

Correlation between The Film Scene Indonesian Calling and Black Armada Incident Regarding Australia's Response to Indonesian Independence

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SUBJECT

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Abstract

Recognising the sovereignty of a country by another country is one of the conditions for establishing a country, including the Republic of Indonesia, which just proclaimed Independence on August 17, 1945. One of the countries that supported and recognised the existence of Indonesia at that time was Australia. Australia at that time supported Indonesian Independence through a union strike against Dutch ships in Australian ports that wanted to sail back to Indonesia in order to reclaim their colony. This strike action is known as the Black Armada and is documented in the documentary *Indonesia Calling*. This research aims to understand the memory contained in the documentary film *Indonesia Calling* and its correlation with the Black Armada event. The research uses a qualitative approach with historical methods and media discourse analysis. The Black Armada incident occurred for four years (1945-1949), and a strike by Indonesian labour workers in Australia

marked. In subsequent developments, the strike spread across Australia and was followed by labour workers unions and Australian citizens, particularly in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Fremantle. This action was documented through the film *Indonesia Calling* by Joris Ivens, which was then disseminated to the international world so that other countries could support Indonesian independence as a condition for establishing a country.

1. Introduction

The proclamation of Indonesian Independence on August 17, 1945, had a significant impact domestically and internationally. This event triggered the enthusiasm of the Indonesian people to be involved in the independence revolution, which was the main driver for many young people who were involved in the struggle for Indonesian independence. Imperialist countries have lost their colonies in the international sphere, while anti-colonialist countries have gained a new brother, Indonesia. Indonesian independence became one of the triggers for the national liberation movement on a broader scale.

Recognition of a nation's Independence is contingent upon fulfilling specific criteria. After Indonesia proclaimed its independence, two elements must be met for Indonesia to be free from colonialism and become an independent country, namely the

constitutive and declarative elements (Rombot et al., 2023). Regarding constitutional elements, Indonesia has fulfilled these elements, including the territory, the people, and the sovereign government. However, Indonesia still does not meet the declarative element, namely, the official recognition of a country from the state. Therefore, Indonesian independence needs support and recognition from other countries.

The proclamation of independence in Indonesia is the starting point for the nation to determine its future, but this does not mean that Indonesia is entirely free to determine its fate. It is considering that there is still interference from other parties, namely the Netherlands, trying to regain control of Indonesia. After the proclamation of Indonesian Independence, Indonesia received support from various countries, including Australia. Australia has a geographical location adjacent to Indonesia, so the linkage between the two countries is inevitable. These two countries must consider foreign relations, including trade and politics. Therefore, Australia supports Indonesian independence as a condition to fulfil the declarative elements (*de jure*) of the formation of a state (Nugraha et al., 2023).

During the period after the reading of the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence, Australia responded to the Indonesian independence struggle through the Black Armada. The Black Armada was a strike action of the labour unions in Australia that lasted from 1945 to 1949 to stop the movement of Netherlands ships in Australia and try to retake their colonies in Indonesia (The Barrier Miner, 1945). Netherlands ships that wanted to return to Indonesia under the pretext of helping political stability after Japan's colonisation drew sharp criticism from the Australian Labor Party and most of the Indonesian labour workers in Australia. They realised the real goal was to regain control of Indonesia's territory (Lockwood, 1975). In response, the workers embargoed the ships, which reflected their active role in the struggle for independence. Australia categorically refused to support the Netherlands' attempt to recolonise Indonesia through an event known as the Black Armada.

Australia categorically refused to support the Netherlands' efforts to retake its colonies. The Australian citizens embargo the Netherlands ships by refusing to provide coal as fuel to operate the Netherlands ships. In addition, Australian citizens refused to work on ships, offices, and restaurants the Netherlands ran during the Black Armada incident (Lockwood, 1975). Real support from Australia can be seen through the Black Armada incident. However, it is unfortunate that this incident is rarely discussed in Indonesian historiography, even though it has been documented in a documentary film titled "Indonesia Calling".

