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# MAN BETWEEN TWO CAMPS

A Profile of Dr. H. J. van Mook from the London "Observer"

**H**AS it ever happened in history that a statesman, in working at the solution of a great political problem, was dealing with the fundamental problem of his own personal life? If not, the present situation of Dr. Hubertus Johannes van Mook, the Dutch Lieutenant-Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies, will become the classical example of it.

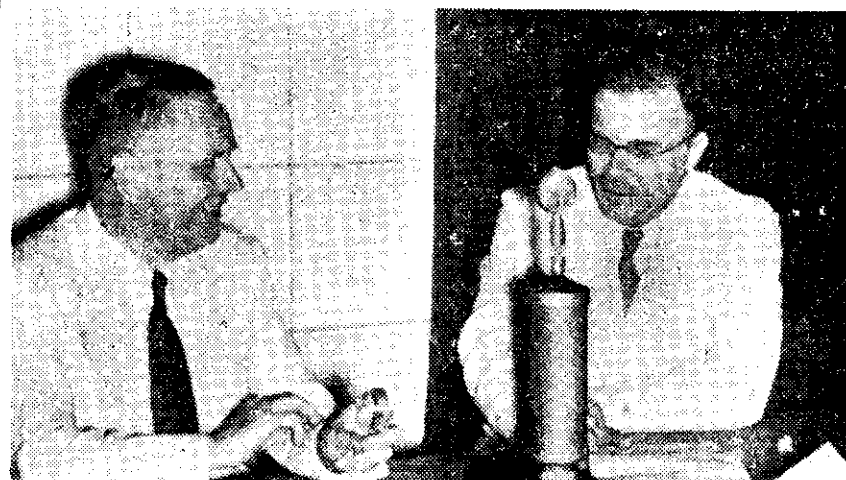
The dispute about the future of Indonesia has for a considerable time held the attention of the world. And in the centre, the storm centre, of that dispute itself, stands the solid figure of van Mook.

His is not only the supreme responsibility; his is the decisive initiative. He fought and won one battle when, as the advocate of Indonesian freedom, he

and deed all his life—often side by side with men whom he to-day faces across the table.

SOME of his political enemies have even spread the tale that he has himself Indonesian blood in his veins. This is a legend—but a legend of some significance. Though he comes from old Dutch peasant and soldier stock (his great-grandfather was a soldier in Napoleon's armies), he was born and bred in Java; he loves that country, its people (among whom are many of his closest friends), and its customs. He has never long been out of it; its progress and fuller development has been the one great cause to which his life has been devoted.

Naturally, he sees that progress and development inseparably bound up with the Dutch-Indonesian connection—a con-



Dr. H. J. van Mook at the microphone during a radio interview with the High Commissioner for the Netherlands East Indies, P. A. Kerstens

wrested the 15-point plan, with its wide liberal concessions, from a reluctant Dutch Parliament. He then entered a second battle in trying, as the advocate of Imperial unity, to make the Indonesian leaders renounce their more extreme secessionist ambitions.

It is he, and almost he alone, on whom at present the peace, continuity, and coherence of a great Commonwealth depends. He fights his two-front war for it—against diehards in Holland and extremists in Java—with the passion and tenacity of a man fighting for his life. And, as was said in the beginning, in a sense, he is fighting for his life.

For he is not just a Dutch politician or official who happens to be concerned with colonial affairs, and is doing his cold duty. He is himself as much an Indonesian as a Dutchman. He is a man of two worlds, and if the two break apart, he will himself be torn asunder to the very roots of his being.

For him the new liberties which he is offering the Indonesians are not just "concessions," reluctantly made under the pressure of an emergency. They are aims for which he has fought in word

and a personality, is the living embodiment.

It is, perhaps, only slightly exaggerated to say that he has always been a Dutchman to Indonesians, and an Indonesian (of Dutch blood) to Dutchmen. At any rate, he has always been the exponent of the progressive commonwealth idea, both against the old colonial diehard school in The Hague and the romantic native nationalism at Batavia. In a sense the two-front battle which he is now waging is the culmination as well as the supreme crisis of his life.

**H**E was born at Semarang, in Java, in 1894. Both his father and his mother were Dutch schoolteachers who had gone to Java as educational pioneers; his wife is also the child of a schoolteacher, and the educational vein is very strong in van Mook; but he has never been a teacher himself.

He received his education, and his first lasting impressions at the secondary school at Surabaya, where he had as schoolmates both the sons of Dutch