

***DIE MAATSKAPPY VIR EUROPESE IMMIGRASIE: A STUDY OF THE
CULTURAL ASSIMILATION AND NATURALISATION OF EUROPEAN
IMMIGRANTS
TO SOUTH AFRICA 1949 – 1994***

by

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MAGISTER ARTIUM



HISTORY
in the
FACULTY OF ARTS
at the
UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

SUPERVISOR: DR. W.P. VISSER

DECEMBER 2005

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not partially or fully submitted it to any other university in order to receive a degree.

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Signature

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Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following persons and institutions who assisted me in completing this study.

Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Wessel Visser, my supervisor, for not only assisting me in finding the topic for this thesis, but also for his continual assistance and encouragement when it felt like this study could never be successful. His patience, understanding and sense of humour was a constant solace during the tougher times.

Secondly, I would like to thank the other members of the History Department of the University of Stellenbosch for their help in making a success of this study. A special word of thanks to Prof. Albert Grundlingh, the head of department, for the numerous occasions on which he read through chapters and gave advice. To Mrs. Corinne Harmsen, who was always available for a word of encouragement, and who is responsible for the typesetting and formatting of this thesis. I would also like to thank Drs. Sandra Swart and Anton Ehlers for their advice, comments and encouragement.

A word of thanks to the University of Stellenbosch for the numerous bursaries awarded to me during the past three years which were invaluable in allowing me to continue with my studies on a permanent basis.

I would like to thank the staff of the J.S. Gerike Library and the Library of the Theological Seminary of the University of Stellenbosch for their assistance in finding important sources for the completion of this study.

To the Board of the *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie*, and the Chairman, Ds. D. Laufs, I extend my gratitude for the permission granted by them to access publications and other documents of their organisation, without which this thesis could not have been undertaken.

A special word of thanks to Mrs. Miems Swanepoel, the director of the MVI's Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal branch, and her secretary Ms. Suzette Golding. Mrs. Swanepoel's enthusiasm regarding my research, and her selfless assistance to immigrants, were an inspiration to me.

I would also like to thank Ms. Alana Baily the director of the MVI's Pretoria branch for valuable advice she gave me in the initial stages of this study.

To my close-knit group of friends in Stellenbosch, I would like to extend my gratitude too. It was often them who were the last line of defence, or encouragement, when I neared throwing in the towel.

My thanks also goes out to my two brothers for their constant encouragement and sacrifice during the period of my studies.

Lastly, to my parents who since childhood have instilled in me the love for knowledge and education, and who have in more ways than one aided me in getting this far in my studies, my gratitude cannot be put into words. It is to them that I dedicate this work, in an attempt to illustrate my appreciation for twenty-seven years of love, support and encouragement.

Roland Slater

SUMMARY

The processes of assimilation and naturalisation are encountered by immigrants around the world in differing degrees. Every immigrant to a new state, is forced to adapt to their new society in certain ways, in order to be able to function successfully in their new community. This thesis aims to look at these processes as they are managed by organisations within the new society.

The *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* (MEI) [Company for European Immigration] was one such organisation which operated in South Africa. The MEI was founded in 1949, following on from other organisations which had concerned themselves with immigrant recruitment, assimilation and assistance in general.

This thesis posits that the MEI, whilst primarily directed at the assistance in assimilating immigrants, also maintained another socio-political agenda. The MEI was an overtly Afrikaner organisation, composed entirely of Afrikaners. The Afrikaner churches were deeply involved with the MEI from the 1950s and onwards and influenced the aims and goals of the organisation.

This thesis, based on the MEI's publications and certain archival material, exposes the fact that the MEI's programmes of assimilation, naturalisation and immigrant assistance in general were influenced by their close collaboration with the cause of the white population of South Africa, the Afrikaner people and the expansion of the Afrikaner churches in particular.

Ultimately this study indicates clearly that the MEI attempted to assimilate European immigrants into the Afrikaner's culture, religion and language stream, by exposing such immigrants to these aspects on a regular basis. One of the chief motivations behind these assimilation attempts, was to maintain the language balance between the Afrikaans- and English-speaking streams of white South Africa.

OPSOMMING

Immigrante die wêreld oor word tot 'n mate blootgestel aan die prosesse van assimilasië en naturalisasië. Elke immigrant moet noodwendig deur 'n proses van aanpassing gaan in sy of haar nuwe gemeenskap om te verseker dat hulle binne die nuwe samelewing suksesvol kan funksioneer. Met die klem op organisasies wat betrokke is by immigrante-assimilasië, poog hierdie tesis om hierdie proses beter te verstaan.

Die Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie (MEI) [*Company for European Immigration*] is 'n voorbeeld van so tipe organisasie wat in Suid-Afrika ontstaan het. Die MEI is in 1949 gestig in navolging van ander soortgelyke organisasies wat betrokke was by immigrantewerwing, assimilasië en algemene bystand.

Hierdie tesis betoog dat alhoewel die MEI primêr gefokus het op die assimilasië van immigrante oor die algemeen, het die organisasie ook 'n sosio-politiese agenda gevolg. Die MEI was openlik 'n pro-Afrikaanse organisasie en sy lede bestaan eksklusief uit Afrikaners. Die Afrikaanse Kerk was ook sedert die 1950s nou betrokke by die MEI en het 'n sterk invloed op dié organisasie se programme van assimilasië uitgeoefen.

Hierdie studie, gebaseer op publikasies en argivale materiaal van die MEI, stel dit bloot dat die organisasie se programme van assimilasië, naturalisasië en algemene bystand van immigrante die bevordering van die wit Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking, en spesifiek die Afrikaanse bevolking en die Afrikaanse Kerk ten doel gehad het.

Die tesis toon duidelik aan dat die MEI gepoog het om Europese immigrante in te skakel by die Afrikaanse kultuur, taal en godsdiens, deur hulle gereeld bloot te stel aan hierdie aspekte van die Afrikaanse bestaan. Die behoud van die balans tussen die Afrikaans- en Engels-sprekende bevolkings van Suid-Afrika was een van die hoof motiverende faktore vir hierdie beleidsrigtings.

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FOREWORD

The end of the Second World War sparked a wave of mass immigration around the world in the wake of the devastation of Europe. Thousands of Europeans immigrated to the 'new' world in search of a better life than their stricken continent could offer. Two of the important facets of the immigration experience are the assimilation and naturalisation processes which immigrants undergo in their new county of domicile. It is these processes, which form the backbone of this thesis.

The *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* (MEI) was an organisation, which dealt with the processes of assimilation and naturalisation that immigrants were exposed to in South Africa. The MEI had specific theories, ideas and policies which they were inspired by, and followed, with regard to immigrant assimilation and naturalisation and it is for these reasons that this organisation was utilised as a case-study of such processes.

In the first chapter the concepts, theories and terms pertaining to the immigration process are analysed in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. From the outset it must be qualified that no attempt is made to re-evaluate or question the writings on immigration, but rather these writings are analysed in order to lay a foundation for the investigation of the MEI as an organisation dealing with immigrant assimilation and naturalisation. It is posited that the most important aspects, with regard to immigrant assimilation in South Africa, include identity, identity formation, assimilation and naturalisation. The influence of other social forces and institutions, such as religion and nationalism on the above-mentioned processes are also discussed in this chapter.

Some of the literature which aided in the analysis of immigration include the following publications: W.D. Borrie (Ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*; S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants*; E.H. Erikson, *Identity* and Ronald Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*. A number of theses on immigration to South Africa were utilised to gain a better understanding of the subject, including the studies of R.P. van Staden, J.E. Reinders, J.F. Loedolff, B.J. in den Bosch, and I.J. Donsky.

In the remainder of the thesis the MEI, as an immigrant organisation, is investigated in more detail, based on the exposition on immigration given in the first chapter. In chapter two a brief summary of the history of the organisation, since its establishment in 1949 till the early part of the twenty-first century is entered into. The chapter traces the origins of the organisation from other organisations established in the earlier part of the twentieth century, to its consolidation in the 1960s and 1970s, and up till its eventual decline in the 1990s.

This brief history of the MEI offers the reader a context within which the organisation can be understood at operational level, which forms the basis of Chapter three. The sixties and seventies represented a period of growth for the MEI both in size and in their dealings with immigrants, and their programmes of assimilation. This chapter looks in detail at various programmes which the MEI established at operational level to aid in the assimilation of immigrants. The chapter also attempts, as the entire thesis does, to evaluate the impact of social forces and institutions, such as the church and nationalism, on the policies of the MEI.

In the final chapter the impact of the MEI on immigrant assimilation was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The MEI's records of assimilation, naturalisation and other services offered by the organisation were analysed, in order to evaluate the scope of the organisation's impact in these fields in context to national immigration to South Africa. At this point it must be reiterated that no attempt was made in this study to undertake an extensive quantitative study, but rather to utilise the MEI's own records, in an attempt to analyse their impact as an organisation of cultural assimilation in context with immigration as a whole to South Africa.

Chapters two, three and four were compiled utilising mostly publications and material accessed from the MEI itself. In chapter two a number of works on the predecessors of the MEI were analysed to understand the run up to the establishment of the MEI. These included Eike de Lange's *Die Geskiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds*, the *Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuss's Zehn Jahre Südafrikanische Hilfsarbeit für Deutschland*

and W. van der Merwe's *Vir 'n Blanke Volk: Die Verhaal van die Duitse weeskinders van 1948*.

Valuable information was found in the library of the Theological Seminary of the University of Stellenbosch regarding the co-operation between the MEI and the Afrikaner churches. Sources utilised included the Dutch Reformed Church's (DRC) minutes from their *Algemene Sinode* and those of the *Raad van die Kerke* meetings and *Die Kerkbode*, the official publication of the DRC.

After initial reservations from the MEI board in Pretoria, limited access to the MEI's records was attained. The bulk of the MEI's documents which were used to investigate their role as an organisation dealing with immigrant assimilation, were publications of the MEI and the annual reports of their head office (Pretoria) and those of their regional offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Pretoria and other major centres throughout South Africa.

The MEI only begun keeping official and reliable records of the assimilation and other activities after a 1966 decision to do so. Therefore annual reports of the organisation and its regional branches only exist from 1967 onwards. Much of the analysis of the MEI on operational level (chapter three) and the evaluation of the MEI's impact (chapter four) is based on the records found within these annual reports.

It must therefore, of necessity be qualified, based on the above, that limited access meant that the MEI refused permission to access archival materials such as correspondence and minutes of meetings. Needless to say, the lack of access to such materials, limited the scope of this study into the workings of the MEI. Nonetheless, it is felt that the annual reports, publications and a number of files on immigrant assimilation accessed from the Western Cape branch of the MEI, still allowed for a detailed and thorough study which accurately reflects the operations and impact of this organisation on the assimilation of immigrants to South Africa.

Roland Slater
Stellenbosch
November 2005

1. IMPORTANT CONCEPTS PERTAINING TO IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY

(a) **Introduction**

One of the central themes of this thesis is identity and the process of immigration's impact on the identity of immigrants. In order to effectively analyse processes such as the assimilation and naturalisation of immigrants the concepts which are central to the process as a whole need to be unpacked. These include, as mentioned, identity, the process of identity formation, naturalisation and assimilation.

The first section of this chapter will deal with the concepts of identity and identity formation. The position of this thesis is that the process of immigration, coupled with assimilation, has a marked effect on the identity of immigrants, and as will be indicated, on the society into which they are attempting assimilation. These phenomena will be explained by the analyses of other works pertaining to such concepts in their general form, and also with particular emphasis on identity and the immigration process.

The processes of assimilation and naturalisation will be discussed in the second section of the chapter. Immigrants are subject to a process of integration into their new country of domicile, which allows them to become meaningful and constructive members of their new society, as opposed to becoming isolated from and marginalised by the dominant population of their new country. In this section previous works pertaining to assimilation, integration, absorption and naturalisation will be analysed to explain these phenomena, and how they have altered over time due to influences from the academe, governments and experts in the field of immigration.

In this chapter it is essential to unpack the aforementioned concepts in order to understand how they manifested themselves in the South African context. An in-depth analysis of these concepts will be entered into concentrating on some of the more important definitions and theories. In addition, these processes will be surveyed as they

were manifested in South Africa and thereby the international and current discourses will be applied to the South African context, particularly by looking at the *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* (MEI's) programmes of assimilation and naturalisation.

(b) Identity and Identity Formation

Identity and identity formation are analysed together in this chapter due to their indivisible nature. Identity, arguably, represents an individual's specific constituent self-description or self-assumption, whilst the process of identity formation represents the attainment, creation or adoption of the traits which constitute the said identity. Thus, it could be argued, one cannot possess a specific identity without undergoing the process of identity formation.

(i) Identity

Preston argues that the construction of personal identity is a complex process of attained and assimilated traits on the part of the individual and is thoroughly elaborate. Personal identity can also be seen as a conglomeration of an individual's understandings and meanings which he or she attributes to their environment. Identity, according to Preston, is also structured and "find[s] expression in particular social contexts."¹ He asserts that identity is facilitated by three important processes or ideas which are interdependent of one another – locale, network and memory.² An individual's identity is affected by his or her locale, geography or environment. The locale points to the specific social environment within which the individual functions and its influence on his or her habits and routine activities. It includes community or folk knowledge or ideologies which exercise an affect on the individual's identity.³ Within this locale or environment the individual interacts within different networks of exchange (with people or groups), or

¹ P.W. Preston, *Political/Cultural Identity: Citizens and Nations in a Global Era*, p.4.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p.9.

what Du Preez calls identity frames – or a system of relations⁴, who share particular interests or concerns. Lastly Preston argues that the above interactions are brought together in the sphere of continually reworked memory.⁵ Here Preston refers to the memory and understanding of situations or past constructions, such as locale and networks of exchange, which give meaning to their identity. Memory is often responsible for the invocation of an “other” against which the group is thereby defined, for example, nation.⁶

To simplify what Preston calls the above, a substantive ethnographic or biographical report⁷ of identity, one can utilise a simple application in the South African context. According to Preston an immigrant’s identity will be affected, for instance, by the fact that he or she lives in South Africa, or a specific region of the country, which possesses its own anachronistic folk knowledge or ideologies. Secondly, within that region or part of South Africa the individual will be exposed to a number of different social networks of exchange, such as their family, peer groups, racial groups and in the immigrant’s case, different South African groups. These interactions and locale (being South Africa or a region of the country) will then also become ensconced in the individual’s social memory. In essence it could be argued that an important component of an individual’s identity, is his or her process of remembering how their identity has been constructed, and which social processes constitute this identity.

Preston goes on to describe identity as “the outcome of a complex series of social processes, [which do] not arise spontaneously but [are] learned and relearned over time. ...Identity does not express an essence but rather an acquired set of characteristics.” Furthermore, identity and aspects of identity possess multiple readings or representations.⁸

⁴ P. du Preez, *The Politics of Identity: Ideology and the Human Image*, p.3.

