGRAPHY

This filmography has been compiled based on several existing versions, especially those in Bakker (1999a) and Barbian (2001) and most importantly in consultation with the European Foundation Joris Ivens. Films are listed by title chronologically in the language of their original production (except for Chinese), with official English titles provided in italics or unofficial English translation in roman type between parentheses. Unless otherwise noted, Joris Ivens is director prior to 1931, usually including camera and editing in whole or in part. Unless otherwise noted all films prior to 1931 are silent, all films beginning in 1936 are with sound, those prior to 1952 are in black and white, prior to 1960 in 35mm.

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Code: DIR = director; CO-DIR = co-director; PROD = producer; WRIT = writer; CAM = cinematographer; ASST = assistant director or operator; ED = editor; CAST = performer; NARR = narrator; MUS = music; CONS = consultant.

DE WIGWAM [*Brandende Staal*, aka *Flaming Arrow*], 1912, 10 min., Netherlands. CAM: Kees Ivens, staff CAPI Nijmegen. (DVD box, 2008)

O, ZONNELAND [Oh Sunland!], 1922, 7 min., Netherlands. Home movie.

'T ZONHUIS [The Sunhouse], 1925, 6 min., Netherlands. Home movie.

'T ZONHUIS [The Sunhouse], 1927, 2 min., Netherlands. Home movie.

THEA'S MEERDERJARIGHEID ZONNELAND [Thea (Ivens's sister) Comes of Age in Sunland], 1927, 12 min., Netherlands. Home movie. (lost)

KINOSCHETSBOEK [Film Sketchbook], 1927, Netherlands. (lost)

PROEFOPNAMES CHARLOTTE KÖHLER [Charlotte Köhler Tests], 1927, Netherlands. (lost)

ZEEDIJK-FILMSTUDIE [Zeedijk Study], 1927, Netherlands. (lost). Other sketches depicted water pumps, shoppers, a public advertisement ('Persil') and onlookers, footage of legs dangling over the water, street pavers, family members.

DE ZIEKE STAD [The Sick Town], 1927-1928, 35mm, Netherlands. WRIT: Erich Wichman. (lost)

ÉTUDES DES MOUVEMENTS À PARIS [*Movement Studies in Paris*], 1927, 6 min. Netherlands. (DVD box, 2008)

702 | **DE BRUG** [*The Bridge*], 1928, 16 min., Netherlands. ASST: Van Es; ED ASST: John Fernhout; PROD: CAPI Amsterdam. (DVD box, 2008)

BRANDING [*Breakers*], 1929, 42 min., Netherlands. CO-DIR: Mannus Franken; WRIT: Jef Last; ASST: John Fernhout; CAST: Hein Blok, Jef Last, Co Sieger.

IK-FILM [I-film], 1929, Netherlands. CAST: Hans van Meerten. (lost)

SCHAATSENRIJDEN [Ice Skating], 1929, 8 min., Netherlands. CAST: John Fernhout. (lost)

ARM DRENTHE: DE NOOD IN DE DRENTSCHE VENEN [Poor Drenthe: Poverty in the Peatlands of Drenthe], 1929, 15 min., Netherlands. PROD: VVVC, Leo van Lakerveld. (lost)

REGEN [*Rain*], 1929, 16 min., Netherlands. CO-DIR & WRIT: Mannus Franken; ASST: John Fernhout, Cheng Fai, Helen van Dongen, Anneke van der Feer. (DVD box, 2008)

WIJ BOUWEN [*We Are Building*], 1930, 110-141 min., Netherlands. CAM: Willem Bon, Jan Hin, John Fernhout, Mark Kolthoff and Éli Lotar; WRIT: E. Sinoo; PROD: VVVC, Nederlandsche Bouwvak Arbeiders Bond.

The following constituent parts of *Wij Bouwen* were also shown separately.

Heien [Pile Driving], 13 min.

NVV-Congres [NVV Congress]

Jeugddag [Youth Day]

Nieuwe Architectuur [New Architecture], 7 min.

Caissonbouw [Caisson Building], 37 min.

Amsterdamse Jeugddag [Amsterdam Youth Day], 30 min.

