'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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10 Socio-economic circumstances for Eurasians after decolonisation

10.1 Introduction

For the majority of the people of mixed ancestry in the three former Asian colonies, not much changed immediately after decolonisation. After some time, however, they began to experience profound changes in society, most notably downward social mobility: they lost their jobs and houses. However, this did not mean that all Eurasians wanted to leave immediately for the mother country.

10.2 India: Bureaucratic obstacles and status decline

In the first years after independence, Anglo-Indians succeeded in maintaining most of their characteristics as a separate community. A number of important political issues were at stake for the Anglo-Indian community in the initial postcolonial period. First, there was the survival of Anglo-Indian schools, including the ones at the hill stations. Secondly, there was the continued use of English in governmental circles, schools and at universities. Connected to that was a third point: the choice of a national language and its effect on the use of English in India.[1] These issues contributed to an uncertain atmosphere among Anglo-Indians. Therefore, after a while, many wished to leave for the UK. But in order to be admitted to the UK, they had to overcome a number of bureaucratic hurdles. It is difficult to assess how burdensome these bureaucratic obstacles were. From the correspondence between the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) and the British High Commissionership in Delhi, it did not become clear how the strict governmental rules on immigration of Anglo-Indians were implemented in practice. For example, one governmental official of the Ministry of Health wrote:

> We do not think it is desirable that they should be given any encouragement to come here. As you know there is an acute shortage of housing accommodation, and our experience of those who have already arrived is that because of racial and other reasons they are extremely difficult to place in employment, and therefore seem likely to remain a burden on the Exchequer.[2]

In this letter, the governmental official provided justifications that also featured in the Dutch East Indies case: shortage of housing and jobs, and racial tensions. This direc-

tive that Anglo-Indians should not be encouraged to migrate to the UK was repeated in several letters.[3] By contrast, another governmental official wrote:

> Our general policy is not to put any obstacle in their way provided that they can pay their expenses. In the event of an anti-European movement developing in India, Anglo-Indians would inevitably suffer.[4]

In 1958, however, the governmental officials seemed to have changed their mind regarding the plight of Anglo-Indians. They showed their satisfaction in their letters when it turned out that the Indian government placed various obstacles in the way of Anglo-Indians wishing to leave for the UK. For example, one official from the Commonwealth Relations Office wrote the following lines to the High Commissionership in Delhi about Anglo-Indians, which point to that sentiment:

> The difficulty of making them into active and useful members of our society is still great. Hence we should not be displeased to see Anglo-Indians experiencing difficulty obtaining travel documents to emigrate from India.[5]

But the British High Commissionership also observed that Anglo-Indians experienced extensive difficulty in integrating into independent India. In a letter from the High Commissioner to the Commonwealth Relations Office in Britain, it was made quite clear that the Anglo-Indians were a problematic community:

> [...] little sign of them yet being effectively integrated. Some of course have done so and whilst retaining Western habits regard themselves as Indian citizens and have thrown in their lot with India: there are many such in the Indian army.

Despite these difficulties, most Anglo-Indians wanted to leave for the UK, according to the official:

> The more they drop in the social scale, the more they want to migrate, but then it is less possible to do so. [They will be] discriminated against in Indian firms. Do not do much to help themselves.[6]

After the job reservations for Anglo-Indians came to an end in the 1960s, there was chronic unemployment amongst Anglo-Indian men. Anglo-Indian women became reluctant to marry men from their own community. The average Indian considered them also as lazy and poorly educated. These ideas reflected earlier oriental stereotypes of the colonised 'other'.[7] The lack of education among Anglo-Indian men could be explained by the reserved government jobs which made it unnecessary for an Anglo-Indian to have qualifications for a superior position. A tradition of minimal education was present among Anglo-Indians, especially among the men. Furthermore, most Anglo-Indian families maintained a western style of living which was more expensive than an Indian lifestyle. This usually left less money for education. As a result, the status of many Anglo-Indians dropped in the postcolonial years. Of the 120,000 Anglo-Indians who were still living in India in the 1980s, it was estimated that approximately one third was living below the poverty line.[8] This was enforced by the fact that those who stayed were too poor to migrate.