⁵ P.W. Preston, *Political/Cultural Identity*, p.4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Multiple readings or representations denote the fact that an individual possesses more than one identity. Identities can be simple in nature, such as one's gender orientation as a man or woman, or they can be complex, such as one's political identity or identity with a specific complex nation, or social grouping. Such a group or national identity is often the sum total of a number of further individual traits (or identities) which together represent an accepted isolated or exclusive identity. For example, an Afrikaner identity might be composed of different identities such as being white, Afrikaans-speaking, or an affiliation to one of the Reformed churches. These characteristics or components are separate identities in their own right, but when combined they create a compound identity which is said to be representative of an Afrikaner identity. The above idea can be problematic, in that the compound identity (e.g. Afrikaner identity) is not determined by a particular set of identities, but rather an aggregate of these identities. Thus an individual who speaks Afrikaans, is white, but belongs to the Methodist Church, as opposed to one of the Reformed Churches, would essentially still be accepted as an Afrikaner, although it must be stated that the 'lacking' church affiliation might affect the socio-political standing of the individual. In other words, such an individual might be seen to be less of an Afrikaner due to his or her not belonging to an 'Afrikaner' church.

The above example points to another important aspect of identity and political perceptions and control of identity. The notion that an Afrikaner represents an individual who is white, speaks Afrikaans and belongs to one of the Reformed churches is an identity trap. An identity trap is the collective political interpretation, or identity frame, of what a particular identity entails. According to Du Preez an agent who succeeds in imposing an identity frame on another has got the other in an identity trap.⁹ Needless to say the agent must be in a position of political power in order to assert upon others what constitutes a particular identity. This can be in the form of a leader or a political organisation or party, such as the National Party, at the height of its power (in keeping with the Afrikaner theme).

⁹ P. du Preez, *The Politics of Identity*, pp.6, 30-31.

Du Preez argues that the different constituents of a compound identity possess immense political ramifications. According to him without a common identity, individuals cannot form a collective agent, or in this context a collective political agent.¹⁰ Furthermore he argues that one of the consequences of the political consolidation of an identity system is that certain persons are privileged.¹¹ Du Preez argues the fact that political organisations will contest for privileges for certain identities, or even collective identities (compound identities, such as an Afrikaner identity).¹² This being the case, it would make sense that certain identities could become more attractive to individuals in that they would assist in empowering individuals socially, politically and ultimately even economically. The possession of an Afrikaner identity in the mid-twentieth century or a post-1994 African identity, allowed for the empowerment of individuals in possession of these identities, as those at the political helm of society (the government) contested for privilege, or at least protection, for these individuals. Du Preez elucidates this argument most poignantly with his summation that identity is validated while tangible advantage is obtained.¹³

A compound identity can also be equated to person, in the holistic sense, or the sum-total of an individual's identity traits. For Du Preez the distinction between identity and person is clear. "Identity is appearance-for-self-and-others; person is a system of identities."¹⁴ For the purposes of this study Du Preez's person is represented by the sum-total of all an individual's identities which combine to form his or her aggregate or compound identity.

Du Preez highlights the fact that not only can a specific compound identity allow for political empowerment due to the political dominance of that identity, but that specific components (or identities) of an individual's compound identity such as his or her race, religion, gender or language can also in their own right denote further empowerment, or

¹⁰ P. du Preez, *The Politics of Identity*, p.3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.6.

exclusivity to such an individual.¹⁵ Using the South African example again, it could be argued that although English-speaking South Africans or European immigrants were politically less empowered during the apartheid era than their Afrikaner counterparts, a component of their compound identity, their race (being white) alone denoted them a level of privilege superior to black South Africans. Some immigrants are furthermore empowered and better regarded by the recipient society than others, due to the fact that certain aspects of their compound identity are seen to be more reconcilable with their new society.¹⁶

Preston's analysis of identity encompasses what he refers to as necessary and contingent change in identities.¹⁷ Contingent change in identity refers to an individual's personal choice and disposition, or a decision on the individual's part to alter or absorb other social aspects to their identity. The former, necessary change, is of importance when looking at the process of immigration and its affect on the identity of individuals. Preston argues that necessary changes in identity are precipitated by (changes in) fundamental structural patterns of social organisation.¹⁸ Thus an immigrant finding him or herself in a new country with new institutions (locale) and with different social networks of exchange would invariably be forced to change certain aspects of his or her identity(ies) in order to facilitate meaningful integration into their new society.

Identity and identities are not fixed but will change as factors such as locale, networks of exchange and memory are altered within a new environment or country, for instance.¹⁹ Echoing this, Erik H. Erikson, a social psychologist, argues that identity is never 'established' as an 'achievement' in the form of a personality armour or of anything static

¹⁵ P. du Preez, *The Politics of Identity*, pp.1-2.

¹⁶ See R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.18. In Taft's study it was indicated that Australians in Perth were better disposed to British immigrants than non-English speaking immigrants such as Italians, Polish or Dutch.

¹⁷ P.W. Preston, *Political/Cultural Identity*, p.5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

and unchangeable.²⁰ Preston is, however, critical of notions held by postmodernists that identity is constantly fluid in nature and that the individual shifts between identities in order to attain certain goals and satisfy desires. Postmodernists argue that the global industrial-capitalist system has invited the voluntaristic affirmation of chosen lifestyles and thus identities.²¹ This belief would thus argue that an English-speaking South African would shift readily between an English and Afrikaner identity where and when it would empower or privilege him or her. Preston rather argues that individuals would alter their identity(ies) as pressures are brought to bear upon their locale, networks of exchange or memory, but not shift to a completely different identity, as the postmodernists would argue.

An Afrikaner in the twenty-first century defines his or her identity differently to an Afrikaner from the 1950s, due to the alteration of his or her locales, networks of exchange and memory. The Afrikaner today interacts differently with black South Africans (networks of exchange), South Africa (his or her locale), has changed from an apartheid based society to an inclusive society, and he or she even remembers (memory) their history differently. All these factors have arguably contributed to a shift in the compound Afrikaner identity, but not left Afrikaners in a position where they are willing to float between identities as it suits them, as the postmodernists have posited. In essence Preston argues that one should view identity as a shifting balance between what is privately remembered and what is currently publicly demanded.²²

Social Anthropologist, Anthony P. Cohen, argues what can be viewed to be a compromise between Preston and the postmodernists' views on identity changes and emphasis on particular components of the compound identity facilitated by different social contexts. Cohen speaks of a 'culture of segmentation' when discussing social actors' interactions with their networks of exchange.²³ Cohen argues that a person

²⁰ E.H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p.24.

²¹ P.W. Preston, *Political/Cultural Identity*, p.5.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ A.P. Cohen, *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, p.93.

identifies with different entities, and with different levels of society for different purposes.²⁴ Although this statement might lead someone to the conclusion that Cohen in fact agrees with postmodernists, the statement denotes a much more complex process.

Cohen is asserting the individuality which is possessed by social actors, and argues that individuals do not passively accept perceived notions of what their identity or role in networks of exchange should represent. He asserts that segmentary boundaries which are formally constituted by such diacritica as dialect, knowledge, sectarian identity or organisational specialism are sufficiently plastic to leave members with enough scope for interpretative manoeuvre that they can construct them symbolically to express their own particular interests and attitudes.²⁵ In essence the social group, tribe, nation or network of exchange exercises an affect on the individual's identity, but the individual possesses the agency to determine which aspects of his or her identity these organisations or groups will be able to influence and which not.

Cohen's position arguably indicates that individuals are self-empowered to resist identity traps which are set for them by organisations or groups, such as political parties or cultural organisations. An immigrant could thus adopt much of the Afrikaner culture, but will remain empowered to, for instance, resist changing his or her religious denomination, whilst remaining secure in his or her new adopted identity as a 'white (Afrikaner) South African'.

(ii) *Identity Formation*

In this study it has been decided to utilise the concept of identity formation to describe the process which immigrants undergo when they find themselves in a new environment (country). Identity formation is an ongoing process which occurs from birth and ends at death²⁶, thus it might seem problematic that the process of immigration would be

²⁴ A.P. Cohen, *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*, p.93.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.94.

²⁶ E.H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p.23.

described, utilising this term, as the process has begun long before their immigration, or since their birth. In effect the choice of the term is justified by the fact that the formation of identity ends when an individual becomes deceased, thus an immigrant's identity, and any person's for that matter, is continually formed regardless of their stage in life.

Erikson describes the process of identity formation as a ongoing process which changes and develops constantly. The process 'begins' somewhere in the first true 'meeting' of mother and baby as two persons who can touch and recognize each other, and it does not 'end' until a person's power of mutual affirmation wanes.²⁷ This argument is of essential importance when one attempts to ascertain the affect of immigration, and a new society, on an immigrant's identity. If Erikson's assertion is true, it means that an immigrant's identity will be altered by the new environment in which he or she lives. Essentially the immigrant will not be able to maintain his or her identity, as it was before he or she immigrated, without at least subtle changes occurring in the new society. Identifying the above, Eisenstadt argues that the institutionalising of roles can thus best be seen as a process of transformation of the immigrant's primary basic groups and fields of social relations – those groups which are the ground of his or her active participation in society.²⁸

Erikson's work on identity deals in particular with the development of the identity of youths, and the processes which affect such an individual's identity.²⁹ However, it is arguably possible to apply his findings to an adult immigrant and his or her experiences of the immigration process. The stages of identity formation in the youth share parallels with the processes and mechanisms (such as the *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie*) which the immigrant is exposed to, and utilises, in the new country, albeit by choice in most cases. Essentially a youth and an immigrant have much in common, in that they are both faced by a new world with new experiences. They both utilise tools and agents in order to make sense of their new world, and thereby approach a stage of maturity or

²⁷ E.H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p.23.

²⁸ S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants*, p.7.

²⁹ See E.H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*.

consolidation of their identities, as they become more familiar with their new environment and the way in which it functions. Erikson's stages of identity formation will be summarised after which the parallels between the experiences of a youth and that of an immigrant will be indicated. For the sake of this thesis it is important to understand the process of identity formation as a whole, but as mentioned before, theories such as Erikson's are also of importance as they pertain to all stages of the individual's life span and development.

According to Erikson, the three stages or mechanisms utilised by an individual in constituting his or her identity are Introjection, Identifications and Identity formation.³⁰ Introjection refers to the first phase of development at which stage the individual establishes a bond with its most important caregivers (parents). Once this has been achieved the individual has reached a stage where he or she can begin to identify with a wider range of objects, ideas and individuals. This stage is known as the identifications stage. The individual, secure in his or her primary relation, begins to expand to other trustworthy stimuli, such as family and friends, thereby extending their identity. Erikson argues that the phase of identity formation begins where the usefulness of identifications end. The identity formation stage occurs when the individual begins to expand beyond his or her immediate environment to society and organisations of society. The individual essentially becomes a component of the greater society due to a process of mutual recognition – the individual begins to identify with society and society reciprocates by identifying with the individual in return.³¹

This final stage in the process of identity formation is the most complex of the stages, as the process might not always run as smoothly as desired. Society might well not identify with the individual, in that he or she might possess attributes which are considered to be unacceptable or deviant as far as the 'whole' is concerned. The individual might also be faced by what can be called an identity crisis, similar to Du Preez's identity trap.³² If he

³⁰ E.H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, pp.159-161.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² P. du Preez, *The Politics of Identity*, pp.6, 30-31.

or she adopts the identity which society expects from him or her, but is not entirely comfortable in this role the individual might feel that his or her changed identity does not add up to anything ‘identical with him or herself.’³³

When one considers Erikson's process of identity formation, Introjection in the case of immigration, is the least important or changeable factor for the immigrant. Introjection occurs during the infancy of an individual and his or her identity. The immigrant has by the time he or she has moved to another country already identified with their caregivers. The stage of introjection arguably occurs solely at this early stage and will not be repeated during later stages of an individual's lifetime.

Identifications, it could be said, differ to introjection, in that it is possible for an individual at any stage of his or her lifetime to identify with new persons, objects and ideas. With this idea it becomes possible to apply Erikson's ideas on identity formation of youths to an adult such as an immigrant. In their new country immigrants will be exposed to new networks of exchange, such as their neighbours, work colleagues or organisations, such as the *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie*, which can contribute to altering and extending the formation of their identity.

Erikson's stage of identity formation is also applicable to the process of immigration and its affect on the identity of the immigrant. Once the previously discussed stage of identifications has occurred the immigrant will in essence extend his or her participation within society and its institutions and organisations, such as political parties and once again, organisations such as the MEI. According to Eisenstadt, the immigrant will then begin to identify with the new society and its institutions and in turn, by means of a reciprocal recognition, society will begin to identify with the immigrant. Essentially the immigrant becomes an active member of the new society affected by it and affecting it in turn.³⁴

³³ E.H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p.160.

³⁴ See S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrant*, p.9, for an example of how this process of identity formation occurs with regard to immigrants.

Eisenstadt describes the above-mentioned process in the following way.

“First, he [the immigrant] has to acquire various skills, to learn to make use of various new mechanisms – language, technical opportunities, ecological orientations, etc. – without which he can hardly exist for long in his new setting. Secondly, he has to learn how to perform various new roles necessary in the new society. Thirdly, he has gradually to rebuild and re-form his idea of himself and his status-image by acquiring a new set of values, and testing it out in relation to the new roles available to and required of him.”³⁵

(c) **Assimilation and Naturalisation**

Naturalisation is often a resulting state which follows on from successful assimilation. Immigrants who are absorbed into their new society will often decide to adopt citizenship after certain criteria have been met, such as a five year stay in their new country. Immigrants are not generally obliged by law to take this step and therefore many immigrants choose not to apply for citizenship once these criteria have been met. The decision to adopt citizenship is influenced by a number of different circumstances which will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is important from the outset to highlight the fact that the immigrant does not necessarily have to undergo these processes in order to secure his or her habitation in the new society, unless it is required by the recipient country. Examples do exist where immigration policies were created, utilising assimilation and naturalisation as tenets of their constitution, and in these examples immigrants were forced to undergo at least the process of assimilation, in order to secure their domicile in their new country.³⁶

(i) *Assimilation*

³⁵ See S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrant*, pp.6-7, for an example of how this process of identity formation occurs with regard to immigrants.

³⁶ See M. Markovic and L. Manderson, “Crossing National Boundaries: Social Identity Formation Among Recent Immigrant Women in Australia from Former Yugoslavia”, In *Identity: International Journal of Theory and Research*, pp.305-306; R.P. van Staden, “Immigrasie na Suid-Afrika vergeleke met die van Kanada en Australië oor die tydperk 1925-1961”, p.7.