Zuid-Limburg [South Limburg], 14 min.

Zuiderzeewerken [*Zuiderzee*], 40-52 min.

VAN STRIJD, JEUGD EN ARBEID / TWEDE VAKBONDSFILM [Of Struggle, Youth, and Labour / Second Union Film], 1930, Netherlands. CAM: Willem Bon, Jan Hin, John Fernhout, Mark Kolthoff, Éli Lotar; WRIT: E. Sinoo. (partly lost)

JEUGDDAG VIERHOUTEN [*Day of Youth Vierhouten*], 33 min.

Breken en Bouwen [Demolition and Construction], 1930, 12 min., Netherlands.

CAM/ASST: Mark Kolthoff. (lost)

VVVC JOURNAALS [VVVC News], 1930-1931, 15 min., Netherlands. PROD: VVVC, Leo van Lakerveld (lost)

Three episodes:

VVVC-Journaal [VVVC-news], 1930, 15 min., Netherlands. (lost)

1. *Filmnotities uit de Sovjetunie* [Film Notes from the USSR], 1930, 11-20 min., Netherlands. (lost)

2. *Demonstraties van proletarische solidariteit* [Demonstration of Proletarian Solidarity], 1930, 20 min., Netherlands. (lost)

TRIBUNE FILM, 1930, 20 min., Netherlands. CO-DIR/ED: Mark Kolthoff. (lost)

DONOGOO-TONKA, 1931, Netherlands. CAM/ED: Willem Bon; WRIT: Jules Romains;

CAST: Delfts Studenten Corps. (lost)

PHILIPS-RADIO, 1931, 36 min., sound, Netherlands. CAM: Jean Dréville, John

Fernhout, Mark Kolthoff, Joop Huisken; ED: Helen van Dongen; MUS: Lou Lichtveld;

PROD: Philips. (DVD box, 2008)

CREOSOOT [*Creosote*], 1931, 81 min., Netherlands. CAM: Jean Dréville, John Fernhout,

Éli Lotar; ASST: Mark Kolthoff.

PESN O GEROYACH [*Song of Heroes*, aka *Komsomol*], 1933, 50 min., USSR. ASST: Herbert

Marshall; CAM: Aleksandr Shelenkov; WRIT: Iosif Sklyut; CAST: Afanaseyev; MUS:

Hanns Eisler; PROD: Mezhrabpom-Film. (DVD box, 2008).

NIEUWE GRONDEN [*New Earth*], 1933, 30 min., Netherlands. CAM: John Fernhout, Joop

Huisken, Helen van Dongen, Éli Lotar; ED: Helen van Dongen; MUS: Hanns Eisler;

WRIT: Julian Arendt and Ernst Busch; NARR: Joris Ivens. (DVD box, 2008; a shortened version was produced by the Netherlands government-in-exile in 1944, 22 min.)

MISÈRE AU BORINAGE [*Borinage*], 1934, 34 min., silent, Belgium. CO-DIR, WRIT, & ED: Henri Storck; CAM: Henri Storck and François Rents; PROD: Club de l'écran. (DVD box, 2008)

SAARABSTIMMUNG UND SOWJETUNION [Saar Referendum and Soviet Union], 1934, sound, USSR. CO-DIR: Gustav Regler. (lost)

BORTSY [*Kämpfer*, aka *The Struggle*], 1936, 95 min. USSR. CO-DIR: Gustav von Wangenheim, Joseph Kurella; CAM: Bentsion Monastyrsky; ED: Helen van Dongen; MUS: Hans Hauska.

MILLIONS OF US, American Labour Productions, 1936, 20 min., USA. Ivens's contribution to this Los Angeles collective production by film industry progressives is unknown.

