
After Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, a government in exile was established in London which was still the responsible ruler of colonies in the East and West Indies. Soon in the Netherlands a discussion started about the position of these colonies in the raging World War and in the post-war world, however uncertain its constellation would be.

At first, attention to the colonies was marginal, compared with the day-to-day issues of occupation and resistance. The collaborationist Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (NSB), always a strong proponent of the Dutch empire, whose perspective can be summed up as ‘Indies lost, disaster born’, stuck to this position after May 1940. The German authorities did not have a clear-cut policy in this respect, and did not seem to be interested in developing one. The NSB position was similar to that of the Nederlandsche Unie, which looked for an accommodation with the Germans, until it was banned at the end of 1941. A lot of attention was paid to the glorious past of the Indies colonial project, and the indelible bond was emphasized between the Dutch and the Indonesians. But the underground press became the main forum for war and post-war issues, and featured discussions of the colonial relationship. The most important newspapers were the leftist *Vrij Nederland* and *Parool*, the communist *Waarheid*, the Calvinist *Trouw* and *je Maintiendrai*, which included many former Nederlandsche Unie members. The Japanese occupation of the Indies came as a shock. Now not only the motherland but also the colony was occupied—a worst-case scenario compared to other colonial powers. Before the Japanese occupation, the London government had already issued some statements that opened a road to more Indonesian autonomy and the prospect of a dominion relation was vaguely broached. In this respect much was made of Queen Wilhelmina’s radio speech of 7 December 1942, but this contained probably more a symbolic than a concrete proposal. Its contents, however, contradicted actual Dutch policy in the Indies until 1942. Indonesian nationalists’ overtures met there with refusals or diversionary tactics. For the occupied Dutch, information on developments in and on the Indies was almost completely absent. This did not prevent the press from discussing, in ever more detail, the future relationship of the Indies and the Netherlands.
Apart from Trouw, which did not see the necessity to set up a new structure, all newspapers supported a new political relation in which, within a dominion relationship, there would be, to varying degrees, room for autonomy for Indonesia. The Dutch had as its foremost task the liberation of Indonesia from Japanese oppression. It was taken for granted that the bond between the Netherlands and Indonesia would be continued as the expressed will of the overwhelming majority of the Indonesian people. This opinion was shared by the Indonesians in the Netherlands, organized in the Perhimpoenan Indonesia, who joined the resistance, and thus amassed enough goodwill that Setiadjit, its most prominent representative, was nominated to sit in important resistance commissions. In such a committee on Indonesia he supported the lofty ideals about the new relationship, together with all the underground papers, including, surprisingly Trouw, as issued in a declaration of May 1945. It was all of no avail, when Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945. However, war-time ideas and ideals had their influence on the chaotic course of events in Indonesia.

A systematic treatment of the ‘visions of empire’ during the German occupation has not been written before. This book by Jennifer Foray, a scholar from Indiana, offers it at last. In great detail and systematically she narrates and analyses the evolution of opinion among the resistance, aptly situated within the general developments during the occupation. As such it is a very useful addition to the knowledge about events during the World War, which tended to be forgotten after the turmoil and violence of the Indonesian decolonization unfurled.

It is a pity that the author or editors of this rather excessively priced book have not taken the trouble to check the Dutch usage with a native speaker. As it stands, several hundred easily avoidable small errors mar this volume.

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