'The Eurasian Question' : the colonial position and postcolonial options of colonial mixed ancestry groups from British India, Dutch East Indies and French Indochina compared

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9 Formal political decolonisation and the 'pull' of the mother country

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the formal conditions of independence, upon which the former colonial authorities and new rulers agreed during gatherings held for that purpose in each of the three colonial contexts: the Round Table Conferences in British India in the years 1930-1932, the Round Table Conference in the Dutch East Indies in the autumn of 1949, and the conference in Geneva in 1955 which ended the Franco-Indochinese conflict, otherwise known as First Indochina War. This chapter also describes the 'pull' factors of the European mother countries and other countries of destination the Eurasians migrated to. The former colonisers put safeguards in place to protect to Eurasians populations, as well as to stop them from migrating to the mother country.

9.2 India: Generous constitutional safeguards and British betrayal

On the night of 15 August 1947, India became independent. Although initially not much changed for the Anglo-Indians, the end of British rule came for many Anglo-Indians as a shock. Anglo-Indians were called upon to decide where their loyalties lay and what their identity was. Anglo-Indians in 'Plain Tales from the Raj', written by Allen, remembered: 'It was the end of our world [...]. Now we did not know where we were, whether we were Indians or British people or what.'[1] If they had not registered for British citizenship, they automatically became Indian citizens upon independence. They did not have to make a choice. According to an earlier Government of India Act, they were statutorily natives, which amongst other things meant that they could apply for the same jobs as natives.[2]

Since the Anglo-Indian community was recognised as one of the six minority groups within the Constitution, the community was represented by its nominated members of the Central Legislature in the various state assemblies. Out of the series of Round Table Conferences during the years 1930-1932, the Government of India Act came into being in 1935, the predecessor of the constitution of an independent India. The constitutional safeguards for Anglo-Indians started from the moment India's constitution was officially implemented on 26 January 1950.[3] The reservations for Anglo-Indians for particular jobs in the railways, customs, post and telegraph departments would last for 10 years after the date of implementation. The number of reserved jobs

for Anglo-Indians would gradually decrease every year and would end in the early 1960s. Another constitutional safeguard, the grants for English language education, would also stop at that time. Except for these job reservations and educational grants the other constitutional safeguard of political representation is still in place today. The Anglo-Indians still have two representatives in the Indian Parliament, the *Lok Sabha*, and in several state assemblies.[4] Furthermore, there are still European schools (formerly known as Anglo-Indian schools) in India that use English as the main language of instruction. Non-Anglo-Indian children increasingly attended these schools after independence. According to an article in the *Manchester Guardian* of April 1955, these privileges were nothing more than what the Anglo-Indians deserved since 'India owes them much'. Furthermore, the author wrote that:

> [...] they are used to doing all those jobs that the British and the upper caste Hindus deemed below their dignity and without their technical knowledge successful independence might have been more difficult.[5]

The British authorities disappointed the Anglo-Indians. Just before formal independence the British Cabinet mission visited the Indian subcontinent to make final preparations for Indian independence. The actual job of the Cabinet Mission was to arrange India's orderly transfer to independence. The mission set up an appropriate consultative office to decide upon the Indian postcolonial constitution.[6] This mission made clear that they would not give the Anglo-Indian community a seat in the interim Indian government. Anglo-Indians felt this to be unfair since the Parsis, a smaller community in numbers than the Anglo-Indians, did acquire a seat in the provisional government. It was said that the Anglo-Indians were numerically four times stronger than the Parsis, and that 'the moral for Anglo-Indians would appear to be that it is only when we begin to acquire a nuisance value that we will secure our rights.'[7] This statement also refers to the sentiment of deprivation among Anglo-Indians, which had built up since the end of the eighteenth century when the first measures were taken to limit their opportunities. Representatives of the British had expressed their sympathy with the fate of the Anglo-Indians, most notably the former minister of foreign affairs Austen Chamberlain, who stated: 'I do feel that for this particular community we have perhaps, a more direct, a deeper moral responsibility than for any other section of the Indian people.'[8] Despite these supportive statements, the leader of the AIAIA, Frank Anthony stated in 1947 that the Indian Congress was more willing to give the Anglo-Indians a voice and their rightful place in society than the British were:

> While the British administration, which owes an invaluable debt to the Anglo-Indian community, insists on excluding us from the Central Government, Congress, who had a good reason to maintain that Anglo-Indians in serving the British administration had been anti-Congress, made every effort to give Anglo-Indians their proper place in the Government of the country.[9]

As a response to this 'betrayal', Anglo-Indians resigned from all voluntary services that were in any way related or beneficial to the British Indian government. Thus, they no longer provided any assistance or contributed to charitable services set up by the British government.[10] As said, about 50,000 Anglo-Indians migrated to Britain

in the 1940s and 1950s. The most important reasons for doing so were fears that decolonisation would lead to large-scale unemployment, discrimination and exclusion. In addition, the idea that their children would have fewer opportunities in independent India was an important reason for migration.[11] It was not easy for these people to move to the UK. They needed to give guarantees about their financial independence in the country of destination to the Indian government when they were domiciled in India. The government of India considered it its responsibility to repatriate them to India in the event of their getting into financial difficulties abroad. This was a remarkable viewpoint from the newly independent rulers, certainly in contrast with the new rulers in the other two former colonies in this study who acted very differently.[12]

Because most Anglo-Indians automatically became Indian citizens, the British authorities did not feel legally responsible for these people anymore. To register for British citizenship under the British Nationality Act of 1948, formal proof of British paternal ancestry was needed. Furthermore, those born out of wedlock were excluded. The deadline was 31 December 1949, which was meant to give the applicants time to provide evidence of a paternal ancestor who had been born in the UK or its colonies.[13] The time-span was very short and many Anglo-Indians did not manage to collect the evidence in time.