704 | **THE RUSSIAN SCHOOL IN NEW YORK**, 1936, USA. (lost)

THE SPANISH EARTH, 1937, 53 min., USA. CAM: John Ferno; ED: Helen van Dongen; WRIT/NARR: Ernest Hemingway; MUS: Marc Blitzstein, Virgil Thomson; PROD: Contemporary Historians, Inc. (DVD box, 2008)

THE 400 MILLION, 1939, 53 min., USA. CO-DIR & CAM: John Fernhout; CAM: Robert Capa; ED: Helen van Dongen; WRIT: Dudley Nichols; NARR: Fredric March; PROD: History Today Inc. (DVD box, 2008)

POWER AND THE LAND, 1940, 33 min. USA. CAM: Floyd Crosby, Arthur Ornitz; ED: Helen van Dongen; WRIT: Edwin Locke, Stephen Vincent Benét (commentary); NARR: William P. Adams; MUS: Douglas Moore; PROD: Pare Lorentz, US Film Service. (DVD box, 2008)

NEW FRONTIERS, 1940, (unfinished), USA. CAM: Floyd Crosby; WRIT: Wieland Herzfelde?; PROD: Sloan Foundation. (lost)

BIP GOES TO TOWN, 1941, 9 min., USA. SUPERVISION: Joris Ivens; ED: Lora Hays; MUS: Douglas Moore; PROD: Rural Electification Administration. (DVD: *Rural Electrification in Ohio: Historic REA Films 1940-1941*, Dr. Ephraim K. Smith, Heritage Productions, Inc., powerforparkinsons.com)

WORST OF FARM DISASTERS, 1941, 6 min., USA. SUPERVISION: Joris Ivens; ED: Lora Hays; MUS: Douglas Moore; PROD: Rural Electification Administration. (DVD: *Rural Electrification in Ohio: Historic REA Films 1940-1941*, Dr. Ephraim K. Smith, Heritage Productions, Inc., powerforparkinsons.com)

OIL FOR ALADDIN'S LAMP, 1941, 35mm, 21 min., USA. CAM: Floyd Crosby; PROD: J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency, Shell Oil. (National Archives of Canada; 1949 version revised by H.E. Hockey available <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWy3dEaupSk>> accessed 15 March 2014)

OUR RUSSIAN FRONT, 1941, 38 min., USA. CO-DIR: Lewis Milestone. CAM: Roman Karmen, Ivan Belyakov, Arkadi Shafran; ED: Marcel Craven; WRIT: Elliot Paul, Ben Maddow (David Wolf); NARR: Walter Huston; MUS: Dmitri Shostakovich; PROD: Art Kino, Russian War Relief. ('World at War' Collection, Signature, Fastforward Music, UK. DVD)

ACTION STATIONS, 1943, 50 min., Canada. CAM: Osmond Borrodaile, François Villiers, John Norwood; WRIT: Morley Callaghan, Allan Field; MUS: Lou Appelbaum; PROD: John Grierson, National Film Board of Canada. (Short version: *Corvette Port Arthur*, 22 min.; DVD and streaming: <http://nfb.ca/film/action_stations> accessed 15 March 2014)

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KNOW YOUR ENEMY: JAPAN, 1945, 62 min., USA. DIR: Frank Capra; ED: Major Aaxton, Frank Bracht, Elmo Williams; WRIT: Frank Capra, Carl Foreman, John Huston, Edgar Peterson; NARR: John Huston; MUS: Dimitri Tiomkin. Early script development and research by Joris Ivens and Helen van Dongen.

THE STORY OF G.I. JOE, 1945, 108 min., USA. DIR: William A. Wellman; CAM: Russell Metty; ED: Abrecht Joseph; WRIT: Ernie Pyle, Leopold Atlas, Guy Endore, Philip Stevenson; MUS: Louis Applebaum, Ann Ronell; CONS: Joris Ivens. (Video-Cinema Films, Inc. DVD, n.d.)

INDONESIA CALLING, 1946, 22 min., Australia. CAM: Joris Ivens, Marion Michelle et al.; WRIT: Catherine Duncan; NARR: Peter Finch. (DVD box, 2008)

PIERWSZE LATA [*The First Years*], 1949, 99 min., Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland. CAM: Bulg.: Zachary Shandov; Czech: Ivan Fric; Pol.: Wladyslaw Forbert; ED: Karel Hoeschl; WRIT: Marion Michelle, Catherine Duncan; NARR: Stanley Harrison; MUS: Kan Kapr; PROD: Lubomir Linhard; Bulgar Film, Sofia; Statni Film, Praag; Wytwornia Filmów Dokumentalnych, Warsaw.