Film, memory, and history are always interesting, especially in historiography. These three elements are interconnected and can influence the course of human history (Cull et al., 2003). Since the introduction of documentary films, documentary films have been recognised for having the power to influence their audiences. Compared to other media, documentary films have a significant psychological and propaganda impact because their influence is not only limited to the intellectual aspect but also touches on emotions and the sense of sight (Jason, 2013). Documentary films can be categorised as new sites of memory. Site of memory refers to all practices that aim to reinforce or stimulate the memory of the past

(Tabaszewska, 2016). Thus, these sites of memory are formed through the interaction between memory and history, including in the documentary *Indonesia Calling*.

The documentary *Indonesia Calling*, released in 1946, is a form of Australia's response to Indonesian independence. In this film, the struggle of the Indonesian people in achieving independence from the Netherlands colonialism, as well as the Black Armada incident that occurred in Australia at that time (Armitage, 1946). This film has succeeded in attracting international attention. It has become one of the essential means of disseminating information about the Indonesian independence struggle to the world community so that the world community sympathises and supports the independence movement. The documentary film *Indonesia Calling* is considered the first unique anti-colonialism film because its creator is a Netherlands East Indies Film Commissioner, Joris Ivens (Doolan, 2021). This film evokes memories that sparked the anger of the Netherlands government because it is a documentary film with anti-Netherlands propaganda. This film is 23 minutes long and tells the story of the strikes carried out by the Indonesian Seamen's Union, Seamen's Union of Australia, Chinese Seamen's Union, Indian Seamen's Union, and Malayan Merchant Navy Association. The workers refused to transport logistics and work on Netherlands ships.

The documentary film *Indonesia Calling* successfully attracted international attention at the time. However, the Indonesian calling has just disappeared in Indonesian history. Although it significantly impacted the Indonesian independence revolution, this film is forgotten in Indonesia's historical record. The lack of research on the critical role of the documentary film *Indonesia Calling* in depicting the historical facts about the Black Armada incident as Australia's response to Indonesian independence has caused this film to be rarely highlighted in Indonesian historiography.

Based on this introduction, the researcher formulated the objectives of the research, namely: (1) to understand more deeply the Black Armada incident and the documentary film *Indonesia Calling* as a response of Australia to the Independence of the State of Indonesia in international recognition; and (2) the correlation between Black Armada incident and the documentary film *Indonesia Calling*. On this basis, the researcher formulated the title of the research *Correlation between The Film Scene Indonesian Calling and Black Armada Incident Regarding Australia's Response to Indonesian Independence*.

2. Methods

This research uses historical methods with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is one of the research approaches used to understand social phenomena in depth and comprehensively (Adlin, 2013). This approach aims to explain and understand the meaning, perception, facts, and social context of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative approaches are often used in complex research contexts. In this case, the researcher wanted to understand aspects that could not be quantitatively measured. Data collection using a very in-depth qualitative approach will improve the quality of research results. One type of qualitative approach used is the historical method and media discourse analysis (Lune & Berg, 2017).

The historical method refers to the research method researchers use to study and analyse the past. As a discipline, history requires a systematic and organised method to ensure accuracy and objectivity in research (Kuntowijoyo, 2018). Historical methods help researchers gather historical sources, analyse data, and compile consistent narratives about the past. Therefore, scientific books and articles published through trustworthy digital literacy need analysis, critical evaluation, and critical thinking. There are several steps in the historical method, namely: (1) heuristic, (2) source criticism, (3) interpretation, and (4) historiography.

According to Sartono Kartodirdjo (1992), the initial stage in the historical method is heuristic. This method involves the process of collecting and researching relevant historical sources. Heuristics aims to gather as much accurate information as possible to compile a comprehensive historical narrative. Once historical sources have been gathered, the next step is to criticise the sources. Researchers must question historical sources' reliability, objectivity, and accuracy in source criticism. The next step is interpretation, which involves analysing and giving meaning to the historical facts found. Researchers connect and provide context to historical facts to produce a deeper understanding of past events. The final stage in the historical method is historiography, which involves studying how previous researchers wrote and interpreted history. By understanding historiography, researchers can see historical perspectives and viewpoints that have changed over time and the way previous researchers wrote history.