This 1948 Nationality Act was aimed at strengthening Britain's relations with its colonies and former colonies within the Commonwealth by creating migration and settlement rights for all subjects of these territories, irrespective of their colour. Colonial and Commonwealth subjects were British citizens by law and therefore Anglo-Indians could be viewed as internal migrants, or as legal British citizens moving within the empire or the commonwealth.[14] British officials who judged the applications received instructions that the requirements of ancestral and formal written proof needed for UK citizenship might be relaxed 'in the event of an obviously British-rooted family'.[15] In debateable cases the final decision depended to a large degree 'on the skin colour of an applicant or a genealogy in the family bible.' Even 'properly attested hearsay tradition' was acceptable according to these guidelines for the British officials.[16] Despite these more lenient quotes, the bureaucratic obstacles for Anglo-Indians who wanted to migrate to the UK were immense. It was obviously an important reason to postpone departure or to stay in India. For example, a number of Anglo-Indians from the artisan class were technically eligible for entry into the UK because their father or grandfather had been a British soldier, but they could not provide enough formal written evidence to convince the British authorities.[17]

The Anglo-Indians not only needed to provide formal proof, but they also needed money to travel to agencies in Delhi, which arranged their departure. They did not need to have British citizenship before departure. The Anglo-Indians could apply for that after living for one year in the UK. The fact that racial classification was in the criteria for admission was kept secret by the government. Nothing was said about it in the explanatory note that accompanied the formal criteria. The racial classification criteria were rooted in the racial hierarchies of the colonial period. Anglo-Indians needed to emphasise their whiteness in order to convince authorities to grant them visas. Authorities used the racial classification to judge requests of Anglo-Indians. The criteria were meant to give British people priority in the event of an emergency because

British authorities feared that the UK might be swamped by Anglo-Indians.[18] It was estimated that two million Anglo-Indians would be able to prove British origin on the parental side. Anglo-Indians appealed to the Society of Genealogists in London to help them find their British ancestors, and they wrote distant relatives to collect information from old church registers. Making the deadline proved difficult for most.[19] Furthermore, although many Anglo-Indians were uncertain about their future, the leaders of the All India Anglo-Indian Association (AIAIA) remained convinced that the best future for Anglo-Indians was in India and not in the UK.[20]

Invisible immigrants

The British government did not encourage the Eurasian migration to the UK partly because of the arrival of other colonial migrants in the UK at the time.[21] The Anglo-Indians arrived in a country which also received in the late 1940s and the 1950s, 7000 migrants from the Caribbean, 160,000 Polish ex-service men, 20,000 German ex-prisoners of war, and 80,000 DPs from camps in Europe. The UK furthermore recruited Italian workers because there were shortages in mining, and there were Irish immigrants. The UK encouraged part of its population to leave. Emigrants left with assisted passages to Australia and New Zealand.

The arrival of the 7000 West-Indians between 1948 and 1951 led to much more debates in the UK than the arrival of about 50,000 Anglo-Indians. The arrival of the West-Indians led to riots and protests. The Anglo-Indians were regarded as rather invisible in the UK. They had British surnames and Christian first names, were adherents to the Christian faith, wore Western style clothes, and spoke English. They did not join the larger South Asian population in the UK which has migrated to the UK earlier which mainly consisted of sailors.[22] The Anglo-Indians started to arrive when bread was still rationed, and when there were coal shortages during the very cold winter of 1947-1948. During the war, 4 million houses (a third of the total number of houses) had been destroyed or damaged. From the 1950s onwards, however, the UK experienced economic growth, and a generous welfare and health system was put into place. In the UK some people worried about falling birth rates and they feared labour shortages.[23] Debates started about the British people's ability to absorb 'other peoples'. In most of these debates it was assumed that these immigrants would be white, and from continental Europe rather than from the (former) colonies. The new stock should come from 'European Voluntary Workers', as the Poles were called, rather than from an import of 'Jamaican Unemployed', as the West-Indians were referred to. Overall, most people in Britain knew or cared little about the former colonies or the new Commonwealth countries. A British survey in the 1950s showed that many people in the UK were unable to name one of Britain's (former) colonies.[24]

Until 1962 migrants from the Commonwealth (which included India and Pakistan) could come to the UK as Commonwealth citizens. After 1962, a voucher system was introduced which restricted migration and favoured people with professional and technical qualifications. It severely restricted options for the Anglo-Indians, who were still in India. Anglo-Indians increasingly chose other British Commonwealth countries, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. From the late 1960s onwards, Can-

ada relaxed its restrictive 'whites only' policy. Australia also relaxed its 'whites only' immigration legislation in 1964. A migrant wanting to go to Australia had to show that 'he' was 'by appearance, education, upbringing, outlook, mode of dress and way of living, that he is capable of ready integration into the Australian community'. 'No overriding importance' was attached to the criterium of appearance. The immigrants no longer had to be white.[25]