For the purposes of his study, on the assimilation of immigrants in Western Australia, Ronald Taft defines assimilation as “the process whereby the immigrants and the native population become more alike as a result of interaction.”³⁷ Isidore Donsky argues that “Assimilation is finally achieved when former immigrants or their descendants can no longer be distinguished from nationals and are not conscious of their original characteristics”.³⁸ Van Staden, quoting the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines assimilation as “the action of making or becoming alike; the state of being like; similarity; resemblance; likeness.”³⁹ Theron argues that assimilation is a one-sided process, whereby an immigrant adapts to the best of his or her ability to the norms of their new society and adopts the cultural pattern which exists in that country.⁴⁰

Donsky’s definition assumes a more radical change than that of Taft, Theron or Van Staden’s, in that it argues that assimilated immigrants become indistinguishable from nationals and furthermore are no longer conscious of their original characteristics, whereas Taft’s definition goes only as far as to denote a greater likeness between the immigrant and the nationals of their new state. Theron’s definition refers to an immigrant’s attempts to adapt as far as possible to the habits and cultural patterns of his or her new society. The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition also uses terms such as *resemblance* and *similarity*, as opposed to Donsky’s *indistinguishable* which denotes an immutability or definitive result of the process of assimilation.

Donsky’s definition is thus problematic, as it argues for the existence of a finite result to the process of assimilation. Certain immigrants will be considered to be assimilated, even though they still utilise the language of their original country or other cultural practices, due to the fact that they are largely integrated into the social networks and culture of their new homeland. Donsky, in an attempt to explain his argument, states that full integration is unlikely to occur in the first generation, but rather in the generations

³⁷ R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen: A Survey of Studies of Immigrant Assimilation in Western Australia*, p.4.

³⁸ I.J. Donsky, “Aspects of the Immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970”, p.48.

³⁹ J.F. Loedolff, “Die Nederlandse Immigrant in Pretoria”, p.391.

⁴⁰ E. Theron, “Die Inskakeling van die Immigrant in die Gemeenskapslewe van Ons Land”, p.13.

which follow, and are brought up and socialised within the culture of the new country.⁴¹ Nonetheless, it is important to critique his definition as evidence exists that much later generations still utilise cultural practices of their ancestors' original homeland, whilst being almost entirely integrated on other levels. An example of this could be Italian immigrants' children and grandchildren who continue to cook Italian food, support Italian football clubs and even speak Italian, whilst living a completely integrated life in the recipient country of their immigrant ancestors.⁴² Furthermore, it is questionable as to whether one should apply the process of assimilation to a second or third generation citizen, or later generations for that matter. If this was the case a large percentage of the world's population would arguably be undergoing the process of assimilation due to the fact that their ancestors, albeit having immigrated decades or centuries ago, were not original citizens of their country. In a nutshell, the argument being posited is that the process of assimilation should only be attributed to a minimal amount of generations and should be seen as a finite process which comes to fruition by, for instance, the second or third generation of new citizens.

At this stage it is essential to highlight the distinction between the terms assimilation and integration. The term assimilation has often been misused in immigration literature, as describing a definitive and immutable process of total change on the part of the immigrant to resemble entirely the people of the recipient nation. It is for this reason that certain historians and social scientists called for the use of the term integration to describe the process which immigrants undergo when settling in a new country. According to Van Staden integration can be seen as “the making up or composition of a whole by adding together or combining the separate parts or elements; combination into an integral whole; a making whole or entire.”⁴³

Integration, as discerned from this definition, thus indicates that the end result – the culture or identity of the recipient nation – is not complete, but is rather changing and

⁴¹ I.J. Donsky, “Aspects of the Immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970”, p.48.

⁴² *Ibid.* and R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.4.

⁴³ J.F. Loedolff, “Die Nederlandse Immigrant in Pretoria”, p.391.

continues to ‘become’, with no immutable ending. Echoing these sentiments Theron argues that integration emphasises clearly that adaptation must occur both on the part of the immigrant, and the non-immigrant.⁴⁴

At the Unesco Conference of 1956 held in Havana, Cuba, the concepts of integration and assimilation also came under the spotlight. It was also felt that the definitions of these concepts needed to be addressed in order to allow for an understanding of the processes of migration and absorption which immigrants are subject to.⁴⁵ Borrie argues that “as applied to a social context the word ‘assimilation’ has frequently retained a substantial trace of its physiological analogy.”⁴⁶

Borrie points out that the term assimilation had, however, been utilised in the strict physiological sense, by social scientists and policy makers on immigration and that for them assimilation had frequently been conceived as a situation of complete conformity – at all social and cultural levels – with the society of the receiving area.⁴⁷ It is further highlighted by Borrie that this definition of assimilation gave rise to ideas and policies regarding immigration, such as those of the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. These included terms such as ‘Americanization’ and ‘melting pot’ which discerned that only assimilable immigrants, who would easily become a part of the fixed total American culture and way of life, would be accepted.⁴⁸ This policy or ideal of assimilation was not isolated to America, but was a determining factor in both Australia and South Africa’s immigration policies during the same period. Prior to the 1960s immigrants to Australia were required to abandon their languages and cultural practices for that of the dominant Anglo-Saxon Australian culture to secure their domicile in the

⁴⁴ E. Theron. “Die Inskakeling van die Immigrant in die Gemeenskapslewe van Ons Land”, p.13.

⁴⁵ W.D. Borrie, *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants: A Survey based upon the Papers and Proceedings of the Unesco Conference held in Havana, April 1956*, p.89.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.89-90.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ W.D. Borrie, *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, p.90.

Commonwealth.⁴⁹ The South African Regulation of Immigration Act of 1913 as interpreted in the 1960s stipulated that the applicant for a permit of residence must also within a reasonable period after his or her arrival in the Republic be able to identify with the white population of South Africa and thereby become a desirable citizen of the Republic.⁵⁰

Cultural pluralism replaced the reigning discourse of total assimilation during the mid-twentieth century as it was accepted that immigrants and the cultural practices of their original homeland, contributed to the ongoing creation of the culture of his or her new homeland due to reciprocal adjustment between the immigrant and the culture of his adopted country.⁵¹ Consensus was, however, achieved on the point that cultural pluralism, although ideal, did not detract from the fact that full integration or assimilation were required by immigrants with regard to civic, legal and political allegiance to their new homeland.⁵² These new approaches to immigration, whilst encouraging the use of the term integration, also led to a review and alteration of the term assimilation, as can be seen below.

The social definition of the term assimilation was, however, challenged, and it is these challenges which have arguably allowed for the continued utilisation of the term assimilation with regard to the process of ‘absorption’ which immigrants undergo, even in the twenty-first century.⁵³

⁴⁹ M. Markovic and L. Manderson, “Crossing National Boundaries: Social Identity Formation Among Recent Immigrant Women in Australia from Former Yugoslavia”,: In *Identity: International Journal of Theory and Research*, pp.305-306; J. Wilton, “Identity, Racism and Multiculturalism”, p.86.

⁵⁰ R.P. van Staden, “Immigrasie na Suid-Afrika vergeleke met die van Kanada en Australië oor die tydperk 1925-1961”, p.7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.98.

⁵² W.D. Borrie, *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, p.98; R.P. van Staden, “Immigrasie na Suid-Afrika Vergeleke met die van Kanada en Australië oor die Tydperk 1925-1961”, p.105.

⁵³ See W.D. Borrie, *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, p.89-91., J.F. Loedolff, “Die Nederlandse Immigrant in Pretoria”, p.396-397; And R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.5, for a discussion on the reciprocal role which immigrants and non-immigrants play in recreating the culture of a nation.

It can thus be deduced from the above, that the meaning of the term assimilation has altered during the course of the twentieth century, both with regard to official immigration policies of countries and in the academic sphere. Originally the term assimilation denoted the specific process whereby an immigrant, once in his or her new country of domicile, abandoned all of the cultural traits of their previous nation in entirety for those traits of the new country. By the mid-twentieth century the definition of assimilation had become less restrictive and became accepted as the term describing the inevitable process which an immigrant and the receiving country undergo as a result of immigration. This newer definition pointed to the fact that immigrants do not depart entirely from their previous cultural practices, but rather adapt these and adopt new traits and customs from their new country of domicile, whilst in turn offering aspects of their original culture to enrich the existing culture, customs and traditions of their new homeland.

It is the second definition of the term assimilation which will be a focal point of this study on European immigration to South Africa. Although, as has been indicated, official policy prior to the sixties, called for the total assimilation of immigrants to South Africa, this study of identity and the affect of immigration on the identity of individuals will of necessity require the utilisation of the latter definition. As will be indicated immigrants to South Africa rarely severed themselves entirely from the cultural aspects of their country of origin, but rather embraced certain aspects of white South African culture out of their own, or for practical purposes, such as language. It is these steps or phases of the process of assimilation which will be discussed in the next subsection.

(ii) *The Assimilation Process*

According to Loedolff, the assimilation process occurs gradually and its pace is determined by differing circumstances. These circumstances include the nationality and its accompanying cultural traits of the individual, the age of the immigrant(s), whether an individual immigrates alone or as a part of a family, or if a family immigrates alone or as

a part of a group of families.⁵⁴ An English person (British) would be able to adapt more rapidly in the United States than an Eastern European as he or she has the language skills and shares a number of cultural traits with the Americans, which the Eastern European must learn from the beginning. Younger immigrants are more likely to adapt to the new circumstances of the new country than their older counterparts. An individual immigrant will be forced to interact more often with people of his new country, whilst a family will maintain much of their practices, language and cultural traits of their country of origin within their home environment. A group of families, or community of immigrants, will much as a single family, interact and share the cultural traits of their country of origin more regularly within their community than an isolated immigrant family surrounded by families of their new country of domicile.⁵⁵ Notwithstanding the above, all immigrants undergo the assimilation process gradually and tend to undergo a number of stages or phases of this process.⁵⁶

(iii) *The Recipient Population*

In order to understand the assimilation process as a whole, more must be analysed than the immigrant's subjective experiences of the process alone. According to Taft "the assimilation of immigrants must be studied in respect to the social environment into which they enter."⁵⁷ Eisenstadt argues that:

"if the ultimate success of institutionalization, from the immigrant's point of view, is the attainment of a new stable status-image, then clearly it entails full acceptance by and participation in the absorbing society. Otherwise the main conditions for acquiring a stable status-image are not fulfilled, and the immigrant continues to be an alien in his new surroundings."⁵⁸

⁵⁴ J.F. Loedolff, "Die Nederlandse Immigrant in Pretoria", p.402.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*; R.P. van Staden, "Immigrasie na Suid-Afrika Vergeleke met die van Kanada en Australië oor die Tydperk 1925-1961", p.104.

⁵⁶ For a detailed model on the process of assimilation see R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, pp.5-7, 11-12.

⁵⁷ R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.13.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11.

Contact with the receiving population of the immigrant's new country is arguably paramount to the success of his or her assimilation. The attitudes of the recipient population towards the immigrant can affect the efficacy of his or her integration into the new society.⁵⁹ Needless to say, if immigrants are socially rejected by the recipient population their chances of successful assimilation into that recipient population would be hampered. As Taft states, the experience of prejudice and discrimination plays an important part in the degree to which an immigrant becomes assimilated.⁶⁰ Prejudice and discrimination are often the result of differing aspects of the recipient population's culture and that of the immigrant, and occurs when neither are able to understand or tolerate the other's social, political and cultural beliefs and values. In essence it could be argued that it is not only of importance for the immigrant to be prepared and 'educated' as to the requirements and nature of their new country, but that it is essential for the recipient population to be 'educated' to understand and accept immigrants' and their beliefs too.

The above preparation of the recipient population for interaction with immigrants was arguably one of the roles which organisations such as the *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* assumed. The MEI articulated the importance of the recipient population in the assimilation process in pamphlets such as *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, which was issued as a guide for 'immigrant friends' to assist them in helping immigrants. Quoting the former National Party Minister of Immigration, Dr. C.P. Mulder, the pamphlet states that the integration of the immigrant cannot occur in a lecture hall or at a single meeting of immigrants. The assimilation process must take place in his or her suburb, place of work and everyday life. Assimilation is the task of the neighbour, colleague and friends.⁶¹

Statements such as this by the Immigration Minister, highlight the importance which is placed on assimilation of immigrants as assisted by the local population. In order for the

⁵⁹ M. Colin (Ed.), *The Integration of Czechoslovakian Refugees in Pretoria: An exploratory Study*, p.8.

⁶⁰ R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.19.

⁶¹ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte: 'n Handleiding vir Vooggesinne en Immigrantevriende*, p.7.

recipient population to engage with the immigrants and assist in their assimilation, there must by virtue exist an environment of friendliness and acceptance of immigrants and the differences between them and the new society. Needless to say, without the acceptance of the recipient population, the immigrants' chances of successful assimilation would be seriously hampered.

As has been indicated above, the attitude of the recipient population towards immigrants is a contributing factor towards the success or failure of successful assimilation on the part of the immigrant. Even less complex than the attitudes of the recipient population towards immigrant's, is social contact with the recipient population. The amount of contact which immigrants make socially with those of the recipient population will affect the success of their assimilation.

Bernardus in den Bosch found that the amount of contact between Dutch immigrants and South Africans had a marked affect on whether the immigrants were homesick or longed for the Netherlands. Dutch immigrants who spent most of their leisure time socialising with fellow Dutch immigrants were found to suffer from homesickness more often, whereas those who had regular social contact with South Africans were less likely to suffer from homesickness.⁶²

An extensive 1958 study done in Australia by Blair on immigrant children and their interaction with Australian children and *vice versa* also highlighted the role which prejudice plays in the assimilation of immigrants, and particularly children. Blair found that:

“Immigrants [children] are more likely to be accepted if they join in group activities, have a good sense of humour, are active in sport, and are not assertive, restless or untidy. Good looks, buoyant happiness and skill in games are not as important in the acceptance of immigrants as they are for the acceptance of Australians, while restraint of assertiveness is more important.”⁶³

⁶² B.J. in den Bosch, “De Verschillende Aspecten van de Aanpassing der Nederlandse Immigranten in Zuid-Afrika”, p.81.

⁶³ R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.20.

It is arguable that the traits which ensured acceptance for immigrants in the Australian classroom, were culture-specific Australian traits such as participation in sports and a good sense of humour. However, immigrant children were considered more acceptable if they remained silent and maintained cleanliness. It can be deduced that traits such as over-assertiveness, untidiness and restlessness represented stereotypes which Australian children attributed to immigrants, especially associating immigrant children with untidiness. Children who were thus more expressive, 'individual', assertive or different would stand less of a chance of being accepted by their Australian peers.