This research approach not only uses a historical method but also applies media discourse analysis to explore the correlation between the Black Armada incident and the documentary film *Indonesia Calling*. Media discourse analysis is a branch of linguistics that studies discourse, namely the unity of meaning in language in various communication media, such as films, letters, television, newspapers, radio, and so on (Rohana & Syamsuddin, 2015). The focus of media discourse analysis is the structure of language in communication, both verbally and contextually, as well as on the context or substance of the message to be conveyed. Therefore, researchers who conduct discourse analysis need to examine the relationship between language and the context of its use in communication media, one of which is through film (Branigan & Buckland, 2014).

Based on this method, this research uses a qualitative approach with historical methods and media discourse analysis to collect data related to the Black Armada incident and the documentary film scene *Indonesia Calling*. This data will be analysed to prove the correlation between the two and provide evidence that the State of Australia supported Indonesian independence through the Black Armada incident. The data obtained will be interpreted using relevant theories, resulting in a scientific paper (Creswell, 1992).

3. Finding and Discussions

Black Armada is a term that refers to Netherlands merchant ships and military ships that were banned from sailing from Australia to Indonesia, after the proclamation of independence (1945-1949). The Black Armada was marked by strikes by shipwrights and port workers from labour unions, such as the Indonesian Seamen's Union, Seamen's Union of Australia, Chinese Seamen's Union, Indian Seamen's Union, and

Malayan Merchant Navy Association. The first incident occurred in August 1945 outside Sydney, Woolloomooloo. At that time, a group of shipwrights from Indonesia gathered at the Indonesian Seamen's Union office to listen to the Indonesian proclamation of independence news on shortwave radio. One of the workers who was present at the Indonesian Seamen's Union office and listened to the news of the Indonesian Proclamation of Independence was Tukliwon (Nugraha et al., 2023).

Tukliwon is known as the secretary of the Indonesian Seamen's Union and a member of the Seamen's Union of Australia who has a close relationship with the Seamen's Union of Australia, representing all Australia's seafarers and ship workers. After hearing the broadcast of the proclamation, Tukliwon immediately went to Sydney to inform the Seamen's Union of Australia about their support for the Indonesian Seamen's Union in the struggle for Indonesian Independence (Male, 1965). The Seamen's Union of Australia supported Indonesian independence because it supported the rights of the Indonesian people to determine their destiny and end the Netherlands colonial occupation of Indonesia.

After learning the news of Indonesian Independence from the radio broadcast, Tukliwon and his friends immediately showed their opposition to the Netherlands. This is evidenced by the refusal of Tukliwon, whom the owner of the Netherlands warship ordered to sail back to Java with the aim of reclaiming his colony. Tukliwon and his friends firmly refused because they supported Indonesian independence. This action was supported by the Seamen's Union of Australia and other labour unions, such as the Blacksmiths Society Australasian, Society of Engineers Australian, Federation of Locomotive Enginemen, and The Australian Railways Union (Male, 1965).

On September 24, 1945, the Black Armada action expanded when a group of Indonesian crew members of four Netherlands ships docked in Sydney went on strike and refused to work on the Netherlands-flagged ships. This is due to allegations related to the materials brought from the ship that would be used to suppress the Indonesian independence movement and retake the Netherlands colonies in Indonesia (Lockwood, 1975). This incident then triggered the Seamen's Union of Australia, the Chinese Seamen's Union, the Indian Seamen's Union, and the Malayan Merchant Navy Association to call on their members to impose an embargo on all ships carrying ammunition or other materials used against the Government of Indonesia.

Black Armada actions in Brisbane, Fremantle, Sydney, and other cities have stopped Netherlands ships from leaving ports in Australia. The Van Heutz ship carrying Netherlands government officials, KNIL Army (Koninklijk Nederlands(ch)-Indische Leger), and Netherlands weapons was detained in Brisbane harbour. In addition, the Karsik Ship carrying Dutch Guilders and the Pahud Ship carrying food supplies were stuck in Melbourne harbour because they needed coal to fuel the ship. This is because Australian citizens do not sell the coal to the Netherlands (Lockwood, 1975).