10.3 Indonesia: The Westerling affair and New Guinea as an alternative destination

In the first years after independence, Dutch companies were still very active in Indonesia and some Dutch people continued to occupy privileged positions in these businesses. The fact that the former Dutch coloniser was still in charge in many places influenced daily affairs and caused frustration and resentment among the Indonesians. The *Indonesianisasi* programme, that was implemented from 1950 onwards, meant that Dutch companies had to employ Indonesians for the majority of their posts, including the higher ones.[9] Dutch companies initiated this policy quite rapidly to avoid accusations from the Indonesians that they continued to employ Dutch citizens in high positions. Dutch multinationals such as Shell and Unilever tried to encourage some Eurasians to stay and to choose Indonesian citizenship in order to be able to keep them as capable and reliable employees.[10] For Indo-Europeans who had not become Indonesian citizens in the option period, it was increasingly difficult to find or hold a job in the immediate postcolonial period. As a result of inflation, the daily lives of Indo-Europeans deteriorated significantly. The primary necessities became more expensive.[11] This led to increased unrest among Indonesians. They blamed the remaining Dutch and Indo-European people for their problems. Furthermore, there was not a stable Indonesian government. Yet, according to the special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, the general tendency among Europeans was to stay in Indonesia:

> Dutch and other European and Chinese business men are not willing to leave a country so obdurately prosperous. On the contrary, Batavia's pre war population of about 700,000 has nearly doubled since it became Jakarta. This is partly due to a big refugee influx of Europeans and Eurasians from burnt-out sugar mills and tea and coffee plantations. But it is also due to a prevailing determination to hang on, hoping for the best while fearing the worst. [...] There was an unprecedented wave of anti-European sentiment after the Westerling affair. This could flare disastrously in the event of another attempted coup by dissident Dutch and Eurasian groups.[12]

The Westerling affair was a failed *coup d'état* by the former captain of the Royal Dutch Indies Army Raymond Westerling on 23 January 1950. It increased tensions between Indonesians, Eurasians and Dutch.[13] With his own private military organisation, APRA (Angketan Perang Ratu Adil), which consisted of colonial soldiers of the 'special forces' from the Royal Dutch Indies Army, Westerling conquered strategic buildings in the mountainous area surrounding Bandung. It was unclear what the purpose of his *coup* was, although Westerling himself explicitly declared that his actions were directed at the TNI (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian National Army) and not at the Republic of Indonesia.[14] It was unclear how many supporters he had. Indonesian-Dutch relations further deteriorated after the attempted *coup*. Several years later, this culminated in large-scale anti-Dutch actions on 5 December 1957. On this day, which was later renamed *Zwarte Sinterklaas* (Black Santa Claus), all Dutch people (including Indo-Europeans with obvious Dutch ancestry) were declared enemies of the Indonesian state. They were forced to leave the country and all Dutch companies were na-

tionalised.[15] People with Dutch citizenship started to leave in large numbers. *The New York Times* wrote on Christmas Day:

> For thousands of Dutch nationals here, today was more than just another Christmas in Indonesia. It was the last Dec. 25 many of them would be spending in this equatorial country in which they were born. They are preparing to leave for the Netherlands, a land they do not know. "What is snow?" a 7-year-old boy asked. [...] an estimated total of 20,000 of the 46,000 Dutch nationals living in Indonesia [...] are Eurasians. [...] The Netherlands is a place they have heard about in their bilingual homes but never seen. Now these people are being uprooted. They are being forced to change countries, something they would hardly have done by choice.[16]