Despite the fact that many Anglo-Indians initially stayed in independent India, there were also Anglo-Indians who longed for a separate homeland, just like some Indo-Europeans in the Dutch East Indies. The Anglo-Indian advocates of such a homeland, united in the Eurasian Collectivist Party, even proposed a separate state in British New Guinea (the eastern part of which was at that time part of Australia) just like the Indo-Europeans in the Dutch East Indies who attempted to make West New Guinea their homeland.[26] This Eurasian Collectivist Party was only a small group but it had far-reaching ambitions. They themselves proclaimed in their letter paper that they had branches in India, Thailand, Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya, and Indonesia. Furthermore, they stated that they were 'pioneers of scheme for the emigration of the Eurasians of the East to New Guinea', 'Publishers of "Vanguard"', and 'a progressive Eurasian Socialist Party dedicated to the Eurasian people's right to self-determination in an extra-territorial National Homeland of their own.'[27] Despite these grand ideas, the Anglo-Indians never achieved the level of financial state support required for the foundation of even a small settlement.[28]

9.3 Indonesia: Choosing Indonesian citizenship?

The transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands to Indonesia took place on 27 December 1949. The decisive prologue was the Van Roijen-Roem agreement of 7 May 1949 which ended all hostilities between Dutch and Indonesian troops throughout the archipelago. The Dutch returned the whole Sultanate of Djokjakarta (an Indonesian nationalist republican bulwark) to the republican nationalists and the Indonesians agreed to participate in a Round Table Conference (RTC) to prepare for the independence of Indonesia.[29] The Dutch diplomat Van Roijen had been appointed in March 1949 to negotiate with the Indonesians about the conditions of independence. His goal was to maintain Dutch economic interests in the Dutch East Indies. Even on the Indonesian side, he was admired for his 'statesmanlike' performance.[30] Before sovereignty could be transferred, the conditions for independence, including the position of Indo-Europeans in independent Indonesia, had to be negotiated during the RTC in the autumn of 1949. Other topics on which the participants of the conference agreed were education, languages and religious freedom, and the Union Statute, which meant that Indonesia would become part of a sort of Dutch commonwealth or Dutch-Indonesian Union, modelled on the British one. A memorandum of 30 points summarised the interests of the Dutch minority group including the Indo-Europeans. This group present at the RTC was divided and did not speak with one voice. Therefore, due to time pressure not all aspects could be covered during the conference, and this was to the disadvantage of the Indo-Europeans.[31]

In the so-called '*toescheidingsovereenkomst*' (agreement on allocation) of nationalities the representatives of Indonesia and the Netherlands agreed upon an option period of two years. Between December 1949 and December 1951, adult Indo-Europeans who had lived for at least 6 months in Indonesia could choose Indonesian citizenship or retain Dutch citizenship.[32] The Indonesians implemented their *Indonesianisasi* programme in the first months of 1950[33], which meant that Indonesians got preferential treatment when jobs were allocated. Thereupon 30,000 Dutch people left for the Netherlands or another country such as the United States.[34] Many of them were Indo-Europeans. The criteria for Dutch citizenship were strict. Only those Indo-Europeans, who could prove that they descended from a forefather who was Dutch or 'equated with Europeans' before 1 July 1893, were eligible for Dutch citizenship and thus admission to the Netherlands. The people who were equated after that date were not legally Dutch and did not have the right to opt for Dutch citizenship. The group that was eligible for Dutch citizenship consisted of 16,000 people.[35] At the end of the option period in December 1951, only 13,739 heads of household had opted for Indonesian citizenship (approximately 40,000 people when all household members were included). However, at the beginning of 1952, 142,000 Dutch people (including Indo-Europeans and other Europeans) were still living in Indonesia, meaning that many Indo-Europeans had not chosen Indonesian citizenship.[36]

One of the negotiators present at the RTC, the president of the employer's organisation of the civil servants A.F.J. de Rosario, had the impression that the Indonesian delegation had more sympathy for the fate of the Indo-Europeans than the Dutch delegation.[37] Hence, a member of the Indonesian parliament, G. Schmitz, gave pragmatic advice. He stated that for Indo-Europeans who had to choose between Indonesian or Dutch citizenship only three questions mattered: Where does one wish to spend the rest of one's life? Can someone's children live here without adopting Indonesian citizenship? What does one have in mind for their children's future? In his opinion, the answer to the first question would be for many Indo-Europeans 'in Indonesia'. And the answer to the other two questions would be: staying as an alien in Indonesia would be extremely difficult, especially for the next generation.[38] These general answers clearly pointed to the option of staying in Indonesia. The largest private interest organisation of the Indo-Europeans, the IEV, also advocated for choosing Indonesian citizenship and staying. They had made a remarkable switch from the Dutch to the Indonesian side during the immediate post-war years. Yet, from different sides within and outside the Indo-European group, people said that the option period of two years was too short for Indo-Europeans to make this complicated choice. The Dutch government promoted a longer option period as well as the opportunity to reconsider and cancel earlier made choices.[39] As the old commissioner of Medan, H.W.J. Sonius said, choosing Indonesian citizenship meant a step down the social ladder for many Indo-Europeans.[40] They had to sacrifice their ideal of raising their children in a Dutch, western sphere with western education, which would have given them the chance to acquire a decent position in a western business.