On September 28, 1945, there was a demonstration by the Australian labour unions in front of the offices of the Netherlands Shipping and Diplomatic Companies. The Australian labour unions involved, such as the Federated Clerks Union,

Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association, Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union, Firemen and Deckhands' Association, and Hotel, Club, and Restaurant Employee's Union. They carried a banner in the demonstration that read "Hands off Indonesia".



Figure 1. The workers carried a banner reading "Hands off Indonesia" in front of the Netherlands Shipping and Diplomatic Companies offices on September 28, 1948.

Source: Rupert Lockwood, *Black Armada*.

In October 1945, this activity increased with the support of the Australian Labor Party, which was then in power in Australia (Male, 1965). The impact of this demonstration is that about 400 ships belonging to the Netherlands that are docked in Australia cannot continue their journey to Indonesia in the Netherlands attempt to regain control of Indonesia's territory. As a result, the ship's cargo was held up in Australian ports (Lockwood, 1975). In addition, the Trades and Labor Council is actively disseminating informational leaflets to the people of Australia. The content of the leaflet, as explained by Rupert Lockwood (1975) in his book "Black Armada" is as follows:

Access to transportation should be given to something other than Netherlands soldiers and officers. Netherlands ammunition had to be confiscated. Repair work on Netherlands ships should not be carried out. Coal could not be given to Netherlands ships. Netherlands ships should not be allowed out of Australian ports. Food and supplies must be provided to something other than Netherlands ships, Netherlands offices, Netherlands restaurants, or Netherlands personnel. In principle, everything related to the Netherlands must be boycotted.

As a result of the Black Armada, there was a demonstration related to the treatment of Indonesian citizens in a Netherlands prison located in Casino, New South Wales, Australia, in 1946. The demonstration was sparked by Australian citizens who sympathised with giving Christmas gifts to Indonesian prisoners but were rejected by Netherlands guards. In response to this, some Casino residents staged demonstrations to demand the closure of the prison (Male, 1965). In April 1947, 480 inmates began demonstrating. Correctional officers opened fire and killed a protester named Soerdo and wounded two other demonstrators (Gapps, 2015). This incident caused Australia's Immigration Minister Arthur Caldwell to threaten to expel Netherlands correctional officers and all Netherlands citizens from Australia if the prisoners were not returned to Indonesia. The Netherlands Diplomatic Office then agreed to return the prisoners to Indonesia. On September 12, 1947, as many as 1,416 Indonesian prisoners were returned to Indonesia, and the Netherlands prison at the Casino was closed in November 1947 (Lockwood, 1975).



Figure 2. Netherlands prison in Casino, New South Wales, Australia, in 1946.
Source: Casino Historical Society.

In July 1947, the Netherlands began to carry out military attacks against the Government of Indonesia through *Politioenele Acties* or Netherlands Military Aggression. This led to widespread anti-Netherlands protests in Australia. The media in Australia began to report negatively on the Netherlands Military Aggression, while Australian students took to the streets to demonstrate in front of the Netherlands Consulate (Male, 1965). This incident made the Australian government oppose the Netherlands Military Aggression at the United Nations Security Council and increase assistance to the Government of Indonesia (Lockwood, 1975). In subsequent developments, Australia was involved in the Tripartite Commission or *Komisi Tiga Negara* (KTN) to oversee the implementation of the Renville Agreement (Cahyantara, 2007).

On December 19, 1949, after the Netherlands recognised Indonesian independence, a Conference of 17 Labour Unions passed a motion to stop the Black Armada's action against Netherlands ships (Kalgoorlie Miner, 1949). The action aims to end a dispute that has been going on for more than four years. During the Black Armada, there were 559 Netherlands-owned ships trapped in Australian ports, including corvettes, submarines, troop ships, passenger ships, merchant ships, tankers, and barges (Lockwood, 1975). In addition, the Black Armada action was also immortalised in a 23-minute documentary entitled "Indonesia Calling". The film was then widely published to the international community to gain sympathy and support regarding the struggle for Indonesian independence to fulfil the declarative element (*de jure*) of becoming an independent country.