As mentioned above, the IEV urged its members to choose Indonesian citizenship. This was a remarkable switch for the organisation, since it had always been loyal to Dutch colonial rule during its entire existence in the colonial period. They started their reorientation process towards the Indonesian side from 1946 onwards. On 31 August 1946, the chairman, Eduard Doppie Wermuth wrote an article entitled 'Reorientation' in *Onze Stem*. His main argument was that Indo-European interests were in Indonesia. The IEV-delegation, present at the Round Table Conference in the autumn of 1949, declared that the Indo-Europeans were racially and economically linked to Indonesia.[17] Despite this clear call, a number of prominent IEV-leaders such as Wermuth, De Rozario and Blaauw did not wait until the end of the option period and left for the Netherlands before December 1951. There, they became active in the (later separated) Dutch branch of the IEV, the *Vereniging Indische Nederlanders* (VIN, Association Indisch Dutch). They could leave because they were relatively rich. Their move made them unreliable in the eyes of other Indo-Europeans. The relatively wealthy situation of almost all the IEV-leaders could have a reverse effect: the switch to the Indonesian side was affordable. The majority however felt too attached to Dutch culture. The IEV-leaders were usually professionals such as lawyers and doctors, so they did not have to depend on the few remaining Dutch businesses in Indonesia or the Indonesian government for survival.[18] Part of the reorientation process was to rename the IEV in 1951: *Gabungan Indo Untuk Kesatuan Indonesia* or *Indo-Eenheids Verbond* (Indo Unity League, IEV).[19]

Due to the IEV's radical new policy, numerous IEV departments closed down when the number of members slumped. Former members considered the new policy of the IEV as a 'betrayal'. Only Indonesian citizens could now become members of the IEV; members with Dutch citizenship were no longer accepted.[20] In 1959, in *Tong Tong*, editor-in-chief Tjalie Robinson characterised this radical policy as a split in the League, after which the unity in the organisation never returned.[21] As mentioned above, despite all efforts of both the IEV and the Dutch government, Indo-Europeans did not opt in large numbers for Indonesian citizenship. People who made this choice were generally part of the middle classes and felt attached to the Indonesian archipelago as their land of birth and hoped to be able to keep their job, business or property.[22] Their choice was motivated by their old colonial status and class. Next to that, they were attracted to the prospect of a prosperous economic future in Indonesia and they wanted to expand old Dutch businesses. In this respect, Indo-Europeans also pointed to the natural riches of Indonesia and to its need for trained personnel. Since most Indo-Eu-

ropeans had never been to the Netherlands, they could not imagine how they would fare in the mother country. Above all, they felt they would have greater opportunities in Indonesia as Indonesian citizens than as Dutch 'foreigners'.[23] Only those Indo-Europeans who chose Indonesian citizenship would be able to continue in governmental service on a permanent basis or in the Indonesian armed forces. Several large (former Dutch) companies threatened to dismiss Indo-European employees who did not opt for Indonesian citizenship. The Netherlands did not present an attractive alternative, with its cold climate, different culture, and its housing shortage.

The constitutional guarantees negotiated during the Round Table Conference were also an important reason to choose Indonesian citizenship and stay, although these did not turn out to be of much value for the Indo-Europeans who stayed and became *Warga Negara*. In the provisional Indonesian constitution of 1949, it was stated in article 7 that: 'all citizens of Indonesia are entitled to equal treatment and protection of the law', in article 18: 'everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion', and in article 100: 'Chinese, European and Arab minority groups should be represented in the House of Representatives by at least nine, six, and three members respectively.'[24] These articles were bureaucratic considerations, that seemed to be favourable for Indo-Europeans at the beginning of the postcolonial period but later proved to be of no value when they fell by the wayside.

'We Eurasians should have a home of our own'

In the 'New Guinea associations', to which old IEV-members increasingly turned, New Guinea was presented as an alternative destination to the Netherlands. New Guinea was an option for those who could not prove Dutch ancestry, for those who did not have enough money for the journey and who did not have family or other connections in the Netherlands. The motives for moving to New Guinea were elaborately explained in a newspaper article by an officer of the Netherlands Immigration Office in Singapore:

> Under the changing conditions in the Dutch-Malay Archipelago, thousands of Europeans and Eurasians felt themselves more and more out of place there, Mr. M.F. Ruitenback, an officer of the Netherlands Immigration Office in Singapore told the *Sunday Times* yesterday. [...] 'Most of them are used to life in the tropics, and do not want to go back to Holland or other parts of Europe because they know that the market there is already over-crowded with trained people in every field', he added. 'So their aim is to retain one area of the whole Archipelago for themselves where they can keep their own European culture and continue to engage in pioneering work.' Mr. Ruitenbach said he had been a member of an organisation formed for this purpose in Batavia called the Nederlands Indische Transmigratie New Guinea. This organisation had about 8,000 members and was growing stronger. It has asked the Dutch Government for an assurance that Dutch New Guinea would be retained as a European stronghold free from domination by Indonesian elements. It had also asked the Government for financial assistance for Europeans and Eurasians from other parts of the Archipelago who were willing to go to New Guinea as pioneers. 'The Dutch Government has replied that it is willing to assist in the scheme when law and order is firmly re-established in the N.E.I (Netherlands East Indies, i.e. Dutch East Indies).[25]

However, the aspirations of Indo-Europeans to build an Indo-European homeland in New Guinea failed just like similar attempts to start an agricultural colony on Sumatra, especially designed for Indo-Europeans, had failed earlier in the colonial period. This was partly due to a lack of governmental support, but it also turned out that Indo-Europeans were not the ideal type of agricultural colonists. They were not accustomed to doing heavy physical work and agricultural labour.[26] The general idea behind the migration to New Guinea showed what many Indo-Europeans desired. Most Eurasians wanted to live in their own country without coping with their colonial 'in-between' position which meant social and political pressure from the Indonesians as well as the Dutch.[27]

An article from the *Indian Daily Mail* from 1946 highlighted the advantages of migration to New Guinea for Eurasians:

> Victims of revolution and economic dislocation, most Eurasians see their only hope for future security in emigration to an underpopulated land where they can begin life anew. Dutch New Guinea was selected as their goal. [...] There would be no colour bar. It was fear of discrimination that led Eurasian leaders to abandon earlier hopes for settlement in Australia, South Africa or the United States. The climate is tropical, much like that to which the Eurasians have been accustomed. Best of all, the U.S. Army's great wartime base of Hollandia has been returned to Dutch control. Eurasian leaders believe it may ultimately become the metropolitan centre for their settlement area.[28]

The Indian Daily Mail went on to explain that the Eurasians had few options.

> Behind the Eurasian willingness to join the world's displaced millions is an unhappy story. Legally and politically, persons of mixed European and Asiatic blood have the full status of Dutch citizens in the Indies. Social discrimination exists only in a very limited degree – less perhaps, than anywhere else in Asia. But two forces are driving the Eurasians to emigration. The first is political. Often called 'more Dutch than the Hollanders' the Eurasians have opposed the Indonesian nationalists bitterly during the past year of revolution. Now they are convinced that the current political negotiations will result in some degree of formal recognition of the revolutionary Indonesian Republic's authority over Java. Probably they are correct. Dutch officials privately admit as much. Under an Indonesian-dominated Republic the Eurasians feel they will be faced by economic and political discrimination. As proof they point to the 13,000 Eurasians interned by the Republic after Japan's surrender. [...] Economic pressures which have been developing for years also have influenced the Eurasian's decision. For centuries they held a virtual monopoly of white collar jobs – clerical posts and minor civil service positions. In recent years educated Indonesians and Chinese have taken those jobs from them steadily, Agriculture could have been a substitute. It was not because the Indies law which forbids anyone but Indonesians to own land. [...] High Dutch officials point to the failure of a 1930 New Guinea colonization effort.[29]

The Washington Post published an article that was almost verbatim the same under the heading: 'New Guinea, pesthole to Yanks, is 'Canaan' to 250,000 Eurasians'. According to this article New Guinea was 'the land cursed as a jungled nightmare by American soldiers'. The paper added:

> Only Brazil still figures as an alternative to Dutch New Guinea in the Eurasians' plans. A minority plan to make the long trip to South America instead of joining their fellows in New Guinea.[30]

The above excerpt from the *Indian Daily Mail* about a Dutch East Indies shows the clear interconnections between the former colonies in the South East Asian region. This interconnection was demonstrated even more by the fact that not only Indo-Europeans from the Dutch East Indies but also Eurasians from neighbouring British colonies such as Malaya, India, Ceylon and Burma attempted to make New Guinea their new homeland. This indicated that a sort of collective identity had come into existence across the whole region. *The Straits Times*, a newspaper printed in Singapore wrote already in 1939:

> The Eurasian problem can only be solved by providing them with a HOME of their own. There are over 300,000 Eurasians in British possessions in the East, and 90 per cent of these are doomed to enforce degeneration.[31]

The paper made a comparison to the fate of European Jews:

> Britain has spent an enormous amount of money, and also lives, to provide a home for the Jews. [...] The Jews are not British subjects, and yet so much is done on their behalf. The Eurasians are blood relations, and yet nothing is done for them. There is plenty of room in New Guinea for a Eurasian colony. Thousands of Eurasians youths in India, Ceylon, Burma, Hongkong and Malay are unemployed, and these should be sent as the pioneers to Eurasia. The land is sparsely peopled, and the natives could be given a large reservation in which they could live their own lives without interference. [...] We Eurasians should have a home of our own, for we have a right to live according to our economic status and in a manner free from external repression.[32]

The Eurasians from Singapore had the same problems as the Eurasians from the Dutch East Indies. They were not used to working on the land, because they were not allowed to own land in the colonies they lived in:

> As for Singapore Eurasians desiring [...] 'to participate in the material advantages of shaping their own destinies without hindrance from extraneous sources' [...] the fact that they know nothing of man's primary occupation, namely, husbandry or making the earth yield fruit in the sweat or their brow, this constitutes a first disability against their even attempting, much less succeeding in founding such a 'home' [...] And here we strike the root cause of the ever-growing menace of the unsolved Eurasian problem – the divorce of the Eurasian from the land.[33]

In 1948, 74 Eurasians from Malaya were ready to settle in New Guinea but apparently the cooperation with the Dutch authorities and fellow-Eurasians fell through, because they were eventually not admitted. According to the *Singapore Free Press*:

> The board of the Eurasian Union at Batavia of which Dr. E.D. Wermuth is the chairman has officially stated that he 'knows nothing' of a Mr. Loth who is reported to be in Malaya and is discussing with Eurasians in Malaya the question of colonising Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea [...] Mr. Loth stated in Malaya that the chairman of the Eurasian Union at

> Batavia, Dr. Wermuth, would request financial aid for this scheme from the Dutch government. [...] The board of the Eurasian Union has announced that it knows nothing of these promises made by Mr. Loth or about any discussion on this subject being held in Singapore. Seventy–four Malayan Eurasians, who applied to go to Hollandia under Mr. Loth's scheme were ready to leave on March 8, when a press statement issued by the Dutch Consulate-General warned them to consider their next move as they had not applied for visas and would be refused permission to land on Dutch soil by the immigration authorities. [...] Preparatory to leaving Singapore, many of the Malayan Eurasians had resigned from their jobs, while some had sold all their belongings.[34]

Meanwhile, the Indo-Europeans became more divided amongst themselves in the Dutch East Indies. In the early 1950s, four former leaders of the PIN founded their own political party *Partai Demokrasi Indo* (Indo Democratic Party). This new party demanded equal rights for people of mixed ancestry. In addition, they established a federation for the 'removal of minorities' as a goal so that all minorities would be treated equally in Indonesian society. This federation consisted of two parts: *Gerakan Indo Warganegara Indonesia*, which was situated in Jakarta and Bandung, and *Panita Sementara untuk mengha puskan Perasaan sebagai Minoriteit antara Golongan Indo Belanda di Indonesia,* which was located in Semarang in East Java.[35] These new associational activities provided the social infrastructure needed for Indo-European people who had decided to stay in independent Indonesia. However, within a few years these organisations would also disappear, because Indo-European people continued to leave for the Netherlands, New Guinea or other countries.

The hope of creating a Eurasian homeland in New Guinea continued for years. In 1959, *The Irish Times* wrote that in New Guinea the Eurasians were treated as Europeans.