In the opinion of Sonius, this was a complicated psychological dilemma, and Indonesians as well as Dutch politicians should give Indo-Europeans more time to make up their minds.[41] Another reason for this was that opting for Indonesian citizenship

felt for them like an act of treason towards the Netherlands. The fact that many had been active in the Dutch military service and had fought against Indonesians, also played a role. Furthermore, having Dutch nationality was for Indo-Europeans one of the few remaining ways to feel superior to Indonesians. When they lost Dutch citizenship, they feared being disfavoured by the Indonesian government. In addition, the memory of the *Bersiap*-period, during which the Indo-Europeans had a particularly difficult time, was still a recent, vivid memory at the beginning of the 1950s. Indo-Europeans feared they would be the first victims of a new 'anti-colonial' campaign.[42] However, the Indonesian government did not want to extend the option period or give an opportunity to reconsider the choice.[43] According to the Indonesians the least valuable and most difficult part of the Indo-European group would probably choose Indonesian citizenship. The better educated and wealthier Indo-Europeans had already departed for the Netherlands or planned to do so.[44]

In 1932, the researcher W.M.F. Mansvelt pointed out that these were critical times for the Indo-European group and that for most of them, except for the highest strata of the group (to which the IEV-board also belonged), a reduction in welfare was imminent.[45] In that respect, the switch of the IEV to the Indonesian side was quite late. Only in the second year after the Japanese occupation did they apparently come to realise that the future lives of Indo-Europeans would be better in Indonesia. From this point on the IEV passionately promoted their new stance through their magazine *Onze Stem* ('Our Voice'). In an article from 31 December 1950, which was about the dilemma of staying or leaving, a clear answer was given: 'on this point we are not in doubt: simply become an Indonesian citizen and courageously start from the beginning.'[46] To support their argument, *Onze Stem* published articles about the negative experiences of Indo-Europeans in the Netherlands. In one of these articles, which appeared in 1953, they quoted a letter of an Indo-European:

> Here follows a quotation from a letter of an Indo, who had departed for the Netherlands without having arranged anything, who ignored all advice, which was given to him to find his future in his country of birth.[47]

In the letter, the Indo-European explained, that he should never have gone to the Netherlands. The factors 'colonial status' and 'class' seem to be decisive for staying in Indonesia. The IEV may have exaggerated when it claimed that all Indo-Europeans experienced a hard time in the Netherlands, but newspapers such as *De Locomotief* and *De Nieuwsgier* also reported the difficult circumstances that Indo-Europeans encountered in the Netherlands. In these articles, Indo-Europeans expressed their regret at migrating to the Netherlands.[48] For many of them, it was difficult to build up a new life and find a suitable job.[49] Despite the effort that the IEV made to advocate their viewpoint, many Indo-Europeans disagreed, and as a result the number of IEV-members dramatically decreased. For example, the IEV-department of Bandung was the largest one in 1947 with 1,500 members. In 1949, only 560 members were left, the others had gone to the Netherlands or cancelled their membership.[50] The IEV-branch 'Groot Batavia' (Large Batavia) publicly announced that it could not agree with the viewpoint of the main board of the IEV.[51]

The majority of the IEV-members had lost trust in the leaders of the organisation.

They increasingly joined associations that encouraged migration to the last remaining Dutch colonial possession of New Guinea as an alternative for migration to the Netherlands. Already in 1951, colonial officials did not consider the IEV as representative for the Indo-Europeans.[52] Despite much resistance from both within and outside the association, the IEV-leaders held firm. For them, Indo-Europeans had to make the best of a bad situation by staying in newly independent Indonesia. Managing to maintain their current economic position would already be a success in itself. Therefore, they published advice for the Indo-European community in *Onze Stem* only a couple of days before the formal transfer of sovereignty in December 1949:

> Do not continue watching passively, waiting and criticising, but accept the inevitable and be pro-active, then, the less pleasant change of our status of [extension of the] old-fashioned colonial [i.e. Dutch] oppressor as active, appreciated and influential minority (in the newly independent Indonesian society) would be bearable.[53]

Dutch government officials expected that most Indo-Europeans would opt for Indonesian citizenship. Therefore, they adopted 'a flexible line of behaviour', as stated by the government in Dutch parliament in 1949, whereby they would accept as Dutch citizens all people who had:

> proof of fulfilment of military service in the Dutch East Indies, membership in pre-war public bodies and the possession of pre-war Dutch passports.[54]

The Dutch introduced this more flexible approach, because it remained difficult for Indo-Europeans to provide proof of Dutch ancestry. One reason for this was that much of the pre-war civil administration was destroyed during the Japanese occupation and the chaotic war after the Japanese capitulation. However, when it became clear that most Eurasians wanted to leave Indonesia, this lenient attitude with regard to who was admitted to the former Dutch mother country changed. The Dutch government sent instructions to Dutch officials in Indonesia saying that the interpretation of the previous guidelines had been too lenient and that stricter controls were necessary to determine who was Dutch and who should be allowed to come to the Netherlands.[55] In 1954, these guidelines were made more lenient again under the influence of the increasing number of requests and public opinion. For example, not having guaranteed housing, maintenance and the possibility to pay back the costs of travel were no longer reasons to turn down the requests, whereas that was certainly the case earlier. Thus, on the one hand, the authorities considered the future interests of the children an important factor in the decision to grant admission, in contrast to the previous criteria in which this was deemed unimportant.[56] On the other hand, the Dutch government was concerned that an exodus of Dutch people (including Indo-Europeans) to the Netherlands would aggravate unemployment and housing shortages. Authorities in the Netherlands felt that the country was overpopulated and encouraged 400,000 Dutch people to emigrate to countries like Canada and Australia and paid for their transport.[57]