Prejudice towards immigrants occurred in South Africa too. A number of Afrikaners were against the immigration of British and even other Europeans due to the fact that it was felt that these immigrants would more readily align themselves with the English-speaking sector of the white population as opposed to the Afrikaans-speaking sector. Some feared that Roman Catholic immigration would swamp the Afrikaner culture and religion if it went unchecked.⁶⁴ The *Federale Raad van Afrikaanse Skakelkomitees* were of the opinion that long term efforts of new immigrants in general would upset the balance between the two white groups to the disadvantage of the Afrikaner.⁶⁵

J.C. Pretorius, researching in 1971 on the attitudes of South Africans towards immigrants, found that Afrikaans-speaking respondents showed greater social distance from foreign whites than the English-speaking respondents did.⁶⁶

Prejudice from the recipient population can lead to immigrants doing all in their power to prevent attracting negative feelings from their new compatriots, even if this entails neglecting their own cultural practices in order to illustrate their suitability and assimilation potential to their new society. A Chinese-Australian's experience illustrates this.

⁶⁴ I.J. Donsky, "Aspects of the Immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", p.57.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ M. Colin (Ed.), *The Integration of Czechoslovakian Refugees in Pretoria: An Exploratory Study*, p.10.

“Dad was well into the Australian way of living and we all spoke...English...and we had a white housekeeper.... He always said, you have to learn Australian, you have to learn how to become a good Australian. And we were so busy trying to become good Australians that we forgot...that we were Chinese.”⁶⁷

In Australia Taft made a surprising finding with regard to discrimination and prejudice. His research discovered that paradoxically, it is often the least assimilated immigrants who experience no prejudice at all, since they have insufficient contact with Australians to do so.⁶⁸ For instance, an immigrant housewife would have little exposure to the people of the recipient country if she remained at home and did not attempt to socialise with these people. She would consequently not be the victim of discrimination, whilst her husband at work, exposed to people of the recipient country on a daily basis may well be the victim of prejudice everyday at work. However, it is essential to remember, as In den Bosch found, that the immigrant wife at home, might suffer from homesickness more readily than the husband who, even though exposed to prejudice, works and interacts with people of the recipient population.

(iv) *Naturalisation*

Naturalisation can be seen to represent the next phase in the immigration process, following the acceptance of the immigrant and his or her successful assimilation. It is, however, notable that successful assimilation is not generally a requirement for naturalisation, but that states usually require immigrants to reside for a minimum period (usually five years) in the country before they are allowed to become a citizen.⁶⁹ Exceptions exist as in South Africa's case. Immigrants who wanted to become South African citizens were required to reside in South Africa for a period of five years within eight years preceding the date of their application. The Immigration Ministry, however, stated that “a person who can read and write both English and Afrikaans satisfactorily

⁶⁷ J. Wilton, “Identity, Racism and Multiculturalism”, In R. Benmayor and A. Skotnes (Eds.), *Migration and Identity: International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, p.88.

⁶⁸ R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.19.

⁶⁹ W.D. Borrie (Ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrant*, p.147; Department of the Interior and Immigration, *How to become a South African Citizen*, p.2.

may submit an application after four years' permanent residence in South Africa."⁷⁰ This clause in the South African Citizenship Act No. 44 of 1949 indicates how states can encourage the acceptance of their policies (such as the duality of national languages in South Africa) by offering incentives such as the ability to apply for citizenship a year earlier, if one could illustrate an acceptance or conformity to these policies.

In 1951 the second Conference of Non-governmental Organisations interested in migration drew up "an ideal schedule of an immigrant's rights"⁷¹ wherein citizenship and naturalisation as a right of immigrants' was included. Point number eleven on the list stated "that every migrant should be allowed to acquire citizenship after a reasonable period of residence."⁷²

According to Borrie, naturalization means in effect that the immigrant has at least accepted, and feels he can perform, the universal roles required of him in his new society.⁷³ Borrie, however, highlights the fact that point nine of the "ideal schedule of an immigrant's rights" allows for the immigrant to retain his or her religious and cultural beliefs and the utilisation of their mother tongue. Borrie thus extends his definition or explanation of the naturalisation process in the following way:

[Naturalisation] may be taken as implying that the migrant feels that he has overcome at least the basic problems of adjustment and that he sees nothing incompatible in accepting the universal roles required of him by that act while at the same time retaining particularistic roles which still associate him with his original culture."⁷⁴

Another important aspect of naturalisation is that by renouncing citizenship of one country in favour of another, legal restrictions and obstacles are in effect removed from the dynamic allowing the immigrant to participate fully on all three major levels

⁷⁰ Department of the Interior and Immigration, *How to become a South African Citizen*, p.2. (underlining in original).

⁷¹ W.D. Borrie (Ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrant*, p.142.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.143.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.148.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

(economically, socially and politically) within his or her new country.⁷⁵ The citizen now shares the same set of rights and restrictions which the recipient population are subjected to. Echoing this sentiment Loedolff argues that although no-one is forced to accept citizenship of their new country, an unnaturalised immigrant possesses an inferior position and will therefore benefit if he or she chooses to become naturalised.⁷⁶

Immigrants, however, do not always desire to become naturalised, due to a number of reasons. Naturalisation requires the renouncement of allegiance and citizenship to one country in favour of the immigrant's new country of domicile. Taft found in Australia that although a number of immigrants identified more readily with Australia and were associated with Australian people more than their country of origin or fellow immigrants from these countries (30% and 60% respectively), still "the vast majority of the immigrants [were] cautious about adopting Australian nationality."⁷⁷ Perhaps absurd, but definitely worth mentioning was one of the reasons why Dutch immigrants to Australia did not want to accept Australian citizenship. Taft found that "they are slow to become naturalised, as they do not wish to exchange their own Queen for the Queen of England."⁷⁸ Although absurd, the monarch of one's country of origin, or any aspect for that matter, might be cause enough to not renounce one's citizenship to that state in favour of a new country, even if the new country offers greater opportunities for the future.

Research done by Loedolff and In den Bosch on Dutch immigrants in Pretoria and Cape Town and the South African Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) research on Czechoslovakian refugees in Pretoria, indicated that less than half of the immigrants or refugees in both cases were in favour of naturalisation. Few respondents in Pretoria (30,5%) and Cape Town (29%) were in favour of naturalisation.⁷⁹ Less than half of

⁷⁵ W.D. Borrie (Ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrant*, p.148.

⁷⁶ E. Theron, "Die Inskakeling van die Immigrant in die Gemeenskapslewe van Ons Land", p.20.

⁷⁷ R. Taft, *From Stranger to Citizen*, p.67.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁹ B. In den Bosch, "De Verskillende Aspekte van de Aanpassing der Nederlandse Immigranten in Zuid-Afrika", p.108.

Czechoslovakian refugees in Pretoria (45,5%) intended becoming naturalised.⁸⁰ Noteworthy was the fact that relatively large percentages of the Dutch and Czechoslovakians were undecided as to whether they would become naturalised. In Pretoria the figure was 41%, whilst in Cape Town 26,5% of people were uncertain.⁸¹ 39,8% of the Czechoslovakian refugees were undecided regarding naturalisation.⁸²

Donsky stated that over 75% of immigrants questioned in 1972 stated they would not become South African citizens and preferred to keep their options open, in case of political unrest and possible international confrontation against South Africa.⁸³ In den Bosch also found that the main argument of opponents of naturalisation was the racial situation in South Africa which they felt did not bode well for the future of the country.⁸⁴

Loedolff in his far-reaching study on the integration of Dutch immigrants in Pretoria summarised the major reasons why Dutch immigrants were in support of, or against applying for citizenship in South Africa. The majority of the reasons given for not applying for citizenship dealt with the fact that the immigrants enjoyed advantages by maintaining their Dutch citizenship, and also that they did not feel that they were truly South African and could thus not justify becoming citizens.

Seven percent wanted to maintain their Dutch citizenship due to the fact that they would lose their old-age pensions in the Netherlands. Ten percent of the Dutch respondents felt that their Dutch citizenship would facilitate their repatriation in instances of ill health or political unrest in South Africa. Some of the immigrants (5%) stated that they loved South Africa but would never be able to fit in, or be accepted by Afrikaners in South

⁸⁰ M. Colin (Ed.), *The Integration of Czechoslovakian Refugees in Pretoria: An Exploratory Study*, p.117.

⁸¹ B. In den Bosch, "De Verschillende Aspecten van de Aanpassing der Nederlandse Immigranten in Zuid-Afrika", p.109.

⁸² M. Colin (Ed.), *The Integration of Czechoslovakian Refugees in Pretoria: An Exploratory Study*, p.117.

⁸³ I.J. Donsky, "Aspects of the Immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", p.44.

⁸⁴ B. In den Bosch, "De Verschillende Aspecten van de Aanpassing der Nederlandse Immigranten in Zuid-Afrika", p.110.

Africa. “Jy is en bly ’n ‘Kaas’ al is jy ’n Suid-Afrikaanse burger” was how one of the immigrants described this issue.⁸⁵ Only four percent of Loedolff’s respondents, in contrast to In den Bosch and Donsky’s findings, felt that the racial situation and the threat of revolution was reason enough to avoid denouncing their citizenship.

The reasons for Dutch immigrants wanting to naturalise were much more wide-spread and diffuse than the previously-mentioned reasons against naturalisation. Certain immigrants (12%) felt that adopting South African citizenship would qualify them for advantages which citizens enjoy such as higher pay, pension schemes and permanent employment positions. Nine percent felt that immigrants are duty-bound to naturalise if they are earning a good living and benefiting from life in their new country. A further eight percent felt that they needed to naturalise for the benefit of their children. Their children would grow up in South Africa so it would be better for them to adopt South African citizenship for their benefit.⁸⁶

The justifications given by immigrants who were undecided as to whether they should immigrate were similar to those of the respondents who were against naturalisation. These included thirteen percent who felt that if they stayed on permanently in South Africa they would naturalise. Three percent felt that they did not feel at home in South Africa yet, but expected that this would change and they would then consider citizenship. Some of the respondents (2%) felt that the process of naturalisation was too expensive.⁸⁷

An important observation to be highlighted with the above examples in mind is the fact that once immigrants have received permanent residence in a country, they are relatively free to live, work and flourish in that country without sacrificing their citizenship and political rights in their country of origin. In essence it is in many ways an unnecessary endeavour to naturalise. The exception here of course is if an immigrant wants to participate politically in their new state and also receive benefits reserved solely for

⁸⁵ J.F. Loedolff, “Die Nederlandse Immigrant in Pretoria”, pp.492-493.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.493-494.

⁸⁷ J.F. Loedolff, “Die Nederlandse Immigrant in Pretoria”, pp.494-495.

citizens of that country. This sentiment was expressed, rather revolutionary for the 1950s, by some of Loedolff's Dutch immigrants (3%) who felt that they were neither South African nor Dutch, but 'global citizens' living in the entire world regardless of the particular country in which they were.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ J.F. Loedolff, "Die Nederlandse Immigrant in Pretoria", pp., p.493.

2. AN HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF THE MAATSKAPPY VIR EUROPESE IMMIGRASIE (MEI) 1949-2004

(a) Introduction

In this chapter a brief summary of the history of the MEI will be ventured, from its inception to the present (2005). It is essential to understand the MEI in its totality in order to allow for a further analysis of the organisation's policies and programmes of assimilation and naturalisation for immigrants. By understanding the origins, influences and aims of the organisation, one can gain a greater understanding of the programmes created, means instituted, and decisions made on behalf of immigrants and the South African public.

The MEI was born from the work of other social organisations, which dealt with the immigration of German Orphans in the wake of the Second World War, such as the *Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfssausschuss* (DAHA), the *Vroue-noodleningskomitee* (VNLK) and the *Dietse Kinderfonds* (DKF). In essence the founding of the MEI was inspired by the attempts of these organisations to find new homes for German orphans in South Africa. It is for this reason that the DAHA, VNLK and DKF, and their role in facilitating the establishment of the MEI will be discussed briefly in this chapter.

The three Afrikaner churches, the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK), the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (GK) and the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* (NHK), expressed an interest in attracting Protestant immigrants from North-Western Europe during the 1940s.¹ It is therefore not surprising that by the 1950s they became increasingly involved and influential within the MEI. The involvement of the churches in the MEI is illustrated by the fact that seven of the eleven chairs of the board between 1949 and 2004 were ministers of these three churches.

¹ MEI, "Die verhouding tussen die MEI en die Kerk", p.3.

From 1949 to 1966 the MEI was involved in the active recruitment of prospective immigrants in Western Europe. Agents worked in Europe and the MEI placed advertisements in European newspapers in order to attract potential immigrants. This early period represented the consolidation of the MEI as a non-profit organisation dealing with the recruitment, assimilation and naturalisation of immigrants to South Africa.

In 1966 the Department of Immigration, which was established in 1961, suspended the MEI's status as an immigrant-recruitment organisation, and it was decided that the organisation would henceforth deal solely with the assimilation and naturalisation of immigrants within South Africa.² This period (1966-1994), and sub-section, is essential in that it will be formative in extending the foundation of this thesis on the assimilation and naturalisation of immigrants to South Africa. It was during this period that, free from recruitment, the MEI could focus its full attention and energy on assimilating and naturalising immigrants according to their understanding of what an assimilated immigrant to South Africa should represent.

The chapter will conclude with a brief analysis of the post-apartheid challenges which the MEI has faced. These include the decrease in European immigration to South Africa due to altered government immigration policies and the economic and socio-political situation which South Africa in the nineties and the beginning of the twenty-first century has faced. The post-apartheid government has also chosen to not subsidise or fund organisations such as the MEI, which enjoyed this during the apartheid years, in favour of other organisations. The MEI has since 1994 been engaged in a struggle for survival, and this period has seen the closure of all but two (Pretoria and Cape Town) of its regional offices in South Africa.

(b) Precursors of the MEI

(i) *The Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfssausschuss (DAHA)*

² J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.5.

Shortly after the Peace of Vereeniging, which ended the Anglo-Boer War in 1902, a delegation of Boer generals, including Christiaan De Wet, Koos De la Rey and Louis Botha, traveled to Germany to voice the plight of the Afrikaner people and to seek assistance from the German population.³ As a result of this plea £10 000 of emergency assistance was received by needy Afrikaner war victims from the German people.⁴

In the wake of the First World War a *Duits-Afrikaanse Hulpkomitee*, better known as the *Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuss* (DAHA) was established to return the goodwill received from Germans in 1902 by assisting German-speakers in Southern Africa, whose property was damaged during anti-German protests in 1915.⁵

The Second World War again left Germany devastated with tens of thousands suffering from numerous ailments, including diseases and starvation. At a meeting on 1 June 1945 in Pretoria it was decided to revive the activities of the DAHA, which had been dormant since 1925, to raise emergency funds for relief packages to be sent to Germany.⁶ Furthermore the Smuts government during the war interned numerous German-speakers residing in Southern Africa and it was decided, with the permission of the government, that the DAHA would assist these internees in their rehabilitation.⁷ Those present at this meeting included E.C.G Schweickert and E. Stahmer who would later become intimately involved in the founding of the MEI in 1949.⁸

General Smuts's government extended permission to the DAHA, after the conclusion of the war, to directly assist sufferers in Germany. The organisation raised in excess of

³ E. de Lange, "Geschiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds", p.2.