POKÓJ ZDOBĘDZIE ŚWIAT [*Peace Will Win*], 1951, 90 min., Poland. CO-DIR: Jerzy Bossak; CAM: Wladislaw Forbert, et al.; ED: Johanna Rojewska; WRIT: Jerzy Bossak; NARR: S. Arskiet al.; MUS: Jerzy Gert, Wladislaw Szpilman; PROD: Wytwornia Filmów Dokumentalnych, Warsaw.

FREUNDSCHAFT SIEGT [*Friendship Triumphs*], 1952, 100 min., colour, USSR, DDR. CO-DIR: Ivan Pyryev; CAM: W. Pavlov et al.; ED: A. Kulganek, K. Moskvina; WRIT: Ivan Pyryev, A. Frolov; NARR: S. Antonov; MUS: Isaak Dunayevski, M. Matussovski; PROD: Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft. (Restored German-language version 2015, 96 min., DVD DEFA-Stiftung)

WYSCIG POKÓJU WARSZAWA-BERLIN-PRAGA [*Friedensfahrt 1952, aka Peace Tour 1952, aka Race for Peace Warsaw-Berlin-Prague*], 1952, 53 min., colour, Poland, DDR. CAM: Karel Szczecinski et al.; ED: Krystyna Rutkowska; WRIT: Ewa Fiszer; MUS: Wernfried Hübél; PROD: DEFA. (Restored German-language version, DEFA-Stiftung DVD set 2015)

706 | **DAS LIED DER STRÖME** [*Song of the Rivers*], 1954, 90 min., DDR. CO-DIR: Vladimir Pozner; ASST: Joop Huisken, Robert Ménégóz; CAM: Erich Nitzschmann et al.; ED: Ella Ensink; WRIT: Vladimir Pozner, Bertolt Brecht; NARR: Ernst Busch (German), Alex McCrindle (English); MUS: Dmitri Shostakovich, Paul Robeson; PROD: DEFA. (Restored German-language version 2015, 105 min., DVD DEFA-Stiftung)

MEIN KIND [*My Child*], 1955, 22 min., DDR. DIR: Vladimir Pozner, Alfons Machalz. WRIT: Vladimir Pozner; NARR: Helene Weigel; PROD: DEFA, International Democratic Women's Federation. (Restored German-language version, DEFA-Stiftung DVD set 2015)

DIE ABENTEUER DES TILL EULENSPIEGEL [*Les Aventures de Till l'Espiègle, aka The Adventures of Till Eulenspiegel, aka Bold Adventure*], 1956, 90 min., colour, DDR, France. DIR: Gérard Philipe; PRODUCTION COORDINATOR (DEFA)/ARTISTIC ADVISER: Joris Ivens; CAM: Alain Douarinou, Christian Matras; ED: Claude Nicole; MUS: Georges Auric; CAST: Gérard Philipe, Jean Vilar, Fernand Ledoux, Nicole Berger, Jean Carmet; PROD: DEFA and Productions Ariane. (Restored original French-language version, TFI Video DVD 2009)

DIE WINDROSE [*The Windrose*], 1957, 110 min, DDR. DIR: Alberto Cavalcanti, Alex Viany, Wu Guoying, Yannick Bellon, Gillo Pontecorvo, Sergei Gerasimov; ARTISTIC ADVISER: Joris Ivens; ED: Ella Ensink; WRIT: Jorge Amado, Sergei Gerasimov, Lin Jen, Henri Magnan, Franco Solinas; MUS: Chi Min, Wolfgang Hohensee, Anatoli Novikov, Mario Zafred; CAST: Simone Signoret, Yves Montand, Yan Meiyl, Clara Pozzi, Vanya Orico, S. Kirienko et al.; PROD: DEFA, International Democratic Women's Federation. (Restored German-language version, DEFA-Stiftung DVD set 2015)

LA SEINE A RENCONTRÉ PARIS [*The Seine Meets Paris*], 1957, 32 min., France. CAM: André Dumaitre, Philippe Brun; ED: Gisèle Chézeau; CONS: Georges Sadoul; WRIT: Jacques Prévert; NARR: Serge Reggiani; MUS: Gérard-Philippe; PROD: Garance Film. (DVD box, 2008)

LETTRES DE CHINE [*Before Spring*], 1958, 38 min, colour, China. CAM: Wang Decheng; WRIT: He Zhongxin; NARR: Xe Tian; PROD: Central Studios for Newsreel and Documentaries, Beijing.