This statement about the overpopulation of the Netherlands was also made by the Dutch High Commissioner of Indonesia, A.Th. Lamping. The position of High Commissioner was created especially, in order to let the Dutch hold a privileged place in

the diplomatic sphere in Indonesia. This meant that they could easily arrange matters for the Dutch people who still lived in Indonesia. Three weeks before the end of the option period, in a radio speech broadcast in December 1951, Lamping strongly encouraged Indo-Europeans to opt for Indonesian citizenship (called *Warga Negara*). He declared that the Dutch government considered the choice of Indonesian citizenship by those Dutch 'who were oriented to this country, the most natural solution.' He said that while the choice of nationality was completely personal, individuals should 'not let themselves be moved by sentiments and impulses but rather by common sense and a feeling of responsibility.'[58] Lamping's speech was criticised in an article in the influential colonial newspaper *De Nieuwsgier,* which resented the 'soothing talk about sentiment' and pointed out that 'a strong feeling of nationality was always a question of sentiment' and that if this feeling had not been present among the Indo-Europeans, their 'whole attitude during the past 50 years would have been impossible.'[59] The article stressed the sudden reversal of nationality, which was for Indo-Europeans at that moment according to the article's reporter 'still a bit more than a birth right which one could swap casually for a pot of lentils.'[60] It was the responsibility of the Dutch colonial system that brought most Indo-Europeans Dutch nationality. Dutch nationality had been an important privilege in the colonial period, but had become an unbearable burden after decolonisation.

Whereas the IEV passionately defended choosing Indonesian citizenship and encouraging people to stay, another organisation with many Indo-Europeans among its members, the *Bond van Oud-Steurtjes* (the league of old pupils of the Oranje Nassau institution of Johannes van der Steur) was neutral in its viewpoint. The magazine of this organisation (*de Bode*) only stressed its

> good advice for all those who are laden with worries: Do not let these worries overwhelm you, maintain your self-confidence, don't let yourself be guided by the infamous inferiority complex, which is so often imputed to Indos (Indo-Europeans).[61]

Among the most important reasons for choosing Indonesian citizenship and staying in Indonesia was the hope for a prosperous economic future. Indo-Europeans cited the natural riches of Indonesia and its need for trained personnel as reasons for staying.[62] Furthermore, they knew nothing about the situation in the Netherlands. Would they have a good future there? They knew that many Dutch people were preparing for emigration to the United States, Australia, New Zealand or Canada. This enforced the idea that there was no place for them in the Netherlands.[63] Many Indo-Europeans were still thinking in colonial terms. They simply could not believe that the Indonesians could develop their country themselves, so they felt they had to stay to help them build up their country. The opportunities for Indo-Europeans in Indonesia would be greater if they became Indonesian citizens than if they kept their Dutch nationality, because they would be a 'foreigner'. Only those who had chosen Indonesian citizenship would be able to continue working in the Indonesian governmental services on a permanent basis or to transfer from the Royal Dutch Indies Army to the Indonesian armed forces.[64]

To a country in ruins

Dutch authorities in the late 1940s, felt that the Netherlands, with a population of 10 million, was overpopulated. They therefore encouraged and financed the emigration of 400,000 Dutch people, mostly to Australia and Canada.[65] Authorities tried to discourage the arrival of Indo-Europeans, and from what the Indo-Europeans could read in newspapers prospects in the Netherlands were not attractive. The Indo-Europeans came to the Netherlands when the country was recovering from a war in which 230,000 to 330,000 people died. There was 26 billion guilders in damages, the country had been looted, and many Dutch had suffered hardship.[66] There were food and housing shortages, and a return of the pre-war unemployment was feared.

The articles in newspapers, the speeches, television programmes and publications of the Indo-European lobby emphasised that the Indo-Europeans were part of Dutch society. Indo-Europeans should be allowed to come to the Netherlands if they were regarded as sufficiently 'Dutch by appearance'.[67] The Indo-Europeans, who did move to the Netherlands, had what Gert Oostindie coined as a 'post-colonial bonus'.[68] They had Dutch nationality, spoke Dutch, grew up in the same school system, and knew the culture of the mother country. There was however also, according to Charlotte Laarman, a post-colonial malus.[69] This means that the negative stereotypes that were developed in the colonial context did affect the Indo-Europeans in the Netherlands. Since they were born and raised in the tropics, they were presumed to be 'eastern' in orientation. Dutch policy makers used words like 'indolent' and 'lethargic' to describe the group. They designed assimilation policies in order to adapt the 'repatriates' to Dutch society. The children were send to adjustment classes, and the women to cooking classes, where they were taught frugality. They were told not to waste fuel, they were taught how to manage a household without staff, and how to cook Dutch style.[70] The Indo-Europeans were depicted as physically frail and vulnerable, and unable to deal with the cold Dutch weather. The military base Budel was transformed into a camp in which 9500 of the 'repatriates' we housed, albeit not all at the same time. After the camp experience of many Indo-Europeans under Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies, this was not an attractive foresight.[71]