3.2 The documentary film Indonesia Calling

Indonesia Calling is a short documentary film released in Australia in 1946. The film *Indonesia Calling* was directed by Joris Ivens and produced by The Waterfront Unions of Australia. The film depicts the state of Sydney City after World War II when the Black Armada incident occurred. At the time, labour unions in the City of Sydney refused to work with the Netherlands, carrying ships loaded with Netherlands weapons and ammunition to suppress the independence movement of Indonesia and retake its colony (Armitage, 1946).

Joris Ivens is a well-known film director who has worked as a Dutch Documentary Filmmaker. In 1945, Joris Ivens received an offer to become *Filmcommissaris voor Nederlands-Indië* (Commissioner of the Netherlands East Indies Film) from the Deputy Governor of the Netherlands East Indies, Van der Plass (Schoots, 1995). In his new assignment, Joris Ivens was asked to make several propaganda films depicting the kindness of the Netherlands in liberating Indonesia from Japanese colonialism. In these films, the Netherlands wants to show itself as a heroic country that will help Indonesia become an independent country under the leadership of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (*Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*).

While travelling to Indonesia, Joris Ivens first stopped in Australia, which became a temporary base for the Netherlands when Japan controlled Indonesia. Upon arriving in Australia, Joris Ivens was presented with a reality that had never been imagined before: dockers were on strike at Sydney Harbour. The strike occurred because they refused to

transport ammunition supplies and logistics to the Netherlands ships that would sail to Indonesia. One of the port workers' demands was that the Netherlands recognise the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia (Goodall, 2008). After witnessing the strike, Joris Ivens finally decided to change his original plans for the film. In the end, Joris Ivens decided to make a documentary about the strike and the Black Armada's actions supporting Indonesian independence.

The process of making the film *Indonesia Calling* was different from his work, making Joris Ivens disguise his identity and role during the making process. In addition, Joris Ivens also did not use his salary as *Filmcommissaris voor Nederlands-Indië* (Commissioner of the Netherlands East Indies Film). During filming, Joris Ivens only used an old Kinamo camera that he had used to make the documentary *Regen*, which tells about the phenomenon of rain in Amsterdam in 1929 (Poole, 2017). This limitation was further exacerbated by the refusal of the Eastman Kodak Company to sell the film *Indonesia Calling*. This is because Kodak executives have been secretly informed that Joris Ivens is working on an illegal film that could threaten the national interest of the Netherlands (Poole, 2017).

Despite the limited equipment, the film *Indonesia Calling* was still produced. The film was funded and produced by the Waterfront Unions of Australia. To raise 1.000 Pounds Sterling for the filming of *Indonesia Calling*, most of the funds came from donations from members of the Chinese Seamen's Union and the Chinese Youth League, which has an office in Sydney's Chinatown (Heryanto, 2018). Joris Ivens collaborated with Marion Michelle and Donald Fraser as photographers and Joan Fraser as the film's editor. Joris Ivens involved several Indonesians in his film crew, such as Sendoek, Soedjono, Soendardjo, and Soeparmin (Fathoni, 2021). Some of the film crew are former political prisoners or militant fighters from Indonesia whom the Netherlands exiled in Australia. The narration for the film *Indonesia Calling* was written by Catherine Duncan, an actress, drama scriptwriter, and radio broadcaster in Australia (S.H., 1945). The cast in this film comes from members of labour unions who play a role in volunteering, such as the Indonesian Seamen's Union, Seamen's Union of Australia, Chinese Seamen's Union, Indian Seamen's Union, and Malayan Merchant Navy Association.