SIX HUNDRED MILLION WITH YOU, 1958, 12 min. China. CAM: crew of the Central Studios; WRIT: He Zhongxin; PROD: Central Studios for Newsreel and Documentaries, Beijing.

L'ITALIA NON È UN PAESE POVERO [Italy Is Not a Poor Country], 1960, 35mm, 112 min. (three parts), Italy. ASST: Giovanni (Tinto) Brass, Valentino Orsini, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani; CAM: Mario Dolci, Mario Volpi; ED: Maria Rosada; NARR: Enrico M. Salerno; MUS: Gino Marinuzzi; PROD: Enrico Mattei, Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, Radiotelevisione italiana.

Three parts:

1. *Fuochi della val Padana* [Fire in the Po Valley]
2. *Due Città* [Two Cities] and *La Storia di due alberi* [Story of the Two Trees]
3. *Appuntamento a Gela* [Meeting in Gela]

DEMAIN À NANGUILA [Nanguila Tomorrow], 1960, 16 mm, 50 min., colour, Mali, France. CAM: Louis Míaillé; ED: Gisèle Chézeau, Héléne Arnal, Suzanne Baron; WRIT: Catherine Varlin (Winter); CAST: Moussa Sidibé; NARR: Roger Pigaut, Moussa Sidibé; MUS: Louis Bessière, Moussa Sidibé; PROD: Société Franco-Africaine de Cinéma, Gisèle Rebillon.

CARNET DE VIAJE [Travel Notebook], 1961, 35mm, 34 min., Cuba, France. ASST: Jorge Fraga, José Massip (Cuba), Isabelle Elizando, Guy Blanc (France); WRIT: Henri Fabiani, Nicolas Guillen (poem); ED: Héléne Arnal; NARR: Henri Fabiani; MUS: Harold Gramatgès; PROD: ICAIC (Saul Yelin), Garance Film (Roger Pigaut).

UN PUEBLO ARMADO [An Armed People], 1961, 35mm, 35 min., Cuba, France. ASST: Jorge Herrera, Ramón F. Suarez; ED: Héléne Arnal; WRIT: Henri Fabiani; NARR: Serge Reggiani; MUS: Harold Gramatgès; PROD: ICAIC (Saul Yelin), Garance Film (Roger Pigaut).

CHAGALL [Marc Chagall], 1962, 35mm, France. DIR: Henri Langlois; CAM: Frédéric Rossif, Jean Guynot; ED: Joris Ivens. PROD: Cinémathèque française. (unfinished and lost)

...À VALPARAISO [Valparaiso], 1963, 35mm, 27 min., black and white/colour, France, Chile. ASST: Sergio Bravo, A. Altez, Rebecca Yanez, Joaquin Olalla, Carlos Böker; CAM: Georges Strouvé; ED: Jean Ravel; WRIT: Chris Marker; NARR: Roger Pigaut; MUS: Gustavo Becarra, Germaine Montero; PROD: Argos Films, and Ciné experimental de la Universidad de Chile. (DVD box, 2008)

LE PETIT CHAPITEAU [The Little Circus], 1963, 35mm, 6 min., France, Chile. CAM: Patricio Guzman; ED: Jean Ravel; WRIT & NARR: Jacques Prévert; PROD: Argos Films, and Ciné experimental de la Universidad de Chile.

LE TRAIN DE LA VICTOIRE [*The Victory Train*], 1964, 16mm, 9 min., France, Chile. CAM: Patricio Guzman; ED: Sergio Bravo; MUS: Gustavo Becerra; PROD: Frente de Acción Popular (FRAP)

708 | **AAH...TAMARA**, 1965, 35mm, 28 min., Netherlands. DIR: Pim de la Parra; CAM: Gerard van den Berg; CAST: Joris Ivens et al.