> In Holland, they would be worse off economically, would be living in a completely alien climate, and, they think, could not be integrated as well as they are in New Guinea. For the Eurasians, Holland is a foreign country. [...] The Indonesians [...] seem to feel more hostile, if that is possible, to Eurasians than to people of pure Dutch blood.[36]

The last orphans

The European-led orphanages from the colonial period in the Dutch East Indies including the orphanage of 'Pa' van der Steur, experienced difficulties during the first years after independence. Many questions had to be dealt with including: 'What should be done about Indo-European children? And which children should be taken care of? Should only Indo-European children born in the colonial period be included? Or should it also apply to Indo-European children who were the result of unions between Dutch soldiers fighting in the decolonisation war and indigenous women? And what about Indonesian orphans?[37] The most complicated issue was whether the staff of the orphanage of Van der Steur could continue caring for children at its old location. The old institution in Magelang was liberated by Dutch troops in 1948. As a result of its bad, decrepit state and the fact that the approximately 200 remaining children had suffered so much mentally and physically during the war and the years after Japanese occupation, the board decided to evacuate them to Jakarta. The story went

that the remaining children showed their admiration for their former caretaker by carrying the chair in which Van der Steur always sat, with them.[38] They were brought to an old building in Djatinegara, one of the suburbs of Jakarta (in colonial times known as 'Mr. Cornelis'). However, this place soon turned out to be too small for them.[39]

A couple of months later, another orphanage in the surrounding area of Jakarta was taken over by the Van der Steur foundation, in order to receive more abandoned children.[40] Meanwhile, Indonesian authorities had nationalised the old location at Magelang, and the orphanage had been turned into an Islamic institution, receiving 'Javanese beggar children' according to representatives of the Van der Steur organisation.[41] A secret report, written by a nephew of Van der Steur documented the – in his opinion – deplorable, immoral state of the institution, the children and the leaders. He also critically considered the board of the institution in Indonesia as 'non-existent', incapable and certainly 'non-influential'.[42]

10.4 Vietnam: William Bazé and the continued activities of the *FOEFI*

In contrast to the other contexts, Indochina had not yet been decolonised in 1950. The First Indochina war between the French colonial authorities and Vietnamese nationalists continued until 1954. Between September 1945 and July 1954, almost half a million French people and people from other French colonies had fought in Vietnam as part of the French forces of the Far East.[43] Although many French were involved in this war, it was largely overshadowed in the French collective memory by the Second World War which preceded it and the Algerian war and the Second Indochina War (with American involvement) after.[44] The president of *FOEFI*, the child protection organisation of Indochina, William Bazé, of mixed ancestry himself, was concerned about the potential danger of abandoned *Métis* children, who had been raised in an indigenous environment. In addition to his presidency of the *FOEFI*, Bazé was also advisor to the French Union in Indochina and president of another Eurasian self-interest organisation *La Mutuelle de Francais d'Indochine*, which promoted the interests of adult *Métis* in Indochina. He was a strong advocate of the *Métis* cause in general, for both adults and children, as is shown by the many references to him in governmental correspondence and newspaper reports in the *Archives diplomatiques des Ministères des affaires étrangers*.[45] His name also often appeared in other governmental agencies. This indicates that Bazé was an influential person, since these references were usually positive. However, sometimes people involved with the French government regarded his organisation, *FOEFI*, with suspicion, as was the case with one member of the *Commission interministérielle pour les rapatries d'Indochine* in 1958. The members of this commission said that they were 'very scared of relations with that association' and that they 'don't have any means of control nor any authority over that undertaking.' Another member of this *Commission* thought that the *FOEFI* received too many subsidies, whereas William Bazé always stressed the shortage of money for his organisation, which made it impossible to help all poor, abandoned *Métis* children.[46] In addition, his militant attitude was openly criticised, because he was for example strongly advocating the *Métis* case, but was ignoring the other French *rapatriés*.[47]

However, the efforts of Bazé proved to be effective. In numerous general notes and reports about the problem of the 'rapatriement' of French citizens from Indochina, the FOEFI and the *Métis* children were mentioned separately. Meanwhile, more and more French troops had gone back to France and they left thousands of western looking *Métis* behind in the locations where they had lived temporarily. Because of the continuous arrival of new French troops in the colony, the number of neglected and abandoned *Métis* children kept growing. In 1950, there were already 100,000 *Métis* children and William Bazé estimated that this number would reach 500,000 in 10 years and one million in 25 years if the trend continued.[48]