As a Commissioner of the Netherlands East Indies Film (*Filmcommissaris voor Nederlands-Indië*), Joris Ivens should not be too involved in directing the film. Therefore, most of the shooting was done by Marion Michelle, who is her lover Joris Ivens (Schoots, 1995). With the help of his small crew, Joris Ivens started the production of the film *Indonesia Calling* by recording the departure of the *Esperance Bay Ship* from Sydney Bay to Surabaya. The ship was carrying about 1,400 Indonesians who would arrive at the Port of Tanjung Perak, which at that time was the only port in Java controlled by the troops of the *Tentara Republik Indonesia (TRI)* (Schoots, 1995). This recording is also the opening scene in the film *Indonesia Calling*.

During the filming process of *Indonesia Calling*, Joris Ivens continued to serve as the Commissioner of the Netherlands East Indies Film (*Filmcommissaris voor Nederlands-Indië*). Even so, Joris Ivens realised that the *Militaire Inlichtingen-en Veiligheidsdienst* (Netherlands Espionage Agency) was always watching his every move and wiretapped. Therefore, Joris Ivens always feels threatened with arrest and deportation in every activity he carries out (Rezwana, 2017). To avoid government scrutiny, Joris Ivens lives on the run. However, living on the run hurt his health. Joris Ivens was diagnosed with chronic bronchitis and constant asthma attacks that came his way. On November 21, 1945, after most of the *Indonesia Calling* film footage had been taken, Joris Ivens resigned as Commissioner of the Netherlands East Indies Film. In his resignation, Joris Ivens condemned the actions of the Netherlands government in Indonesia. After resigning, Joris Ivens was accused of using Netherlands equipment and funds to make an illegal documentary (*Indonesia Calling*), but the accusation was never proven (Schoots, 1995).

After the filming and filming process was completed, Indonesia Calling was first screened at the Newsreel Theatre in the Kings Cross settlement on August 9, 1946 (Langen, 2020). In order to avoid being banned and arrested by the Netherlands government, this film was screened without crediting the creator. For a week, the film was screened three times a day at the office of the Indonesian Seamen's Union (Schoots, 1995). However, the Australian Classification Board denied the film an export license due to its anti-Netherlands narrative. Australia's Member of Parliament, Harold Holt, insisted on immediately banning the film due to its perceived anti-Netherlands propaganda, which was feared to have the potential to harm Australia's diplomatic ties with the Netherlands. However, the film was finally successfully exported in December 1946 after the Prime Minister of Australia, Ben Chifley, stated that the film Indonesia Calling had nothing to do with the Australian government and that the Australian government was not responsible for the film (Cottle & Keys, 2009).

In the end, the film Indonesia Calling was successfully disseminated and watched by the international community. After the filming of Indonesia Calling, controversy immediately arose. The Netherlands government gave a negative response to the film Indonesia Calling. Joris Ivens was considered to have violated his duty to make a documentary depicting the reconstruction of the Netherlands East Indies in Indonesia, and Joris Ivens was officially declared a traitor by the Head of the Netherlands Press, Alfred Schuurman (Rezwana, 2017). The film Indonesia Calling was banned from being widely shown, and this ban continued to be supported by the Netherlands Government until 1950 (Schoots, 1995). Despite being banned by the Dutch government, the film Indonesia Calling still spread to various countries worldwide and attracted the sympathy of other countries to support Indonesian independence.

3.3 Black Armada incident in a scene from the documentary film Indonesia Calling

The film Indonesia Calling begins with a scene showing footage of 1,400 Indonesians returning to Surabaya on the Esperance Bay ship (Schoots, 1995). Before the ship departed, Eliot Valens Elliott, the leader of the Seamen's Union of Australia, gave the Indonesia flag to representatives of labour workers from Indonesia on behalf of the Australian labour union. This is a symbol of support from labour unions in Australia for Indonesian independence. The representatives of Indonesian workers expressed their gratitude for the support from the Australian labour union. Through this scene, it can be seen that there is a good relationship between Indonesian workers and other workers in Australia. This relationship has never been revealed in Indonesian history, but Joris Ivens managed to present it in the film Indonesia Calling (Fathoni, 2021).



Figure 3. Eliot Valens Elliott gave an Indonesian flag to the Indonesian Seamen's Union as a form of the Seamen's Union of Australia's support for Indonesian independence.

Source: Documentary Film Indonesia Calling.