POUR LE MISTRAL [For the Mistral], 1965, 35mm, 33 min., black and white/colour, widescreen, France. CAM: Claude Dumaitre, Pierre Lhomme; ASST: Jean Michaud et al.; ED: Jean Ravel, Emmanuelle Castro; WRIT: René Guyonnet, Armand Gatti, André Verdet (commentary); NARR: Roger Pigaut; MUS: Luc Ferrari (not used), Antoine Duhamel; PROD: Claude Nedjar, Centre Européen Radio-Cinéma-Télévision. (DVD box, 2008)

LE CIEL, LA TERRE [The Sky, the Earth, aka *The Threatening Sky*], 1966, 35mm, 28 min., black and white, France. ASST: Cao Thuy; CAM: Duc Hoa, Robert Destanque, Thu Van; ED: Cathérine Dourgnon, Françoise Beloux; WRIT: Jean-Claude Ulrich [Chris Marker]; NARR: Serge Reggiani, Joris Ivens; MUS: Ensemble artistique des étudiants vietnamiens en France; PROD: Dovidis.

ROTTERDAM EUROPOORT [*Rotterdam Europort*], 1966, 35mm, 20 min., colour, Netherlands. CAM: Eddy van der Enden, Étienne Becker; ASST: Mirek Sebestik, Marceline Loridan; ED: Catherine Dourgnon, Geneviève Louveau, Andrée Choty; CAST: Carel Kneulman, Willeke van Ammelrooy; WRIT: Gerrit Kouwenaar; NARR: Kouwenaar, Yves Montand (French); SOUND: Tom Tholen; MUS: Pierre Barbot, Konstantin Simonovich; PROD: Joop Landré, Nederlandse Filmproduktie Mij, Argos Films. (DVD box, 2008).

LOIN DU VIETNAM [*Far From Vietnam*], 1967, 35mm, 115 min., black and white/colour, France. CO-DIR: [Chris Marker], Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Agnès Varda, Michèle Ray, Roger Pic; CAM: Joris Ivens, Marceline Loridan (Hanoi); ED: Chris Marker; NARR: Maurice Garrel, Bernard Fressom, Karen

Blangeurnon, Agnès Varda; MUS: Michel Fano, Michel Chapdenat, Georges Asperghis; PROD: S.L.O.N., Paris. (Restored English-subtitled version, Icarus Films Home Video DVD 2013)

LE 17^E PARALLÈLE [*The 17th Parallel*], 1968, 35mm, 113 min., black and white, France. CO-DIR: Marceline Loridan; CAM: Nguyen Quang Tuan, Dao Le Binh; OTHER COLLABORATORS: Bui Dinh, Hac Nguyen, Thi Xuan Phuong, Pham Chon, Liliane Korb, Maguy Alziari, Phung Ba Tho, Jean-Pierre Sergent, Dang Vu Bich Lien, Jean Neny, Antoine Bonfanti, Pierre Angles, Michel Fano, Harald Maury, Donald Sturbelle, André v.d. Beken, Bernard Ortion, Georges Loiseau, Ragnar, Studio central du film documentaire (Hanoi), the people and army of Vinh Linh; PROD: CAPI Films, Argos Films, Paris. (DVD box, 2008)

LE PEUPLE ET SES FUSILS [*The People and their Guns*], 1970, 35mm, 97 min., black and white, Laos, France. DIR & WRIT (COLLECTIVE): Jean-Pierre Sergent, Marceline Loridan, Joris Ivens, Emmanuelle Castro, Suzanne Fenn, Antoine Bonfanti, Bernard Ortion, Anne Rullier; PROD: CAPI Films, Paris.

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RENCONTRE AVEC LE PRÉSIDENT HO CHI MINH [*Meeting with President Ho Chi Minh*], 1970, 35mm, 8 min., France. CO-DIR & CO-WRIT: Marceline Loridan; WRIT: Marceline Loridan.