The old colonial ideas about Eurasians representing a threat to white prestige re-emerged, notably because these children grew up in an indigenous environment. Often their mothers feared stigmatisation because they had a child fathered by a French soldier. In other words, according to Henri Sambuc, member of the *French Academie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer,* in a speech from 1950, *Métis* children were living outside both indigenous society and European society. Furthermore, in Sambuc's opinion, because of their acquaintances among the indigenous population and their knowledge of the indigenous language, they could easily become revolutionaries.[49] Because of this threat and the predicted large growth in the number of Eurasians, William Bazé advocated financial support from the French colonial state to receive these neglected and abandoned children in orphanages. This also applied to cases in which the mothers of *Métis* children were still alive.[50] After the French left Vietnam, Bazé employed the presence of *Métis* children left behind in Vietnam to criticise France's role as a supporter of the United States after 1954 in the Second Indochina War. Moreover, with that criticism he justified sending children and grandchildren of Frenchmen to France, often without the approval of their Vietnamese mothers.[51] The most important reason for the French to keep sending *Métis* children back to the mother country was of a moral nature: French authorities considered them French and felt responsible for their upbringing.[52]

Before decolonisation in the late 1940s, the *École de Troupe d'Enfants Eurasiens* started to also admit Afro-Asian and Indo-Asian children. Furthermore, by July 1947, the school did not only accept children born of Asian mothers and French fathers, but also children born to French mothers and Asian fathers. In 1948, the school dropped the word 'Eurasians' from its name and officially became an *École d'Enfants de Troupes*, probably to reflect its new, racially open admission policy.[53]

A 1943 decree by Governor General Decoux had given the *Jules Brévié Fondation* (the predecessor of the FOEFI) the legal means to remove Eurasian children from their mothers. This decree was an adaptation of the *pupille de la nation*-law of 1917, but was specifically meant for *Métis* children: *'Pupille de la nation Eurasien',* which could offer *pupille* status to any *Métis* child, who regardless of the French father's military contributions, had been physically or morally abandoned by their parents or who 'did not receive an education or decent upbringing.'[54] Furthermore, the decree declared that any child of unknown parents – whether abandoned, not recognised by the European father or born of parents who could not maintain paternal power as defined in a colonial law of 1891 – was an orphan. Thus, he or she was to be adopted by the state, would be given a legal guardian and placed under the care of an orphanage of the *Ju-*

les Brévié Fondation. This law made it impossible for an indigenous mother to reclaim her child.[55]

There were two ways that the *Métis* children could be received in FOEFI institutions. Either impoverished Vietnamese mothers themselves brought their Eurasian children to FOEFI orphanages, or the group already mentioned, the organisation *l'Action Sociale,* actively sought them out. With prior knowledge that French military men regularly had sex with local women, *l'Action Sociale* would return to military camps nine months to one year after the French soldiers had left and offered assistance to impoverished indigenous mothers who had given birth to *Métis* children. Then, the welfare agent of *l'Action Sociale* would offer the mothers the option of placing their children in FOEFI orphanages, with the understanding that the children would be educated at the *L'Ecole d'Enfants de Troupes Eurasiens* in Dalat.[56] This scenario sounds as if the mothers really had a choice, but usually they did not know what sending their children to the orphanages really meant. The mothers often did not realise that in consenting to this they lost their parental rights. It is not clear how many children were taken to orphanages against their mothers' wishes. In most instances, government agents who searched for *Métis* in villages tried to convince the mothers to place their children in the orphanages voluntarily. The removal of the children did happen under pressure, but not always entirely involuntarily.[57] On a number of occasions FOEFI board members mentioned in their reports at the annual meetings that indigenous Vietnamese mothers coped remarkably well with the arrival of an unplanned baby from a French man. The reason for their indifference towards their children was that they were reassured that they could always send them to a FOEFI orphanage. Therefore, members of FOEFI remarked that: 'The FOEFI is a charity and not a hotel.'[58]