In the next scene, it is said that Australians have known Indonesian people who have worked in Australia for a long time. The two sides have a harmonious and tolerant relationship despite having different cultures and languages. Australians saw sailors and shipwrights in Indonesia as comrades in arms because they were equally hostile to Japan. Even though they live far from Indonesia, the labour workers from Indonesia always think about Indonesian Independence. Joris Ivens highlighted that the desire for independence is demonstrated by the Indonesian population within Indonesia and the Indonesian community residing in Australia. They did not hesitate to voice their support for Indonesian independence on the streets of Sydney City (Fathoni, 2021).



Figure 4. Indonesian workers are voicing their voices about Indonesian independence on the streets of Sydney City.

Source: Documentary Film Indonesia Calling.

Joris Ivens also described a revealing scene related to 72 million people of Indonesia who live in an archipelago with abundant natural resources but live under colonisation and exploitation by the Netherlands. Using Indonesia's rich natural resources, the Netherlands colonial government could generate profits of 32 million Pounds Sterling or 100 million dollars annually. This number was huge at the time. After World War II ended, the Netherlands again tried to take advantage of Indonesia's natural resources. Therefore, the Netherlands needed transport ships and warships from Australian ports. The film *Indonesia Calling* enters the story's core when it is explained that the Netherlands warship and the Netherlands transport ship in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney (Australia) are preparing to return to Indonesia to regain control of their colony. Thus, Joris Ivens revealed that the real reason for the Netherlands to return to Indonesia to support Indonesian independence is not entirely valid. However, the real reason for the Netherlands is to control and utilise Indonesia's natural resources (Fathoni, 2021).

However, the labour workers from Indonesia refused to help the Netherlands transport logistics and weapons. They did not want to be involved in the transportation of weapons that would be used against their people. Therefore, an action known as the Black Armada began, marked by labour workers from Indonesia

leaving ships and docks in Australia. They then met with workers from various other countries and told them the reasons for the strike of labour workers from Indonesia. Labour workers from Australia, India, and China then followed this action. This event shows that even though they are in a foreign country and come from different nationalities, solidarity among the workers remains strong (Schoots, 1995). They adhered to the principles of the Atlantic Charter, which stated that every nation was entitled to independence and support for the Black Armada, which was growing in Australia.



Figure 5. The labourers in Australia called for a Black Armada action in Sydney City by upholding the principles of the Atlantic Charter.
Source: Documentary Film *Indonesia Calling*.

The extensive action of the Black Armada in Australia prompted the Netherlands to counter the attack by asserting that their vessels were humanitarian, transporting essential supplies such as medicine and food. However, it was later revealed that these ships were laden with weapons and ammunition, inadvertently fuelling the escalation of the Black Armada's activities in Australia. Ship workers strike at the port, and ship repair engineers and transport drivers are in charge of transporting goods to the port. An exciting scene in the film *Indonesia Calling* is the action of the Black Armada, followed by 11 crew members of the United Kingdom Moreton Bay, which is part of the Allied bloc and a friendly country of the Netherlands. Support also came from Harry Bridges, the president of the American Longshoreman's Union (Schoots, 1995).

The support from various parties received by Indonesian labour workers shows that even though Indonesia is at war with the Netherlands, their solidarity as fellow workers is not broken. Meanwhile, Max Sekantu and Tukliwon continued to record Netherlands ships that did not depart from Australian ports at the Indonesian Seamen's Union Office. They tried to prevent any ship from escaping Australian ports. Therefore, when there was a Netherlands Swarten Ship brought by an Indian captain to Indonesia carrying weapons and ammunition belonging to the Netherlands, the Indonesian shipwrights immediately chased after him. The scene was theatrical; the Indonesian shipwright tried to ask the Indian captain to stop the Netherlands' Swarten Ship for solidarity among the nation (Fathoni, 2021). The effort was successful; the captain from India turned off the engine of the Swarten Ship in

the middle of the Australian ocean. The captain of the Swarten Ship from India returned to Sydney port using a small boat.