⁴ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.1.

⁵ W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk: Die Verhaal van die Duitse Weeskinders van 1948*, p.16.

⁶ Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuss 'DAHA', *Zehn Jahre südafrikanische Hilfsarbeit für Deutschland*, p.1.

⁷ W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk*, p.16; Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuss 'DAHA', *Zehn Jahre südafrikanische Hilfsarbeit für Deutschland*, p.1.

⁸ Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfsausschuss 'DAHA', *Zehn Jahre südafrikanische Hilfsarbeit für Deutschland*." P.2; J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, pp.1-2.

£250 000 by 1947, much of this contributed by Afrikaners, for the relief of German war victims. This assistance came in the form of money, food-packages, blankets and clothing, again predominantly donated by the Afrikaner community.⁹ The idea of adopting German orphans was, however, not one mooted by the DAHA, but rather by an organisation inspired by the workings of the DAHA, the *Vroue-noodleningskomitee* (VNLK).

(ii) *The Vroue-noodleningskomitee (VNLK)*

Amongst certain Afrikaners the need arose to establish an organisation which could assist German war victims directly from within Afrikaner circles. It was felt that although the DAHA did noteworthy work for the German people, it predominantly consisted of German-speakers and it was therefore felt that the ‘stamp’ of Afrikanerdom was absent in the assistance it provided.¹⁰ Associated with the above idea was the sentiment that Afrikaners were still greatly indebted to the German people for their assistance after the Anglo-Boer War, and that a purely Afrikaner organisation could thus rectify this historical ‘imbalance’.

Dorothea Petronella Liebenberg was very sympathetic towards the German people and very involved in women’s activity in the DAHA. She was also one of those individuals, who felt that Afrikaners should contribute directly to the German victims, so as to clearly indicate to them that it was the Afrikaners who were returning the favour extended to them in 1902 by the German people.¹¹ In July 1945 Liebenberg called a meeting, attended by a number of women, including the daughter of Oswald Pirow (a former National Party Minister for Justice and later leader of the pro-German New Order Movement) and the chairwoman of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie*, Mrs. S. Broers. This meeting led to the establishment of the *Vroue-noodleningskomitee* (VNLK) as an

⁹ W. van der Merwe, *Vir ’n Blanke Volk*, pp.16-17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.17-18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

Afrikaner organisation offering direct assistance to German war victims.¹² Thousands of food-packages and clothing items were sent to Germany by the VNLK, with the assistance of the DAHA, containing the message, “*van die Boerevolk van Suid-Afrika.*”¹³

(iii) *The Dietse Kinderfonds (DKF)*

It was Liebenberg who first mooted the idea of bringing German orphans to South Africa. A discussion between Liebenberg and Dr. T.E.W. Schumann, the head of the South African Weather Bureau, led to the first steps being taken in this regard.¹⁴ It was felt that the immigration of German orphans would alleviate the need to care for them in Germany, whilst their presence in South Africa, as adoptees of Afrikaners, would ultimately bolster that population.¹⁵

As a consequence of the above discussion Schumann proceeded to organise a meeting for 4 September 1945 to discuss the idea of recruiting German orphans to immigrate to South Africa.¹⁶ The meeting was attended by amongst others, J.J. Bosman (Managing Director of Volkskas Bank), Dr. A.J. Stals (a member of parliament), S.J. Botha (a well known Pretoria businessman and director of various Afrikaner companies) and E.C.G. Schweickert (an art dealer, representative of the DAHA, and later a member of the MEI in 1949).¹⁷ At the meeting the following aims of a prospective organisation for the immigration of German orphans were articulated:

- a) A fund of about £250 000 (R500 000)¹⁸ should be raised to facilitate the immigration of German orphans to South Africa;

¹² W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk*, p.18.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ E. de Lange, “Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds”, p.2.

¹⁵ W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk*, p.19; E. de Lange, “Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds”, p.2.

¹⁶ W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk*, p.20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Amount in Rands appears in E. de Lange, “Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds”, p.2. The amount in other sources (see W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk*, p.20.) is £250 000.

- b) Afrikaners should be called upon to assist in the raising of such funds to allow for the immigration of ten thousand German orphans;
- c) Afrikaners should be called upon to adopt the above orphans.¹⁹

At the meeting it was unanimously decided that it was not only desirable, but their duty to assist Germany in any possible means.²⁰ A committee was elected consisting of Dr. J.C. Neethling (Convenor), Mr. W. Bührmann, J.J. Bosman (both later involved with the MEI), Mrs. D.P. Liebenberg, Henk de Bruyn, S.J. Botha and Dr. Schumann, in order to execute the plans of the organisation. At a meeting of the committee three days later (7 September 1945) the name *Die Dietse Kinderfonds* (DKF) was chosen for the organisation.²¹

The newly-established organisation went to work immediately to attract funds and interested parties to become involved in their work. Within the first month the DKF had amassed £2 150 (R4 300) from eleven contributors.²² A number of prominent Afrikaner organisations and individuals were recruited to act as patrons of the DKF. These included the leaders of the National Party (Dr. D.F. Malan), the *Nuwe Orde* (Adv. Oswald Pirow), the *Ossewa-Brandwag* (Dr. H. van Rensburg) and the *Afrikanerparty* (N.C. Havenga). The moderators of the three Afrikaner sister-churches, the NGK, NHK and GK also became patrons. Cultural leaders and organisations included the likes of Gerhard Moerdyk, a well-known architect, M.E. Rothman (renowned Afrikaner woman journalist and author) and the chairwoman of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie*, Mrs. Broers. The Rectors of the five Afrikaans universities (Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit and Orange Free State) were also approached to act as patrons.²³

¹⁹ E. de Lange. "Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds". p.2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk*, pp.24-25.

Appeals were made to the government to support the planned immigration of German orphans to South Africa. In 1946, however, Prime Minister Smuts refused government sanction for the proposed scheme.²⁴ The fear existed that the Allied Forces would be opposed to South Africa accepting German immigrants of any kind. The Smuts government was believed to be against German immigration so soon after the Second World War as they were poorly disposed towards Germany.²⁵

Further approaches were made to the government during the course of 1946 and 1947 to appeal for government sanction. Eventually in February 1947 the DKF received the following response:

“I have the honour on behalf of General Smuts, to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 7 February 1947, and to inform you that since the original application there has been a change in circumstances. The government has formulated an immigration policy and created the necessary organisations both within the country and without. It is the government’s desire that all immigration steps and organisation will follow these official channels. The *Dietse Kinderfonds* will therefore have to work through both these channels and present their suggestions and recommendations to them. Child immigration is a part of this whole plan, and the workings of the Fund (DKF) can therefore be handled in that regard.”²⁶

On 6 September 1947, it was announced at the sixteenth meeting of the DKF that official government sanction had been received for the proposed immigration of German orphans. The government, however, decided that initially it would only fund the immigration of 100 orphans and that £5 500 (R11 000) would be made available to the DKF for this purpose.²⁷

Schalk J. Botha departed in April 1948 for Germany for the selection process of the hundred orphans. Eventually only 83 would make the journey to South Africa, due to problems experienced, including ill health of the orphans, and an unattainable amount of

²⁴ E. de Lange, “Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds”, p.5.

²⁵ W. van der Merwe, *Vir ’n Blanke Volk*, p.21.

²⁶ E. de Lange, “Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds”, p.6. [translated by the author]

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

girls which were desired by potential foster-parents in South Africa. They included 34 from Schleswig-Holstein, 30 from Hamburg, 9 from Nieder-Sachsen and 15 from Nord-Rhein-Westfalen.²⁸

The ideal of mass child-immigration from Germany, as well as general immigration from Western Europe, remained prominent in the minds of a number of people, and it was this ideal which eventually inspired the formation of the MEI in 1949.²⁹ As has been indicated in the above section a number of the prominent people involved in the DAHA, VNLK and DKF, were later to become involved in or with the MEI. Amongst others E.C.G. Schweickert, T.E.W. Schumann, E. Stahmer, W. Buhrmann, J.J. Bosman, and O. Pirow were to contribute greatly in the establishment and consolidation of the MEI during its formative years. Through the MEI these individuals could continue the tireless work begun by the DAHA, VNLK and DKF to assist Germany and attract prospective immigrants to South Africa to bolster the Afrikaner population.

(c) The establishment of the MEI

A provisional committee regarding German immigration to South Africa met on the 25 February 1949 at the home of E.C.G. Schweickert, an art dealer and representative of the DAHA, in Pretoria, which led to the establishment of the MEI. The meeting was attended by Theo Schumann, Oswald Pirow, F.C.L. Bosman, secretary of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, Dr. E. Stahmer, E.C.G. Schweickert, W. Buhrmann and J.M. Rabie, a well known land-surveyor from Pretoria, Prof. Naudé and E.G. Blohm, who acted as secretary. During the meeting a provisional committee was elected to act as trustees of the to be established company, which included Dr. H.O. Mönnig, O. Pirow, Dr. E. Stahmer, W. Buhrmann, E.C.G. Schweickert, F. Janowsky, H.J.E. Freyer and J.M. Rabie. Furthermore the committee received £500 from the DAHA in order to assist in the establishment of a company for immigration.³⁰

²⁸ E. de Lange, "Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds", pp.10, 15.

²⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

At the second meeting of the provisional committee on 1 March 1949 Dr. Mönning was elected chairman of the board, with E.C.G. Schweickert as his deputy and E.G. Blohm as the secretary. At the meeting the basic principles were formulated for the Act of Establishment of the company and were handed over to the legal firm of Couzyn and Hertzog who were to compile the final Act of Establishment and Statutes of the company.³¹

At the following meeting of the committee on 24 March 1949, it was decided that the official name of the company would be the “*Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie*” and at the board meeting on 26 September 1949 it was announced that the Registrar of Companies had officially sanctioned the establishment of the company. At this meeting it was decided that a regional office would be established in Cape Town and that the DAHA’s immigration division would be incorporated into the structures of the MEI.³²

By June 1950 the MEI consisted of six permanent staff and a part-time secretary. 966 immigration applications pertaining to 2 898 individuals were received of which 427 pertaining to 1 281 individuals had been dealt with successfully. During the next couple of years numerous German and Afrikaans-speaking people were attracted to become members of the MEI, at a membership fee of £1 per annum.³³

(d) The role of the Afrikaner churches in the MEI

The Afrikaner sister-churches manifested an interest in the immigration of Protestants from North-Western Europe in the wake of World War II. This was largely the case due to the ever-increasing immigration of Roman Catholics from the continent.³⁴ A report by the *Kommissie vir Waaksaamheid teen die Roomse Gevaar*, at the thirty-first meeting of

³¹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, pp.1-2.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p.2.

³⁴ MEI, “Die verhouding tussen die MEI en die Kerk”, p.3.

the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of South Africa in Cape Town in October 1949, illustrates this poignantly.³⁵

The state had initiated a scheme in 1947 for the immigration of Italians and Austrians to South Africa to counter the lack of coloured and black labour on farms.³⁶ In answer to this scheme the commission argued that it was clear that the government did not acknowledge the Protestant character of South Africa, when selecting immigrants.³⁷ *Die Kerkbode* (the mouthpiece of the DRC) argued that Italian immigration, and the Roman Catholic religion, would threaten the Protestant nature of the rural areas and thus called for protest from all sectors of society to prevent the immigration scheme.³⁸ A massive petition and written protests from church councils from all over South Africa and from the Agricultural Union, however, led to the Smuts government postponing and later abandoning the scheme in its totality.³⁹

Hattingh highlights the common interest which the three sister-churches shared with regard to immigrants when he argues that they agreed on one issue and were outspoken about the fact that immigration should not disturb the religious character of the country and therefore that strong emphasis be laid on the advancement of Protestant immigration.⁴⁰

In 1955 the *Raad van die Kerke* at its meeting in Durban called for the creation of a separate Department of Immigration which would endorse a separate immigration organisation, such as the 1820 Settlers' Organisation. The federated churches (Afrikaner sister churches) would then become actively involved in such an organisation to

³⁵ "Verslag van die Kommissie vir Waaksaamheid teen die Roomse Gevaar"; In *Handelinge van die een-en-dertigste Vergadering van die Sinode van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, pp.306-307.

³⁶ J.A. Kriel, "Hervormingsfees, 1947" (*Die Kerkbode* 60(18), p.842.)

³⁷ "Verslag van die Kommissie vir Waaksaamheid teen die Roomse Gevaar"; In *Handelinge van die een-en-dertigste Vergadering van die Sinode van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, p.307.

³⁸ J.A. Kriel, "Hervormingsfees, 1947" (*Die Kerkbode*. 60(18), p.843.)

³⁹ "Verslag van die Kommissie vir Waaksaamheid teen die Roomse Gevaar"; In *Handelinge van die een-en-dertigste Vergadering van die Sinode van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika*, p.307.

⁴⁰ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.2.

encourage the immigration, assimilation and naturalisation of Protestant immigrants.⁴¹ These recommendations indicate the fact that the churches' involvement in the MEI was not consolidated at this stage yet. It was only in the next year that full involvement of the churches became a reality.

In March 1956 the secretary of the MEI appealed in a letter to the DRC for greater involvement from them and the other sister churches in the MEI. Each church was invited to nominate one member to the Board of the MEI. An appeal was made for the churches to assist in the creation of a Christian Protestant Immigration Board to act as:

- a) an advisory organ for the MEI, especially with regard to the assimilation of immigrants, and
- b) a body which could advise and assist the MEI in the recruitment of prospective immigrants.

The Synod of the DRC appointed Dr. T.N. Hanekom to the Board and furthermore made an urgent appeal to ministers to inform their congregations of the importance of immigration and the assimilation of immigrants. Emphasis was placed on the necessity of attracting Protestant immigrants, due to their suitability for assimilation.⁴² At the twenty-fifth meeting of the *Raad van die Kerke* held in Pretoria in 1957 the above-mentioned appeal made by the MEI for the creation of a Christian Protestant Immigration Board was approved.⁴³

⁴¹ "Handelinge van die vier-en-twintigste vergadering van die Raad van die Kerke, 8 Junie 1955", pp.73, 92.

⁴² "Handelinge van die drie-en-dertigste vergadering van die Hoogerwaarde Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, 17 Oktober 1957", pp.215-216.

⁴³ "Handelinge van die vyf-en-twintigste vergadering van die Raad van die Kerke, 27 March 1957", p.93.