Dutch authorities hoped that 50,000 people from the Dutch East Indies, would be willing to move to the Dutch colony Surinam. The plan failed because the Indo-Europeans were not interested.[72] A plan for migration to the US had more success.[73] The US had put pressure on the Netherlands to end its colonial regime in the Dutch East Indies, because the USSR equated (neo-)colonialism with capitalism. In the contemporary cold war context, the USSR sought to convince countries on the brink of independence to seek help from the USSR rather than from the US.[74] The Dutch put pressure on the US to take some of the repatriates because the US had pushed for Indonesia's independence. In 1953, the US introduced its Refugee Act. The US quota system, which was introduced in the 1920s, only allowed 1648 Dutch people to migrate to the US annually. The Refugee Act made 1700 extra visa available. Under the Pastore-Walter Act I and II (respectively introduced in 1958 and 1960) another 9000 extra visa were made available to the Dutch refugees. Since visas were made available to entire families the number of people able to migrate was much larger than the above mentioned num-

ber of visa. The Indo-Europeans used these possibilities. They had to migrate to the Netherlands first, and find a US sponsor, before they could migrate to the US. Sponsors could be churches, and individuals. Mrs. De Ruyter, for example, wrote to the widow of the former US president, who proved willing to sponsor her and her family.[75]

The US was an attractive alternative to the Indo-Europeans. The Dutch East Indies were more advanced when it came to music and fashion than the Netherlands, and were more oriented towards the US already before the Second World War. In the US press, the possibilities for the Indo-Europeans were applauded. In a letter to *The New York Times* it was said:

> Many of us may have disagreed in the past with Congressman Francis Walter's views on immigration, but I'm sure that all of us are applauding his successful plea [...] for admitting to the United States thousands of Dutch refugees from Indonesia. These victims of self-destructive Indonesian chauvinism could not be integrated without hardship into the economy of the overpopulated Netherlands.[76]

Overall, the Netherlands was not presented as an attractive option for the Indo-Europeans. The US seemed to offer more possibilities, but only to a small number of people.

9.4 Vietnam: Ceasefire and *Convention sur la nationalité*

After the end of the Japanese occupation and the *coup d'état*, French military forces bombed the port of Haiphong in the North-Eastern part of Vietnam in November 1946. This was followed in December by the Viet Minh attacks on French civilians and soldiers in Hanoi.[77] On 22 December 1946, while the Viet Minh fought in Hanoi, the Standing Committee of the ICP issued a statement to party members calling for a war of national resistance against the French colonial regime.[78] The First Indochina War can be divided into two phases: the first lasted from 1946 until the end of 1949, and the second from 1950 until 1954. The first phase was characterised by reconquering areas that the French had lost. In other words, the French attempted to restore colonial power. Soon enough, the French found out that the guerrilla warfare tactics of the Viet Minh made it impossible to restore control. Therefore, this goal was regarded as unfeasible and impractical. In reality, both sides used harsh interrogation methods, torture, and the torching of villages to intimidate combatants and civilians, and acquire information.[79] The second phase was influenced by the Cold War geopolitical context, the internationalisation of the war, and the concomitant fear of communism and was characterised by more traditional military engagements.[80] The very last month of the First Indochina War during the spring of 1954 was characterised by intense fighting.[81] The turmoil could well have motivated *Métis* people to leave.

During the period between 21 December 1946 and 5 March 1947, the leader of the Viet Minh, Ho Chi Minh, made seven appeals to the French troops for a ceasefire. He was unsuccessful. Part of the reason for the failure to negotiate a ceasefire was that the French government was divided on the issue, with some favouring negotiations with the Viet Minh, and others proposing military aggression. The unstable situation in Indochina was reflected in France: several governments succeeded each other be-

tween 1945 and 1954; misinformation and miscommunication were instrumental in the war's escalation.[82] It soon became clear that the French troops had a clear advantage when it came to weapons and could take and hold any area they wanted. By contrast, the Viet Minh held a considerable advantage in manpower because they were better at recruiting soldiers locally. The war became a low-scale, guerrilla-like affair of patrols, ambushes and small-unit actions. The French held most cities and the Viet Minh dominated the mountainous countryside and remote areas. In June 1948, the French signed the Halong Bay accords, formed a provisional government, the unified non-communist 'state of Vietnam', which was deliberately set in opposition to Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam.[83] In March 1949, the French authorities signed an agreement with former emperor Bao Dai, according to which the French gave Vietnam its 'independence' as an associated state under the leadership of Bao Dai within the French Union. This concession did not have the reinforcing effect on the war effort the French hoped for. The war entered the second more international and dangerous phase.[84] In the midst of this confusing and unstable situation, the private *Métis* interest organisation *La Mutuelle de Francais d'Indochine* tried to safeguard the future of its adult members with an appeal to employers to give priority to *Métis* in the allocation of jobs in the case of equal suitability between *Métis* people and Vietnamese candidates.[85]

The later American president John F. Kennedy – then a young member of the American congress – and his family visited Vietnam in 1951. In their assessments of the war effort, confusing ideas about the purpose of the First Indochina War abounded. Was the ultimate goal of the war effort to restore colonialism or to combat communism? John F. Kennedy said: 'we are not here to help the French maintain colonial rule, but to stop the communists'. By contrast, his brother Robert Kennedy said: 'we are here to help the French maintain colonies'. And he added: 'The French proved to be mostly suspicious of US intentions.'[86] Also the Vietnamese nationalists had an (albeit slightly unbalanced) double agenda, fighting against imperialism coupled with a socialist revolution. At the Second National Congress of the ICP (later renamed the Vietnamese Workers Party, VWP), held in February 1951, the VWP was formally re-established. In his keynote, the new party leader Truong Chinh declared that the VWP would play a leading role in the Vietnamese revolution, while ideologically following a Marxist-Leninist path. Although the fight against imperialism held priority over anti-feudal taxes, Chinh confirmed that once the French had been defeated, a new government would be set up under clear party leadership. The party would gradually change the country with the help of a socialist revolution.[87]

In the course of the 1940s, orphanages and other child protection institutions in Tonkin had closed their doors because of the Japanese occupation.[88] When after Japanese occupation the heavy fighting between French and Vietnamese troops continued, almost all *Métis,* consisting of thousands of adults and children, fled to the south. Later, the *Métis* children were transported to reception centres, the so-called *foyers,* set up for them in the southern part of France.