Figure 6. The labourers in Australia prevented the departure of the Dutch Ship Swarten, which carried weapons and ammunition to recolonise Indonesian territory.

Source: Documentary Film Indonesia Calling.

At the end of the film, a scene affirms the commitment to uphold the Atlantic Charter. The workers who gave speeches expressed the importance of unity in the fight against imperialism. In addition, a scene showed great support from Chinese sailors with a donation of 1.100 Pounds Sterling. Sun Yat Sen greatly influenced Chinese sailors at that time and emphasised the importance of supporting oppressed nations in an effort to achieve independence for their own nation (Schoots, 1995). The film ends with the workers marching, while an orator states that the ships that did not sail were an effort by the workers to maintain the life of the newly independent republic of Indonesia. The spirit of Indonesian nationalism is increasingly felt in this film, especially after the song Indonesia Raya is sung at the closing of the last scene (Rezwana, 2017).



Figure 7. The solidarity of workers in Australia from Indonesia, Australia, China, India and the Malay Peninsula continues to support Indonesian independence through the Black Armada action.

Source: Documentary Film Indonesia Calling.

4. Conclusion

On September 24, 1945, an event known as the Black Armada occurred in Australia. This event was a ship embargo action involving ships belonging to the Netherlands that docked at the Ports of Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, and Fremantle. The embargo action was carried out as a form of Australia's support for Indonesian Independence, which had just been proclaimed. Due to this embargo, 559 Netherlands ships in Australia cannot continue their journey to Indonesia. The action received support from various labour unions, such as the Indonesian Seamen's Union, Seamen's Union of Australia, Chinese Seamen's Union, Indian Seamen's Union, and the Malayan Merchant Navy Association. This event was triggered by suspicions that Netherlands ships were carrying weapons to reoccupy its colonies in Indonesia after the proclamation of Indonesian independence. The Black Armada action has been concrete evidence of Australia's support for Indonesian independence in 1945. The Black Armada event was immortalised through a documentary film titled *Indonesia Calling*.

The film *Indonesia Calling* is a short documentary originating in Australia in 1946. The film was directed by Joris Ivens and produced by The Waterfront Unions of Australia. This film tells the story of solidarity between workers from various countries who support Indonesia's right to determine their destiny. This film shows the rejection carried out by the workers in Sydney against Netherlands ships carrying weapons and ammunition to suppress the Indonesian independence movement after World War II. Thus, the film *Indonesia Calling* became a work that raised important issues regarding independence and the rights of the Indonesian people through the Black Armada incident. Through his film, Joris Ivens effectively communicated the ideals of solidarity and freedom that the people of Indonesia cherished during that period. The film *Indonesia Calling* provides a new perspective on Indonesian independence after 1945, which shows the support of Australian citizens and other citizens in the struggle for Indonesian independence.

The research results have theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research can develop an understanding of Australia's response to Indonesia's declaration of independence through the Black Armada event documented in the *Indonesia Calling* documentary film. The film *Indonesia Calling* is an educational tool to foster a sense of nationalism and solidarity towards the current generation, both within school and in the community. So far, Indonesian historiography has often overlooked the film *Indonesia Calling* and the actions of Indonesian citizens abroad. However, if examined more deeply, both played a significant role in achieving and maintaining Indonesian independence. With the Indonesian historiography narrative tending to be militaristic and focused on the elite, the role of labour in the film *Indonesia Calling* is quickly forgotten. As a result, the current generation knows little about the movement of Indonesian labour workers in Australia, trying to prevent the departure of Dutch warships in reclaiming their colonial territories. Therefore, it is time to break the tradition of writing history to present a more comprehensive and honest history.

In this research process, some limitations need to be considered. The research sources used are dominated by the *Black Armada Book* (Rupert Lockwood, 1975),

Living Dangerously: A Biography of Joris Ivens Book (Hans Schoots, 1995), and newspaper archives from the National Archives of Australia website. Therefore, the results of this study should be used as comparative material to enrich more complex research. Thus, the mistakes that may have occurred in this study can be corrected, and the understanding of the history of Indonesia's Independence can be expanded.

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