

MOLLY BONDAN : 1912 – 1990

Molly Bondan, one of the most effective, but modest and unobtrusive, foreigners who worked in support of the Indonesian revolution and later to help realize its promises, died in Jakarta, following a two-year ordeal with cancer, on January 6, 1990. A model of selfless devotion to Indonesia's welfare and disciplined hard work on its behalf, she never completely lost the idealism that sustained her even in the period of disappointment that set in for her within a decade of the country's independence.

Though later naturalized an Indonesian citizen, Molly was born Mary Alitheia Warner on January 9, 1912 in Auckland, New Zealand. Her father, Edward Warner, and her mother, Maud Martin, and emigrated to Australia and New Zealand from England. Molly's parents were both active in the Theosophical Society, and she graduated from an experimental high school in Australia connected with that organization in 1928. She then went to work in the office of her father, a designer and illustrator of catalogues and posters, who was at the same time a fine painter and etcher of Australian bush and rural society. She subsequently held a variety of mostly clerical jobs, ending up as a company secretary.

But this rather quiet and uneventful life was fundamentally changed by Indonesia's revolution. Her interest in Indonesia had already been kindled by her sympathy with the plight of Indonesian nationalists interned in Australia during the war. When the Australian government finally released them from detention in the fall of 1945, these Indonesians promptly established Cenkim, the Central Committee for Indonesian Independence, on September 22, 1945. Molly volunteered to work with the Committee's Brisbane office, and there met its principal officer, Mohamad Bondan, whom she married a year later. Bondan, a gentle, soft-spoken, but dedicated nationalist from West Java, was a friend and follower of Mohammad Hatta and had been arrested by the Dutch in 1933, two years later being sent, together with Hatta, to the notorious concentration camp of Tanah Merah in Boven Digul deep in the interior

of western New Guinea. Hatta, along with Sutan Sjahrir, was fortunate enough to be moved, within a year, to the much healthier climate of Banda, but Bondan was among those obliged to stay on in this fever-ridden, physically debilitating camp for a full eight years. In mid-1943, in the face of the penetration of the Japanese forces into the interior of New Guinea the Dutch, fearing that some of the bitter Indonesian nationalists at Boven Digul might cooperate with the Japanese, moved them to Australia. Succeeded him as English speech writer for President Sukarno until his ouster from power in early 1966. In that capacity she conscientiously strove to translate Sukarno's ideas into English as clearly as possible, rendering them with fine nuance and great accuracy. She continued in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until she reached pensioned retirement in 1968.

But Molly's retirement was pro forma. She continued to work as hard as ever, launching with Bondan's help a monthly series – *Indonesian Current Affairs Translation Service Bulletin*, which she typed and stenciled herself. This English Language coverage of judiciously selected highlights from Indonesian periodicals was sufficiently valuable to be subscribed to by numerous libraries scattered around the world. The Bulletin was published from 1968 to 1976, when Bondan's deteriorating health obliged them to give up this work. Molly continued with ad hoc assignment from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Information, in the process editing several books on the arts of Indonesia of which perhaps the most attractive was one, with her text, highlighting an especially beautiful collection of colored photographs of Javanese temples, Candi in Central Java, Indonesia, published by the provincial government of Central Java in 1982. Her last major assignment with the government commenced in 1988 when she helped organize exhibits for the "Festival of Indonesia" She had hoped it might be possible for her to visit the United States for the festival's opening in Washington in September of this year.

During Bondan's last years, Molly spent much of her time helping him write his biography, and when he died on February 6, 1981, she continued this work. Though many of Molly's fiends urged her to write her own biography she remained

adamant in insisting this would have to wait until after she completed Bondan's. this she managed to accomplish only in the last days before her death, and it will be up to some of her many friends to undertake the story of her own life.