Ill. 9 Métis boys in the reception centre of Cholon (part of Saigon), undated.[89]

The *foyers* were divided into girls' and boys' centres. For example, the *foyers* at St. Rambert and Bugeay were only meant for girls, and the *foyers* at Vouvray and Semblancay were meant for boys.[90] Adult *Métis*, if they agreed, could also be evacuated to the southern part of Vietnam and be repatriated to France. This happened on a large scale, even though people at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were concerned about the fact that the majority of unemployed people among colonial migrants were Eurasians.[91] They feared that their mixed ancestry would make it more difficult for them to find a decent job in France. A considerable number of Vietnamese women travelled alone with their *Métis* children, because they had become widows during the war.[92] A couple of hundred *rapatriés* of the first generation, predominantly Vietnamese women, who did not have the means to support themselves at the time, could not really integrate into French society according to local politicians of the locations where they were received after their arrival in France. They were French citizens, but they transplanted their Vietnamese life style to the reception centres. They created a true Asian, Vietnamese atmosphere there.[93]

Almost all *Métis* children were eligible for French citizenship according to the already mentioned *décret* of 1928 and the *Convention sur la nationalité* of 1955 (when they were 18 years or older). The *Métis* simply had to prove that they were of French ancestry. A 'French', white and European appearance helped to prove that as well as a French education, upbringing and fluency in French. However, none of these features was indispensable for acquiring French citizenship.[94] Not even written proof of French ancestry was necessary, while that was a crucial condition in the British and Dutch contexts. This meant that children of soldiers who did not have French nationality could apply for French citizenship. Because most of the children eligible for French nationality were not recognised by their French fathers, they were given a new

name that was similar but not the same as that of their fathers. For example, the *Métis* child protection organisation FOEFI changed the names of its pupils from Vietnamese to French, or reversed the order of the French names (so René Robert became Robert René). In other cases, the name of the father was reversed (Henri Francois was the son of Francois Henri). Renaming the children was a part of the transformation process the FOEFI undertook. This process destroyed the children's links to their past, as names connected them to their maternal family, culture, and ancestral heritage.[95] Obviously, while the actions of the FOEFI gave many *Métis* valuable opportunities in life, it also could be a particularly painful process. The colonial status of *Métis* as defined in the *décret* of 1928 in this manner strongly influenced the inclusive policy of the French government to repatriate almost all *Métis* children and adults to France.

Following the *Convention sur la nationalité* of 1955, the new Vietnamese government offered naturalised *Métis*, of whom many had become French citizens, the chance to reclaim their Vietnamese citizenship.[96] An additional complicating factor for *Métis* was the regulation from the 1955 *Convention* which forced those who had acquired French citizenship prior to 1949 to choose before 15 February 1956 whether to retain French citizenship or choose Vietnamese citizenship. This was a difficult choice for *Métis* people. Those born after 1949 were automatically granted Vietnamese citizenship.[97] Some adult *Métis* choose Vietnamese citizenship, because they came under the influence of nationalists while in orphanages. They spoke Vietnamese amongst themselves and sometimes ran away when they discovered that repatriation to France was eminent.[98] The opportunity for *Métis* people to choose French or Vietnamese citizenship became an important factor informing the decision-making process of *Métis* people in newly independent Vietnam.

The Vietnamese, as well as the French government, tried to win 'the hearts and minds' of people living in the Vietnamese countryside, including *Métis* children, by offering poverty relief and child care programmes. If the Vietnamese government won the loyalties of abandoned Eurasian children of French and imperial soldiers, the children would pose a threat to French authority and prestige in the colony during the first Indochina War.[99] This threat was strengthened by the generous citizenship criteria, which the Vietnamese granted the Eurasians. Applicants had to adhere to Vietnamese culture and speak Vietnamese. This was similar to the requirements made on those who wanted to become French. There was however one important difference. The DRV demanded political loyalty from their new citizens, and it explicitly questioned the loyalty of non-Vietnamese and *Métis* people to the newly independent Vietnamese state.[100] According to French colonial authorities, Vietnamese authorities secretly and automatically forced Vietnamese citizenship upon the *Métis*.[101]

From camps to camps

Repatriation to France was not without obstacles. France, like the Netherlands, had suffered severe losses during the Second World War. Half a million hectares of land needed to be de-mined, 400,000 buildings had to be rebuild and two million buildings were damaged. Infrastructure like ports, train tracks, roads and bridges had been destroyed and supplies could not easily be distributed. Rationing continued until

1949. The disintegration of the French Empire did not only led to wars in Indochina but also to bloody uprisings in Madagascar and Cameroon and the brutal war in Algeria (1956-1962). The arrival of the *pieds-noirs* from Algeria received much more attention in the press than that of the people coming from French Indochina. The *pieds-noirs* formed strong organisations that made effective claims for rights in France, while those from Indochina did not.

