From Occupier to Occupied: War, Resistance, and the Future of the Dutch Empire

by

Jennifer L. Foray

This talk will explore how the experiences of World War II shaped and transformed Dutch perceptions of their centuries-old empire. Focusing on the work of leading anti-Nazi resisters, Jennifer L. Foray examines how the war forced a rethinking of colonial practices and relationships. As Dutch resisters planned for a postwar world bearing little resemblance to that of 1940, they envisioned a wide range of possibilities for their empire and its territories, anticipating a newly harmonious relationship between the Netherlands and its most prized colony in the East Indies. Though most of the underground writers and thinkers discussed in this book ultimately supported the idea of a Dutch commonwealth, this structure wouldn't come to pass in the postwar period. The Netherlands instead embarked on a violent decolonization process brought about by wartime conditions in the Netherlands and the East Indies.

Jennifer L. Foray has a Ph.D. from Columbia University in New York, where she studied under István Deák and Volker Berghahn. She joined the faculty of Purdue University in the fall of 2006, and since then, has completed research fellowships at both the Remarque Institute of New York University and the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Her present work explores the intersections of war, imperialism, and decolonization in Europe, with particular emphasis upon the Dutch case. In addition, she has written about the role of the German Wehrmacht in the occupied Netherlands; the historical relevance of the diary of Anne Frank; and the global designs of the Dutch Nazi Party. Her talk today is based upon her recent book, entitled Visions of Empire in the Nazi-Occupied Netherlands, published by Cambridge University Press.