On 26 October 1956 it was decided that the three Afrikaner churches would become intimately involved with the MEI. The three churches were now invited to nominate two representatives (as opposed to the previous one) each to the Board of the MEI.⁴⁴

The MEI never hid the fact that its activities were narrowly connected to that of the Afrikaner sister churches. A pamphlet highlighting the links between the MEI and the Churches argued that the foundation and aims of the MEI differed from other secular organisations in that theirs' was based on the Holy Scripture with the aim of the successful assimilation of immigrants on spiritual, social and material levels.⁴⁵

Furthermore it was argued that the MEI saw its task not only as an organisation which aimed to assimilate the immigrant with regards to cultural, social and educational aspects, but that it placed great emphasis on attempts to channel and integrate immigrants into one of the three Afrikaner sister-churches. They argued that they saw all immigration aspects linked to the Afrikaner, his church, language, culture and existence as central to their task.⁴⁶

One of the MEI's guides for immigrant friends, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, also reiterated their aim to integrate immigrants into the Afrikaner's religious domain. The guide states that immigrant friends should explain to immigrants the Afrikaner's assumptions regarding Sunday and how it is spent. When the time is right, invite them to Church and arrange that their children attend Sunday school and church youth groups. Do not however, be over-hasty with the religious assimilation of the immigrant. The religious assimilation of immigrants must occur with the greatest of care, exceptional tact and over a long period of time. It may however not be neglected.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.2.

⁴⁵ MEI. "Die verhouding tussen die MEI en die Kerk." p.2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ MEI, *Die vreemdeling in ons poorte*, pp.13, 16. Italics in original.

1958 saw the beginning of a new strand of cooperation between the MEI and the sister-churches. The Hungarian Revolt of 1956 led to an initiative from the MEI to approach the government in order to allow Hungarian refugees to immigrate to South Africa. The decision was taken to allow the MEI to recruit 200 Hungarian immigrants. On their arrival in South Africa members of the Afrikaans churches, who handed out Hungarian Bibles, met the refugees. This was the first of numerous occasions where the MEI and the churches cooperated by handing out Bibles written in immigrants' own languages, donated by the Bible Society of South Africa.⁴⁸ This was one of the many actions in which the close cooperation and association which existed between the MEI and the sister churches was manifested.

In 1967 an ad hoc committee was established dealing expressly with the religious assimilation of immigrants. The committee was established to reaffirm the role of the churches with regard to the MEI and the assimilation of immigrants.⁴⁹ It was decided at the meeting that the MEI would have to report regularly to the committee on issues regarding the religious assimilation of immigrants handled by the company. The MEI would also have to continue to actively work towards the religious assimilation of immigrants and facilitate their channeling into the three sister churches.⁵⁰

The churches' support for the MEI was continuous throughout the following decades. In December 1978 the MEI received a letter from the Skriba of the Algemene Sinode of the DRC which articulated the support for the organisation.

Already at its meeting in October 1978 in Bloemfontein, the General Synod, amongst other issues, took note of the operations of the MEI. With regard to the MEI, the Synod decided on the following:

⁴⁸ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.3.

⁴⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.4.

⁵⁰ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.3.

1. The Synod recognised the important work with regard to immigration, which the MEI undertook in close cooperation with the Church. It requested that the *Algemene Kommissie vir Ampsbediening en Evangelisasie*, if requested, to appoint a representative on the committee of the MEI in consultation with the Moderator.
2. The General Synod requests that all Synods, whenever possible, afford the Executive Director of the MEI to briefly address their Synods regarding assistance which the MEI can or would like to offer them.
3. The General Synod suggests that all Synods become actively involved with the work of the MEI, by amongst other means, appointing representatives to the National Board of the MEI.
4. The General Synod requests that all Church Councils, through their Synods make an asserted effort to make use of the organs of the MEI and to support them financially where possible.⁵¹

Since the beginning of the 1980s the MEI managed to extend their cooperation and links with the sister churches to the extent where their Chief Executive Official addressed the Synods and Synod committees of the churches on a regular basis. Hattingh argues that the MEI and the churches became so intrinsically linked that at times the MEI was even referred to as the ‘church’ in certain cities.⁵²

(e) The early years (1949-1966)

The following individuals filled the position of Chairman of the Board of the MEI during the period in question:

1 March 1949 – 4 March 1955	Dr. H.O. Mönnig
4 March 1955 – 2 December 1959	Dr. J.G. Meyer

⁵¹ MEI “Die verhouding tussen die MEI en die Kerk.” pp.4-5.

⁵² J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.3.

2 December 1959 – 28 October 1960	Ds. T.F.J. Dreyer (NH Kerk)
28 October 1960 – 14 November 1961	Ds. J.C. Kruger (G Kerk)
14 November 1961 – 5 September 1962	Ds. R.J.N. van Tonder (NG Kerk)
5 September 1962 – 20 August 1963	Ds. T.F.J. Dreyer (NH Kerk)
20 August 1963 – 27 October 1988 ⁵³	Mr. A.B. van N. Herbst (NH Kerk) ⁵⁴ .

The 17 years which followed the establishment of the MEI were characterised by the consolidation of the organisation and its links with other organisations of a social, cultural and religious nature. The MEI extended its links with the Afrikaner sister churches, and so became an important means for the churches to extend their influence. Immigration was regarded as a means of increasing the numbers of Afrikaners, and the membership to Afrikaner-dominated institutions such as the churches.

The MEI busied itself with three major immigration-related issues, namely the recruitment of immigrants from the European continent, the support and assimilation of these immigrants, and lastly attempts to naturalise immigrants once they had met the criteria required for citizenship.

In 1957 the first immigration stimulation-action, sanctioned by the MEI, departed for Europe in search of prospective immigrants. The group consisted of Ds. C.B. Brink of the NG Kerk, Ds. A.J.G. Oosthuizen of the NH Kerk and Ds. T.T. Spoelstra of the G Kerk.⁵⁵ This group was the first official attempt by the MEI and the sister-churches to actively attract prospective Protestant immigrants to South Africa, and again illustrates the narrow cooperation between the MEI and the sister churches.

Little evidence exists of more of these stimulation-action trips to the continent. However, the MEI's role as active recruiters of immigrants is mentioned on countless occasions by

⁵³ Although this section deals with the period of 1949-1966 Van N. Herbst remained chairman until 1988.

⁵⁴ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.i.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

Hattingh in his analysis of the history of the MEI.⁵⁶ It could be argued that the lack of government and private funding inhibited the MEI's ability to be able to afford the costs linked to overseas travel, accommodation and other related expenses of the recruitment process. In November 1966 the Department of Immigration officially revoked the MEI's status as an agency of immigration recruitment, and ordered the organisation to concentrate solely on the assimilation and naturalisation of immigrants already present in South Africa.⁵⁷

At the same time that the MEI approached the Afrikaner sister churches to become involved in the organisation, feelers were sent out to Afrikaner cultural organisations in order to assist the MEI in the assimilation of immigrants. The 1950s saw the beginning of these attempts with the greatest success being achieved under the directorship of A.B. van N. Herbst, who held the post from 1963 onwards.⁵⁸

One of the more important cultural organisations approached was the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge* (FAK) and their affiliated organisations. The FAK's response was to support the MEI within its federal structures and to encourage its affiliated organisations to support the principles and aims of the MEI and to assist them in their task through any means possible.⁵⁹

By the late 1950s the MEI had attracted the involvement of a number of organisations, including the FAK, the *Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut* (AHI), the *Ekonomiese Instituut*, and the Afrikaner sister churches, in their structures. Furthermore the MEI had extended its accessibility to immigrants throughout the country by opening branches in all major centres, including Cape Town, Pretoria, Durban, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. The support of other institutions such as the *Afdeling Volwasse-onderwys* and the Department of Education, Arts and Sciences had also been enlisted, and these departments and

⁵⁶ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, pp.2-6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*.

institutions funded a number of the MEI's programmes of education and assimilation of immigrants.⁶⁰

Initially after the founding of the MEI it struggled to gain support for its motives from the national government. The government was still possessed by fears that immigration would lead to greater unemployment and thus opposition from the population.⁶¹ Immigration numbers had decreased drastically under the new Nationalist government in the early 1950s. The situation was so unfavourable that the MEI considered disbanding itself in 1953. The government did support the MEI, as mentioned above, through the Department of Education, Arts and Sciences, but only on a project-basis, thus preventing the MEI from extending its programmes further.⁶²

The mid-to-late 1950s, however, saw an increase in immigration to South Africa due to greater activity on the part of the government. In 1957 it was officially decided by the government to subsidise the MEI as an organisation dealing expressly on project-basis with the assimilation of immigrants.⁶³ This decision by the government breathed new life into an organisation which had reached stagnation point.

Discussions and pressure from the MEI, along with other organisations, finally led to the creation of a Department of Immigration in 1961 by the government to deal with ever-increasing immigration numbers. As previously mentioned, the new Department of Immigration, whose tasks included the recruitment of potential immigrants to South Africa in Europe, ordered the MEI in November 1966 to cease its own recruitment of immigrants in continental Europe and to focus solely on the assimilation and naturalisation of immigrants within South Africa.⁶⁴ This decision ushered in a new era for the MEI and its immigrant-related projects.

⁶⁰ P.J. Meyer, "Immigrasie en die Afrikaner se verantwoordelikheid teenoor die immigrant", pp.56-57.

⁶¹ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, pp.4-5.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

(f) A shift in function (1966-1994)

The following individuals filled the position of Chairman of the Board of the MEI during the period in question:

20 August 1963 – 27 October 1988 -	Mr. A.B. van N. Herbst (NH Kerk)
27 October 1988 – 25 April 1991 -	Dr. W.A. Cruywagen OVDG ⁶⁵ (Administrator of the Transvaal)
25 April 1991 – 11 February 1993 -	Dr. P.G.J. Koornhof (former cabinet Minister)
11 February 1993 – 31 January 1996 -	Gen. Ds. C. Colyn (Chaplain-general of the South African Defence Force) ⁶⁶

The decision of November 1966 allowed the MEI to focus its full energy, attention and finances on the assimilation of immigrants to South Africa. It was after this decision that the MEI, established and consolidated, performed its most important work with individuals and families who had chosen to make South Africa their home.

Mr. A.B. van N. Herbst acted as chairman for a period of 25 years, including 22 years of the period in question (1966-1994). His contribution during this period of the MEI was noteworthy. Herbst was, for instance, by means of tireless work, attributed with the success of attracting the involvement of a number of important cultural organisations such as the FAK.⁶⁷

Along with suspending the MEI's role as immigrant recruitment agency, the government decided to officially recognise two organisations as the sole proprietors of immigrant care. The 1820 Settlers' Organisation, founded in 1920⁶⁸, was given the responsibility of handling the assimilation and naturalisation of all English-speaking immigrants, whilst

⁶⁵ Orde vir Voortreflike Diens Klas 1 Goud

⁶⁶ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.i.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁶⁸ *The Settler*, vol.59, no.1, January/February 1986, p.25.

the MEI would be responsible for all non-English-speaking immigrants.⁶⁹ The MEI would eventually receive a greater subsidy from the state, due to the complex financial issues related to the assimilation of immigrants who were unable to speak one of the two official languages (English and Afrikaans).⁷⁰

Ironically, the MEI now took charge of the assimilation of immigrants, such as Portuguese, Italians, Spanish and other Northern-Europeans who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. One of the principles which facilitated the founding of the organisation, Protestant immigration, was aimed at discouraging Catholic immigration to South Africa. It could be argued that the intensification of religious assimilation during this period was aimed to counter the growth of the Catholic Church in South Africa. Ds. P.A. Pienaar, a Pretoria minister associated with the MEI, learnt to speak Portuguese during the 1970s and 1980s in order to establish Portuguese Reformed Congregations (*Igreja Reformada Portuguesa*).⁷¹

The South African League, which dealt with Kenyan immigrants to South Africa and the *Suid-Afrikaanse Kultuurakademie*, which worked towards the resettlement of Polish and Hungarian immigrants in South Africa, were integrated into the MEI in 1969⁷² and 1973⁷³, respectively, due to their inability to function without government subsidisation. The incorporation of these organisations into the MEI, led to an improvement of infrastructure for the company and in turn a greater number of immigrants came under the care of the organisation.

By the late-1960s the MEI had established regional offices with paid officials in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Germiston, Springs, Vanderbijlpark, Welkom, Durban, Port Elizabeth and later even Uitenhage. The need was also expressed to standardise the

⁶⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*; MEI; *Jaarverslag 1973/74*, p.7.

assimilation programmes of these regional offices regarding the assimilation of immigrants on educational, cultural, religious and economic levels.⁷⁴

The new direction which the MEI moved towards, facilitated by the formation of the Department of Immigration and that department's reorientation of the MEI's social functions, are illustrated in the aims (section 3) of the Constitution of the Regional Office of the MEI in the Western Cape. The MEI could thereafter concentrate solely on the assimilation and attempted naturalisation of immigrants on religious, social and even financial levels.

The MEI would undertake to support immigrants, and assist their spiritual, social and financial integration wherever they could. The idea was to work in conjunction with the Afrikaner churches, associated cultural organisations and government departments to allow for the successful integration of immigrants into the Afrikaner nation and to disperse knowledge to immigrants about South Africa, its languages and history. The organisation would undertake to spread the Afrikaner culture to immigrants by organising events where folk dances and games would be practiced and folk songs sung. Immigrants would be advised on accepting South African citizenship whilst they would be encouraged to undertake this process. The MEI would endeavour to encourage the immigration of white Europeans who would fit with ease into the South African white society. These aspects included religious denomination, scientific and professional skills and previous residence in South Africa. The Company would undertake to assist immigrants in finding employment in their new country of domicile, attempt to spread a positive message regarding South Africa to prospective immigrants and assist them where they could financially.⁷⁵

An example of a standardised project initiated by the MEI, was the *Praat-Afrikaans-Projekte*. The programme facilitated the attendance of immigrant children, along with Afrikaner children, at camps where *volkspele* and Afrikaans were taught to the

⁷⁴ J.H. Hatingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.6.

⁷⁵ MEI, "Konstitusie: Streekkantoor Wes-Kaapland", pp.1-2.

immigrants by means of classes and interaction with the Afrikaans children.⁷⁶ Several hundred immigrant children were involved on an annual basis in this programme.⁷⁷

The MEI worked actively to assist immigrants in learning South Africa's national languages. In the early seventies the MEI managed to involve Technical Colleges in the language-education of immigrants. A number of language laboratories and classes were organised by the MEI with the assistance of these tertiary institutions.⁷⁸

The above-mentioned camps for immigrant and Afrikaner children were considered by the MEI to be one of the most effective means of assimilating immigrant children, and occurred on a regular basis. From 1970-1971 fourteen such camps were held and 370 immigrant children participated.⁷⁹ Hattingh indicates that an average of 503 immigrant children per annum participated in these camps between 1966 and 1992.⁸⁰

The Regional Offices of the MEI were decisive to the success of the MEI in assimilating immigrants into the Afrikaans-speaking sector of South Africa. Hattingh argued that it was at regional office level where the immigrants were best integrated into South Africa. At regional level they were brought into direct contact with the Afrikaner churches, schools and cultural community. Furthermore he argued that the professional, sympathetic and competent staff of the MEI helped to ease their total resocialisation into the Afrikaner cultural community.⁸¹

Addendum one is a table summarising the most important activities and actions of the MEI during the period 1966-1992. The figures provided are an annual average of this twenty-eight year period, and can therefore be multiplied by this figure to ascertain a rough total figure of the activities of the MEI during this period.