COMMENT YUKONG DÉPLAÇA LES MONTAGNES [*How Yukong Moved the Mountains*], 1976, 16mm, colour, 718 min., France. CO-DIR: Marceline Loridan; CAM: Li Zexiang, Yang Zhiju; ASST: Jean Bigiaoui; COLLABORATORS: Françoise Ascain, Christine Aya, Dominique Barbier, Joel Beldent, Fabienne Bergeron, Paul Bertault, Sylvie Blanc, Joëlle Dalido, Robert Destanque, Martine Goussay, Dominique Greussay, Jacqueline Haby, He Tian, Guo Weijun, Renée Koch, Alain Landau, Guy Laroche, Joëlle Lebeau, Donna Lévy, Jacques Lévy, Lucien Logette, Sarah Matton, Eric Pluet, Ragnar van Leyden, Théo Robichet, Jacques Sansoulh, Xia Zhou'an, Françoise Sigward, Tan Qinwen, Qian Liren, Xia Jiaohe, Dominique Valentin, Julie Vilmont, Wu Mengbin, Ren Zheng, Ye Cheyan, Zu Chongyuan; TRANSLATOR: Lu Songhe; ED: Suzanne Baron; WRIT: Alain Badiou; PROD: CAPI Films, Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA), Paris. (CNC 2014. *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes*, DVD box set)

Autour du pétrole: Taking [*The Oilfields*], 84 min.

La Pharmacie no. 3: Changhai [*The Pharmacy: Shanghai*], 79 min. (DVD box, 2008)

L'Usine de générateurs [*The Generator Factory*], 131 min.

Une femme, une famille [*A Woman, A Family*], 110 min.

Le Village des pêcheurs [*The Fishing Village*], 104 min.

Une caserne [*An Army Camp*], 56 min.

Impressions d'une ville: Changhai [*Impressions of a City: Shanghai*], 60 min.

Histoire d'un ballon: Le Lycee no. 31 à Pékin [The Football Incident], 19 min. (DVD box, 2008)

Le Professeur Tsien [Professor Tchien (Qian)], 12 min.

Une répétition à l'Opéra de Pékin [Rehearsal at the Peking Opera], 30 min.

Entraînement au Cirque de Pékin [Training at the Peking Circus], 18 min.

Les Artisans [Traditional Handicrafts], 15 min.

COMMEMORATION IN PARIS OF THE DEATH OF MAO ZEDONG (news-item), 1979. CO-DIR: Marceline Loridan.

LES KAZAKS – MINORITÉ NATIONALE, SINKIANG [*The Kazakhs – National Minority, Xinjiang*], 1977, 16mm, 50 min., colour, China, France. CO-DIR: Marceline Loridan; ED: Suzanne Baron; WRIT: Marceline Loridan; PROD: CAPI Films, Paris.

710 | **LES OUIGOURS – MINORITÉ NATIONALE, SINKIANG** [*The Uigurs – National Minority, Xinjiang*], 1977, 16mm, 35 min., colour, China, France. CO-DIR: Marceline Loridan; ED: Suzanne Baron; WRIT: Marceline Loridan; PROD: CAPI Films, Paris.

HÂVRE, 1986, 35mm, 96 min., colour, France. DIR: Juliet Berto; WRIT: Juliet Berto, Elisabeth D. Prasetyo; CAST: Joris Ivens.

UNE HISTOIRE DE VENT [*A Tale of the Wind*], 1988, 35mm, 78 min., colour, France. CO-DIR: Marceline Loridan; CAM: Thierry Arbogast, Jacques Loiseleux; CAST: Joris Ivens, Han Zenxiang, Wang Delong, Liu Zhuang, Wang Hong, Fu Dalin, Liu Guilian, Chen Zhijian, Paul Sergent, Zou Qiaoyo, Yin Guangzhong; TRANSLATOR: Lu Songhe; ED: Geneviève Louveau; WRIT: Marceline Loridan, Elisabeth D. Prasetyo; MUSIC: Michel Portal; PROD: Marin Karmitz, La Sept; CAPI Films, Paris. (DVD box, 2008)

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