The repatriates from Indochina could mostly not immediately leave for France after the defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. First, they were placed in military camps in Saigon, where the new Vietnamese authorities watched them distrustfully. From 1956 onwards, almost all of them embarked on ships heading for reception centres or *Centres d'Accueil* in France.[102] These camps continued to exist for years. More than half of the male residents (56 per cent) living in the *Centres d'Accueil* were of Eurasian ancestry and nearly three quarters of all children who were living there were of mixed ancestry (74.4 per cent).[103] The people were encouraged to leave the camps as soon as they found a job. The administrators of the camp considered all luxurious items such as televisions or washing machines suspicious. The idea was that one could only afford those items when they had a decent job, and if they had such a job the subsidised camp residence was no longer needed. Many of the younger *Métis* managed to leave the camps in due time. Only the older Vietnamese women, the handicapped and other 'inassimilable people' stayed, some of whom even until today.[104]

9.5 Comparison and conclusion: 'It was the end of our world'

Both the Dutch and British metropolitan governments were initially reluctant to admit people of mixed ancestry from the former colonies into their countries. Important reasons were housing shortages and the fear of a return to pre-war unemployment. The idea that 'eastern' people would not fit in also played a role. In both cases, bureaucratic hurdles had to be taken before Eurasians from the former Dutch East Indies and British India could come to the Netherlands and the UK. For the Anglo-Indians as well as for the Indo-Europeans this added to the atmosphere of deprivation and discontent, which was on the rise since the late colonial period. This also added to the inferiority complex which all three Eurasian groups were believed to have and to which many authors at the time referred. They were often considered Europeans, but never completely.[105] In France, there were, by contrast, fewer concerns about housing or unemployment. This situation could also be attributed to the fact that the number of repatriates was not that large, and because it occurred at a time when the post-war recovery was fully underway, and there were shortages of labour in France. This was not the case in the Netherlands and the UK in the late 1940s. Since the repatriates were mostly children in the French case, age mattered, as did religion and education. The decision to transport all children of mixed ancestry to France was influenced by the violent decolonisation process in Indochina. Next to that, the geopolitical context was important because the *Métis* were fleeing a communist regime at a time when the Cold War dominated international relations. In addition, the decision of the older *Métis* to migrate was motivated by their former place in the colonial hierarchy. With this

colonial etiquette, they were certain there was no place for them in newly independent Indochina. An alternative, like the Indo-Europeans and Anglo-Indians had with their potential new homeland of respectively New Guinea, was less relevant to the *Métis* people in the Indochinese case because by that time this option had pended out.

An important difference between the Dutch and British Eurasians were the privileges that Anglo-Indians secured during the series of Round Table Conferences in 1931. Not only were jobs for Anglo-Indians guaranteed but also other rights such as representation in Parliament and provincial legislatures and educational grants for education in English. In addition, Anglo-Indians automatically became Indian citizens when independence was declared. They did not have to make a choice like the Eurasians in the Dutch East Indies case. The IEV, in its periodical *Onze Stem*, noted that the Anglo-Indians who stayed in large numbers in India after decolonisation were a good example for Indo-Europeans: 'In India, one does not find the phenomenon that a large group of Eurasians did not accept the Indian nationality like here.'[106] But 'not accepting' was not possible in India when one automatically became an Indian citizen.

In all three cases, policy makers usually approached the Eurasian group as families of Eurasian people, and this was related to the dominant discourse.[107] The male head of the household had to apply for visas and citizenship for himself and his wife and children. This tied in with the principle that the wife always followed the citizenship of her husband.[108]

In the Dutch case, Indo-Europeans were traumatised by their experiences during the Japanese occupation and the *Bersiap*. Therefore, the inclination to leave was stronger than in the British case. At the Round Table Conference in autumn 1949 the conditions for the independence of Indonesia were negotiated. Both sides made a large number of promises, but in the 1950s, the Indonesian government unilaterally broke them whereas in India they remained firmly in place after independence. The regulations of the French government to grant the *Métis* French citizenship (and therefore admission to France) were more generous and written proof of European ancestry was not essential. The decolonisation of Indochina happened relatively late in comparison with the other two cases because the French coupled their struggle to maintain colonial power with an anti-communist fight for which they gained American support.

The American support became clear in the last stage of the First Indochina War in the summer of 1953, when approximately 70 per cent of the costs of the war were paid by the Americans.[109] The first Americans had arrived in Vietnam in 1950, as part of the United States Military Assistance Advisory group charged with training the South Vietnamese Army.[110] In Indonesia, the opposite happened: the Dutch lost their colony to non-communist Indonesian nationalists and were under diplomatic pressure from the international community, especially the United States. The Americans were more focused on Vietnam and deemed Indonesia to be insulated by water from the 'so-called' domino effect (which would lead to all neighbouring countries becoming communist in the South-East Asian region). However, the United States later feared the communist exploitation of anti-colonialism and the Security Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Indonesia.[111] It demanded the release of

all republican prisoners, the reopening of negotiations based on previous agreements, and an early date on which the transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands to Indonesia would take place.[112] In both the Dutch and French cases, some Eurasian people regretted their decision to move to the mother country and wanted to return to the former colony. They felt discriminated against.