⁷⁶ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6; MEI, *Jaarverslag 1973/74*, p.7.

⁷⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag 1970/71*, p.14.

⁸⁰ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

This table arguably puts into context the extent of the work done by the MEI during this period, whilst also indicating the fact that the work of the MEI, and the immigrants they dealt with amounted to a rather small percentage of South Africa's total immigrant population over the twenty-eight years in question.⁸²

The nineteen-sixties and early seventies saw a marked increase in immigration figures to South Africa. This was arguably facilitated by the creation of a separate Department of Immigration and an Immigrants Selection Board in 1961, whose roles' it were to supply the flailing market of skilled workers, which massive industrialisation in South Africa had caused, with skilled (white) immigrants from Europe.⁸³

In the nineteen-fifties between 152 079⁸⁴ and 152 183⁸⁵ individuals immigrated to South Africa at an average rate of approximately 15 200 per annum. In contrast, between 320 570⁸⁶ and 333 148⁸⁷ individuals immigrated to South Africa during the nineteen-sixties, constituting an approximate annual average of 32 000 to 33 300 persons. The nineteen seventies saw a continuation of the sixties immigration boom. Between 1970 and 1976 a further 266 415 persons chose to relocate to South Africa, peaking at 50 337 in 1975, constituting an average of approximately 38 000 immigrants per annum.⁸⁸

This massive increase in immigrants facilitated the extension and growth of the MEI during this new era of assimilation and naturalisation as defined by the Department of Immigration. The MEI's regional offices were now increased to nine throughout the

⁸¹ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

⁸² See Chapter 4 for an in depth analysis of the scope of the MEI's work in context with national immigration.

⁸³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, pp.250-251.

⁸⁴ Centre Europe-Tiers Monde (CETIM), *White Migration to South Africa*, pp.56-57.

⁸⁵ J.E. Reinders, "Het Immigratieklimaat van Zuid-Afrika", p.101.

⁸⁶ CETIM, *White Migration to South Africa*, p.57.

⁸⁷ J.E. Reinders, "Het Immigratieklimaat van Zuid-Afrika", pp. 101, 103-104.

⁸⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.254.

country and its fundraising programmes were intensified in order to manage and assist the increasing immigration during this period.⁸⁹

During the 50s, 60s and 70s the MEI facilitated the immigration of a number of groups of political refugees from Europe and Africa who were forced to leave their native lands. A counter (communist) revolution was crushed in Hungary by Soviet troops in early November 1956, thousands fled including 200 to South Africa in 1957/58.⁹⁰ An uprising in Belgian Congo, led by the “Bula Matari” (crusher of rocks) led to the independence of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in January 1960.⁹¹ 3 256 Belgian refugees immigrated to South Africa from the Belgian Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 1960. In 1969 several hundred Czechoslovakian refugees migrated to South Africa and with the independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1977 thousands of Portuguese refugees were allowed to repatriate in South Africa.⁹²

The MEI’s international contacts also facilitated the immigration of a number of Europeans. These contacts grew systematically during the period between 1955 and the nineteen-seventies. The MEI launched its own newspaper in the Netherlands, *Nieuws uit Zuid-Afrika* (NUZA) which it claimed was indirectly responsible for the immigration of thousands of Dutch citizens to South Africa. A lack of funds and other factors such as the debilitating exchange rate, however, led to the liquidation of the newspaper in 1975.⁹³

The MEI became an affiliate of the International Reformed Agency for Migration (IRAM) in 1964 which encouraged the assimilation and channeling of immigrants into the Protestant faith, whilst acting as a support mechanism for Protestant immigrants the world around.⁹⁴ J.H. Hattingh, the executive director of the MEI, became the vice-

⁸⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.8.

⁹⁰ J.K. Hoensch, *A History of Modern Hungary 1867-1986*, p.292.

⁹¹ J.F. Clarke, *The African States of the Congo War*, p.14.

⁹² J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.8.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

⁹⁴ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.9.

president of IRAM in 1966. However, the organisation liquidated in 1967 due to complications.⁹⁵

The MEI became involved with other organisations such as the International Committee for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the Netherlands's *Jongere-programma* which assisted the organisation in understanding the workings of voluntary non-governmental organisations throughout the world and encouraged the immigration of young Dutch citizens to South Africa respectively.⁹⁶

The MEI was responsible for a hand full of publications during the sixties and seventies which dealt with the process of immigration and assimilation. The Dutch newspaper *Nieuws uit Zuid-Afrika* was an important means of encouraging people to relocate to South Africa. Other publications dealt with a number of varying issues such as school placement for immigrant children (*Die Skoolplasing van u kind*), a guide for South Africans to assist in dealing with immigrants (*Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*), and a pamphlet dealing with the problems faced by South Africa in the turbulent eighties (*Is u bekommerd oor die toekoms van Suid-Afrika*). J.H. Hattingh undertook important research in the form of a comparative study of South Africa and Israel's immigration climates.⁹⁷

The head-office of the MEI (Pretoria) and all its regional offices published reports on an annual basis summarising their achievements, hardships and goals, which served as a valuable source of information on immigration within the public domain.

In 1980 the MEI extended its registration as a non-profit organisation to a welfare and fundraising organisation. This change allowed the MEI to concentrate further attention and funds on the assimilation of immigrants.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁹⁸ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.11.

Curiously enough the MEI's greatest source of privately raised income during this period was the ownership of a number of parking areas. Between 1969 and 1999 R3 747 759 was raised by means of the management of these parking areas. According to Hattingh, without the parking areas the MEI would certainly not have been able to sustain its work, and even the existence of the organisation itself.⁹⁹

The above figures, programmes and activities accentuate the idea that the sixties, seventies and early eighties represented a golden age of growth for the MEI. The increase in immigration and the formation of a Department of Immigration facilitated greater funds and immigrants for the MEI to operate with and this is evidenced by indicators such as the increasing publications which disseminated from the offices and officials of the MEI, the increasing international contacts made, and the general favour which the MEI enjoyed from the government of the day.

It is due, to amongst others, the above reasons, that this study will particularly focus on this period of the MEI's existence (1966-1994). This fervent period of the MEI's history allows us possibly the best insights into their programmes of assimilation and naturalisation and identity formation, which are of central importance to this study. The nineteen-nineties on the other hand dealt the MEI a number of new challenges, including the cessation of government funding and a dramatic drop in European immigration, which in turn had dramatic affects on the MEI.

(g) 'New South African' challenges (1994-2004)

February 1990 saw the unbanning of black political parties in South Africa, the release of struggle-icon Nelson R. Mandela and the final dismantling of the system of apartheid. In April 1994 Nelson Mandela was the first black person elected president of South Africa in its first democratic election. A new dawn had emerged in South Africa and as a result of this all organisations and institutions, which predated this year, were now forced to

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.11-12.

operate in a society with different interests and priorities. The MEI, which for decades had focused on the immigration of white Europeans to South Africa, motivated by a number of reasons such as the bolstering of the white South African population¹⁰⁰, was not left untouched by the ‘new’ South Africa and its related priorities.

In 1992 the MEI changed its name to the *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie (MVI)* [The Company for Immigration (CFI)], thereby dropping the reference to European immigration, which was regarded as inappropriate within the new South African dispensation. Hattingh, however, argues that the name change did not affect the original aims of the organisation maintaining that the MVI still aimed to advance immigration to South Africa by prospective immigrants regarded as ‘assimilable’ and who would contribute to the development of South Africa.¹⁰¹ Hattingh appears to side-step the racial aspect of the name change, whereas the minutes of the annual general meeting of the MVI in 1992 justified the name change. The name was seen to cause confusion in the changing South African society. Immigrants who were not of European decent were confused as to whether they could call on the MEI for assistance, whilst non-European South Africans would feel unwelcome to assist the company in its workings. According to the company’s Acts and Statutes no-one who could reconcile themselves with the goals and principles of the MEI would be excluded from membership to the company.¹⁰²

The early nineties saw a dramatic decrease in European immigration to South Africa, which led in turn to a dramatic decrease in funds available to the MVI. Mr. A.R. Badenhorst, the executive director of the MVI in 1992, argued that immigration as a concept had become so politically unpopular that immigration figures fell by 50% in 1992 from the 1991 figures.¹⁰³ The MVI was forced to close six of its eight regional branches due to the lack of funds. The early nineties saw funds from the government, local government, cultural organisations and churches dramatically decreased and even

¹⁰⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag 1967-68*, p.1.

¹⁰¹ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.11.

¹⁰² MVI, “Sakelys en ander stukke: Jaarvergadering 05-08-93”, p.5.

¹⁰³ MVI, “Sakelys en ander stukke: Jaarvergadering 05-08-93”, p.5. Bylaag A.

halted entirely. A number of the MVI's parking areas, their greatest source of private funds, were also lost to them during this period.¹⁰⁴

The 1990s and 2000s were challenging years for the MVI. The lack of state subsidies (suspended in 1993), coupled with a lack of involvement from organisations which had previously formed the backbone of the MVI both financially and through voluntary involvement, hampered the functionality of the organisation.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the MVI continued its work in the field of assimilating immigrants, but more particularly assisting them to settle, adapt and come to terms with their new environment. The organisation's operations continued to include language classes (in English, Afrikaans, Xhosa and any South African languages for which there was a demand), programmes of cultural education, youth activities and social work.¹⁰⁶

The Cape Town regional office's most important work, under the twenty-six year tenure of Miems Swanepoel, an exceptionally fit and lively woman, was done out in the pristine nature of the Western Cape and South Africa as a whole. Tannie Miems, as she is better known, led countless groups of immigrants, foreign visitors and South Africans on some of the country's most famous hiking trails. According to Swanepoel immigrants could come to love and understand their new country and God better by 'kloofing', walking, swimming, rowing and rock-climbing, and generally being in the South African nature.

¹⁰⁷

Some of the greatest setbacks experienced by the MVI, regarding the assimilation of immigrants during the post-apartheid era, included a lack of involvement (physically and financially) from the state and cultural organisations. The closure of its language laboratory in Cape Town at the Jan van Riebeeck High School, due to the school requiring the premises, was experienced as a massive blow. The Department of Home

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ MVI, *50ste Jaarverslag. Kaapland en Kwazulu-Natal*, pp.4, 18.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5.

Affairs's lists of immigrants were often received years after the arrival of the immigrants, which made it difficult for the MVI to contact these persons. These issues made it increasingly complicated for the MVI to undertake the task for which it was established.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ MVI, *50ste Jaarverslag. Kaapland en Kwazulu-Natal*, p.18.

3. THE MEI's PROGRAMMES OF ASSIMILATION AND NATURALISATION

(a) Introduction

This chapter will deal specifically with the period during which the MEI was arguably most active in the assimilation of immigrants to South Africa. 1961 saw the formation of a separate Department of Immigration, which centralised the government's dealings with the process of immigration, and led to the re-organisation of the administration of immigrants. From 1966 the MEI was charged solely with the task of the assimilation and naturalisation of non-English-speaking European immigrants.

The focus of this chapter is that of the MEI's programmes of assimilation and naturalisation, as well as the organisation's aims, goals and inspirations with regard to these programmes. How did they go about executing their government-sanctioned mandate, and essentially what were the forces and ideologies which determined how they went about this task?

It is essential to review some of the remarks regarding the Afrikaner people, and *Afrikanerwees* (what constitutes the Afrikaner's make-up), and the Afrikaner's nationalist aspirations found in some of the MEI's documents, annual reports and leaflets. These documents often refer to what could be regarded as broad definitions of the Afrikaner people. The role of religion in the MEI, and its programmes of assimilation are also of importance under this section. The form or shape of the organisation's programmes of assimilation and naturalisation were indubitably affected by these socio-political and religious ideals.

In conclusion the specific programmes of assimilation and naturalisation will be analysed as they are described in MEI documentation. These programmes included camps for young immigrant children where *Praat Afrikaans* projects were initiated, which promoted the use of Afrikaans amongst immigrants, language laboratories which taught immigrants

Afrikaans, as well as English, Xhosa and other South African languages and women's mornings, where immigrant women socialised with Afrikaner women.

Finally a brief analysis of the MEI's impact, successes and failures regarding the assimilation of immigrants to South Africa during the second half of the twentieth century will follow.

(b) The MEI as an Afrikaner institution

The MEI was an organisation, which was narrowly linked to the Afrikaner nation and its other institutions, be they political, social or religious. From its inception to its disbanding the organisation was composed almost exclusively of Afrikaners, and in particular influential Afrikaner men. The organisation never suppressed the fact that its existence was partly in order to advance the cause of the Afrikaner nation in South Africa. An analysis of nationalism, Afrikaner nationalism, and manifestations of the above argument will be entered into in the two sub-sections below.

(i) Nationalism and Afrikaner Nationalism

According to Suzman, nationalism is a versatile concept, which exists in different forms and can be analysed in different ways.¹ Civic nationalism is one type of nationalism which can refer for instance to a geographical body, such as a city, province or country and the feelings of unity or collectivism which can exist in such locales. Ethnic nationalism is the other major form of nationalism, which can be described as the feeling of unity, which prevails within a certain group of people, such as an ethnic group. Suzman further argues that nationalism can be analysed in four different ways: as an ideology, a group sentiment, a process of 'nation-building,' or a collective movement.²

¹ M. Suzman, *Ethnic Nationalism and State Power*, p.7.

² *Ibid.*

The traditional doctrine of nationalism, based on the writings of Johan Gottfried Fichte, consists of five basic propositions:

1. The world is naturally divided into nations, each with its own unique culture, normally based on language but sometimes on religion or other factors.
2. All people must belong to a nation.
3. All nations must seek full political autonomy, or statehood.
4. Only within an independent nation can an individual find true spiritual and political fulfilment.
5. Only a world of free and sovereign nations can provide international order and stability.³

It is arguable that one can attribute Afrikaner nationalism to the point pertaining to language and the rights of linguistic groups to self-determination. Language was of central importance to Afrikaner nationalism in that it afforded a collective agent to drive the cause of Afrikaner self-determination. Language in South Africa has a long and complicated history and was inextricably linked to Afrikaner nationalism. Eugene Marais, an Afrikaner intellectual argued that the Afrikaans language could serve as a means of strengthening the ‘ties of blood’ across the entire region of southern Africa, uniting Afrikaners.⁴ In the early days of the Union of South Africa Dutch or Afrikaans intellectuals battled it out with their English-speaking counterparts in the public arena to determine the language policies for the Union. The achievement of official bilingualism was one of the first major battles fought by Afrikaner nationalists against headstrong opposition. It was argued during this period that

“Bilingualism was regarded as nothing more than a polite gesture towards the other section – neither more nor less. The average English-speaking South African was inclined to regard every political recognition of the Dutch-language as a menace to the interests of his own race.”⁵

³ M. Suzman, *Ethnic Nationalism and State Power*, p.10.