In the report of the annual FOEFI meeting of 1952, the author of the piece also made clear that it was not a sacrifice for every mother to hand over her child to a FOEFI institution instead of looking after it herself. This phenomenon is referred to under the heading 'the danger of mothers' and it mentions some Vietnamese mothers who put little effort into tracking down the French fathers of their children and instead relied on the FOEFI to take care of their children.[59] According to the author of the report, some indigenous mothers were indifferent about giving birth to a mixed child and voluntarily brought the baby to an FOEFI institution to give it a proper upbringing. However, for other mothers abandoning their children was a huge sacrifice or they changed their mind after a while according to annual reports of the FOEFI. Therefore, from 1953 onwards, mothers had to sign a contract when they requested care for their *Métis* children. In the contract, it was stipulated that they could not interfere with their child's upbringing. Furthermore, it was codified that they would respect the visiting times of the orphanage and that they could not take back their children in the middle of the school year without severe measures, such as paying the costs of the upbringing, their food and education. Women who insisted upon reclaiming their children would not be able to re-enrol them and would have to reimburse FOEFI for all expenses made for their education so far.[60] Initially this contract also took the form of a handwritten note by the Vietnamese mother, in which she promised to reimburse all costs for her child when the child did not obey the rules of discipline.[61] A year later this contract was elaborated upon. Mothers had to sign a

certificat de décharge (a certificate de resignation) when they handed over their children. This document meant that the FOEFI had the right to send the child to France or another country of the French colonial union for its training without the consent of the mother.[62]

In 1954, the annual meeting was postponed until September due to the heavy fighting between French and Vietnamese troops in Dien Bien Phu in the spring of 1954. It was noted during the FOEFI meeting in September that in the Dien Bien Phu battle one former *Métis* orphan was killed, another one disappeared, and two were taken hostage.[63] This concurrence of events, a meeting of a Eurasian interest organisation, and heavy violence that also affected *Métis* demonstrated how the violent process of decolonisation and its aftermath affected French policy towards Eurasians. The colonial status of *Métis* also played a role in the decision-making process. These factors guided the FOEFI in taking the decision to repatriate almost all *Métis* children to France.

10.5 Comparison and conclusion: *Rapatriés*, returning home or *Warga Negara*?

In both the Dutch East Indies and British India, life initially remained largely the same for Eurasians who had decided to stay, although many Indo-Europeans had experienced horrendous things during the decolonisation war in Indonesia between 1945 and 1949. However, for the Indo-Europeans who had stayed in Indonesia, after five relatively calm years, circumstances quickly worsened. Thousands wanted to leave after all. In their efforts to be admitted to the Netherlands, their former colonial status and concomitant mixed ancestry played a role. Next to that, bureaucratic regulations were important, since formal proof of Dutch ancestry was a key factor in the bureaucratic procedures leading to departure for the Netherlands. Class and related economic status were also important in the decision for both staying and leaving, since having more resources could be advantageous in both instances.

The situation in the Dutch East Indies contrasted sharply with that in British India. There, thanks to a thorough preparation and the presence of representatives of Anglo-Indians next to colonial authorities and Indian nationalists at the series of Round Table Conferences, Anglo-Indians had been acknowledged as an Indian minority. They kept their guaranteed governmental jobs and education on a European basis until the 1960s.

If Anglo-Indians wanted to migrate to the UK, they encountered similar difficulties as the Indo-Europeans who wanted to go to the Netherlands. Both the British and the Dutch governments attempted to curtail this migration because of housing shortages, fears of unemployment, the doubt authorities had regarding Eurasians' work ethic, and the likelihood that they might become a public charge. Both the economic situation in the mother country and the economic situation in the former colony were important for the decisions of Eurasians. Opportunities to acquire European citizenship were also crucial.

In Vietnam, the repatriation programme focused on children of mixed ancestry who were regarded as sufficiently 'French' to be evacuated to metropolitan France.

The small European group of French ancestry had already been repatriated after the Japanese occupation and before the decolonisation war started. In both Vietnam and Indonesia, the former colonial governments felt responsible for the children of mixed ancestry still in the colony. While the French were even more concerned about Eurasian children than the Dutch, in the end, in both cases, children were removed without the consent of their mothers.