⁴ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, p.364.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.361-362.

The Rev. W. Nichol argued that the only way to preserve Afrikaner children for their people (Afrikaner) was for them to be educated in Afrikaans schools.⁶ Dr. D.F. Malan, speaking after the official recognition of Afrikaans as an official language in 1925, argued that “for the first time the Afrikaners felt that they were fully recognised and fully free and at home in their own country.”⁷

Other cultural aspects were also important determinants in the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. Important ideological building blocks in this process were the following: the promotion of a common language (Afrikaans), the emphasis on what was perceived to be a common past (Afrikaner history), and the unity of a common religion.”⁸

Nationalism or collective mobilisation, according to Suzman, can be influenced by what he calls ‘framing processes’. Framing processes are defined as “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action.”⁹ These ‘shared understandings’ arguably include facets of a group of people such as their language, history, religion and culture, which can be utilised to awaken feelings of unity, which then creates the foundations for collective mobilisation in order to achieve certain goals, such as gaining control of state power.

When one looks at the role of nationalism with regard to the immigration process it is arguable that both Suzman’s types of nationalism can influence this process. Civic nationalism is inevitably a phenomenon which the immigrant will encounter in his or her new homeland, and the immigrant will in return for his or her domicile be encouraged to align her or himself with the civic nationalism of their new state. Ethnic nationalism, where it exists in immigrant countries, can also not be avoided by the immigrant, especially when one views policies such as those of Australia and the United States (prior

⁶ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, p.379.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.377.

⁸ A.M. Grundlingh, “Afrikaner nationalism and white politics”, (B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies (Eds.), *South Africa in the 20th Century*, p.268).

⁹ M. Suzman, *Ethnic Nationalism and State Power*, p.9.

at least to World War II), where immigrants were required and even coerced to assimilate into the culture of their new state.¹⁰

Both forms of nationalism existed in South Africa during this specific period of study. Immigrants were expected to be loyal to their new homeland, in return for permission to live and benefit from their new country of domicile. Afrikaner nationalism, which represents an ethnic-type nationalism and can be analysed as a collective movement¹¹, had a marked affect on South Africa during the twentieth century. Being the all-pervasive movement which it was, it arguably affected the immigration process too. South Africa's immigration policies were influenced by the ideology of (Afrikaner) nationalism, especially between 1949 and 1960. During this period in other major receiving countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States immigration policies were based on economic factors such as a shortage of labour, whilst South African immigration policy was affected by the need to advance the cause of the white population, and particularly the ruling Afrikaner group, in South Africa.¹² In 1959 the Prime Minister, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, went as far as to state that "ideological reasons at that time had to take precedence in restricting immigrants, even if it meant foregoing economic prosperity."¹³

Donsky furthermore states that Afrikaner criticism of the open-door immigration policy of the Smuts' government during the late 1940s was in itself a unifying force which Afrikaners could rally around, contributing to an election agreement between the National and Afrikaner Parties in the 1948 election.¹⁴

¹⁰ W.D. Borrie (Ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, p.90; M. Markovic and L. Manderson, "Crossing National Boundaries: Social Identity Formation Among Recent Immigrant Women in Australia from Former Yugoslavia", In *Identity: International Journal of Theory and Research*, pp.305-306; J. Wilton, *Identity, Racism and Multiculturalism*, p.85.

¹¹ M. Suzman, *Ethnic Nationalism and State Power*, p.7.

¹² I.J. Donsky, "Aspects of the Immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", p.11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.23; H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: A Biography*, p.480.

Afrikaner nationalism, and its manifestation in the newly elected National Party, led to a serious decline in immigration in the 1950s¹⁵ -this whilst the rest of the world was experiencing the post-World War II immigration boom.¹⁶ Between 1945 and 1952 it was estimated that total world migration (including displaced persons) amounted to 4,4 million.¹⁷ The National Party's immigration policy, based on calculations found in demographic studies, considered the absorption capacity of the country at that time to be limited to 14 000 immigrants per year¹⁸, much less than the average of 25 242 per year which entered South Africa between 1946 and 1948.¹⁹

Under the Nationalist government it was determined that preference would be given to artisans from other countries in North Western Europe whose basic races formed the original white Afrikaner population. This was seen as a reaction to Smuts' open-door policy encouraging British immigration.²⁰

It was within this political nationalist climate that the MEI came into being as an organisation dealing with the assimilation and naturalisation of European immigrants. In the following sub-sections the MEI's position with regard to the racial situation in South Africa, and the cause of the Afrikaner, including the MEI's perceptions of the role of immigration in advancing this cause, will be discussed.

(ii) *The MEI and racial politics in South Africa*

A.E. Trollip, the Minister of Immigration in 1966, highlighted the need for immigration to South Africa when he stated that the down-scaling of immigration would not only threaten the Afrikaans language, but in fact the future of white people in South Africa.²¹

¹⁵ I.J. Donsky, "Aspects of the Immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", p.24.

¹⁶ W.D. Borrie (Ed.), *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants*, pp.18-20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p20.

¹⁸ I.J. Donsky, "Aspects of the Immigration of Europeans to South Africa 1946-1970", p.24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Annexure A, p.72.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.1.

The MEI, in support of the Minister's statement, argued that the white population of South Africa, in relation to other population groups (black, coloured and Asian), was on the decline by the late sixties. At the turn of the twentieth century whites composed 23% of South Africa's population, by the sixties this figure had decreased to 20%, whilst estimates were advanced that the percentage of whites could decline to as little as 15% by the turn of the century.²² The solution to this problem according to the MEI, in 1967, was the stimulation of immigrants from Europe to bolster the white population of the Republic.²³

Part of the MEI's task was to educate immigrants as to the political (apartheid) situation in South Africa. Immigrant-friends were tasked with this job, in conjunction with the MEI. Immigrant friends were, amongst others, enlightened in a number of ways to assist immigrant assimilation.

Immigrant friends were told not to ask immigrants, which they have just met, how long they have been in South Africa, if they like the country and whether they had witnessed things for which South Africa was castigated in the foreign media. The MEI argued that if an immigrant had witnessed something like this, they could be outspoken, which could be embarrassing for the South African immigrant friend.²⁴

The MEI argued that immigrants world-view was generally more liberal than that of the average South African. They encouraged immigrant friends to not be confrontational about issues but to rather lead them gradually to a more conservative way of thinking.²⁵

Furthermore, the MEI reminded immigrant friends that immigrants were unschooled in dealing with South Africans of other racial groups. Immigrant friends were encouraged

²² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, p.11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

to assist immigrants in the employment, remuneration and privileges of non-European workers.²⁶

J.P. de Lange referred to the Afrikaners' intrinsic link to the politics of South Africa. He argued that the Afrikaner was inseparable, socially and culturally, from his politics. The National Party was the instrument of social order and identity preservation for the Afrikaner people.²⁷

(iii) *The MEI and the Afrikaner cause*

As mentioned earlier, the MEI, never hid the fact that, amongst others, its aims included the advancement of the Afrikaner people, their language, religion and culture. Its documents made mention of the fact that selective immigration was a necessity in order to bolster, not only the white population, but in particular the Afrikaner population.

The MEI was in favour of selective immigration and explained it in terms of the need to not disrupt the demographics of South Africa. The MEI argued that immigration should be selective so as not to affect the language composition and Protestant nature of the country.²⁸

The above argument indicates clearly that the MEI, although in favour of the bolstering of the white population of the Republic, maintained that the language and religious make-up of the country should not be disrupted. One could argue, based on this statement, that the advancement of the Afrikaners' cause remained paramount to the MEI.

Ironically 32 years later J.H. Hattingh, chairman of the board from 1966-1989,²⁹ in his evaluation of the MEI's history bemoaned the government's immigration policies during

²⁶ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, p.14.

²⁷ J.P. de Lange, "Die maatskaplike en kulturele inburgering van die immigrant", p.6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

²⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.i.

the early Nationalist rule. He argued that the tragedy of the post-Second World War period was the government's near-sighted immigration policy. He stated that if the government of the day was not obsessed with fears of swamping and identity threats by foreign cultures the country's demographics would have looked very different today. As opposed to other immigration countries, such as the USA, Australia and Canada, South Africa did not attract skilled Europeans, who might have added to the development of the country as they did in the aforementioned states.³⁰

In the organisation's annual report of 1967/68 the "MEI and its task" was discussed in detail, incorporating the important part the organisation had to play in the assimilation of immigrants, including the education, as such, of those immigrants with regard to the Afrikaners and their role in South Africa. Hattingh argued that like all nations, the Afrikaner people possessed their own unique cultural traits, values, traditions and world-views. Immigrants would come to South Africa with differing aspects such as the above and he argued that it was the role of South Africans to assist in the process of integration which these immigrants would require to become a part of the Afrikaner nation. He argued that it was accepted amongst Afrikaans-speaking South Africans that this task was to be spearheaded by the MEI.³¹

A MEI publication, which aimed to educate South Africans regarding immigration and assimilation, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, argued that the task of the organisation should not be exclusively to assist in the process of assimilation of immigrants. The booklet goes on to say that the organisation should also devote itself to the advancement of the Afrikaner church, language and culture, in fact, the very survival of the Afrikaners as a people.³²

The MEI actively encouraged the channeling of immigrant children into Afrikaans-medium schools. The organisation stated that the maintenance of the balance between

³⁰ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.12.

³¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.5.

³² MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, pp.4-5.

the English and Afrikaans-speaking populations of South Africa was dependent on projects such as the MEI's channeling of immigrant children into Afrikaans-medium schools.³³

The guide for immigrant friends, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, also argued along these lines when it stated that it should be remembered that a country's gain out of immigration is most poignant in the second generation. They therefore argued that immigrant children should be placed, wherever possible, in Afrikaans-medium pre-schools, schools and other educational institutions.³⁴

A number of other points were made in this guide for assisting Afrikaners in dealing with immigrants, which illustrates the fact that the focus of the MEI was not only upon making immigrants feel welcome and comfortable in South Africa. The ostensible advancement of the Afrikaner cause by means of the absorption of immigrants into the Afrikaner nation, was the other outstanding aim of the MEI.

The guide argued that Afrikaners should maintain the use of their language wherever possible, but that they should be accommodating of immigrants who do not understand Afrikaans. South Africans were encouraged to explain that the ability to speak Afrikaans was a necessity in South Africa as 60% of the white population were Afrikaans-speakers.³⁵

Continuing the guide pressed Afrikaners to donate Afrikaans reading material to immigrants, whilst stipulating that it should be the 'right' type of books, magazines or newspapers. They also encouraged the donation of an Afrikaans Bible, without any comment from the donor.³⁶

³³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.5.

³⁴ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, pp.11-12.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p.13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, stressed that Afrikaners should, when the opportunity arose, inform immigrants about the developmental history of South Africa, but particularly that of the Afrikaner, his church, culture and world-view. They argued that holidays such as The Day of the Vow should be explained to immigrants, thereby allowing for a better understanding of the role which religion played in the day to day lives of Afrikaners.³⁷

At the second national congress of the MEI, held in Pretoria in 1975, Professor J.P. de Lange, the Vice-Rector of the Rand Afrikaans University (today the University of Johannesburg), warned delegates of the fact that immigrants were more likely to assimilate into the English-speaking population of the Republic.³⁸

De Lange argued that the European immigrant, when immigrating to South Africa, is faced by two major white groups, the Afrikaner and the English-speaking community. The Afrikaner community represents an exclusive identity-conscious group, whereas the English community was a patchwork quilt of different people, nationally (many were immigrants or descendents of immigrants from Europe), politically, socially and economically.³⁹

The immigrant, according to De Lange, having left his or her country of origin has by necessity placed their identity in a fluid state. It could thus be construed that the immigrant would find assimilation into the less exclusive group, being the English-speaking community, less traumatic than assimilation into the exclusive and identity-conscious Afrikaner community.⁴⁰

In order to attract immigrants to the Afrikaner community, De Lange suggested that Afrikaners should assertively attempt to get to know immigrants, befriend them and *vice*

³⁷ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, p.14.

³⁸ J.P. de Lange, "Maatskaplike en kulturele inburgering van die immigrant", p.4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

versa. Above all, he suggested that Afrikaners should be honestly interested in the immigrants and accept them as they are whilst not attempting to force them into ‘rapid’ assimilation.⁴¹

The constitution of the MEI’s Western Cape regional office contained a number of clauses which manifests the notion that the organisation’s task included that of the promotion of the Afrikaner cause. Clause 3(g) stated that the organisation would aim to teach the immigrant about the cultural systems, values and possessions of the Afrikaner, amongst others, by the teaching of the official languages.⁴²

In 1993 the MEI attempted to define the Afrikaner and factors which they argued contributed to the constitution of these people. The following was highlighted as factors which contribute to the Afrikaner’s identity:

Man as a creation of God was emphasised, along with his inextricable bond to the Word of God. The authority of parents in the Afrikaner culture was highlighted, along with the importance of family life. Central to Afrikanerdom, was seen the need to earn one’s daily bread through honest and hard work. The MEI argued that the struggle to maintain oneself in an unsympathetic and individualistic world was another character trait of the Afrikaner people. Lastly Afrikaners were depicted as a people who maintained a strong group-feeling spurred on by their communal language, religion and blood-kinship.⁴³

The document continues by criticising what is described as “new” Afrikaners. New Afrikaners are seen as educated and self-motivated, upper-middle class home-owners. They enjoy a low profile whilst being anti-apartheid, are distrustful towards their fellow English-speaking South Africans, who they view as “boerehaters” and sell-outs who pack for Perth when the going gets tough. The MEI, however, is critical of these people in that a number of them speak English and are in favour of a multi-cultural environment, which

⁴¹ J.P. de Lange, “Maatskaplike en kulturele inburgering van die immigrant”, pp.4-5.

⁴² MEI, “Konstitusie: Streekkantoor Wes-Kaapland”, p.2.

⁴³ MVI, Sakelys en stukke. Jaarvergadering, 05/08/93, Bylaag A.

according to the author of the document, Dr. A.R. Badenhorst, begs the question, “is hulle dan enigsins Afrikaners?”⁴⁴

Badenhorst continues his description of Afrikaners by highlighting the indelible link between the Afrikaner, Europe and European culture. He argued that the Afrikaners European dependency essentially made them Euro-Africans, as opposed to other South Africans who could be seen to be Negro-Africans. This heritage he continued was something which Afrikaners should never neglect or loose, because without it they would be poorer and not be able to give Africa what it desperately required. Africa could not produce a Beethoven or Immanuel Kant, the wheel was not discovered in Africa and neither electricity or nuclear power.⁴⁵

Badenhorst furthermore stated that at this time (1993) the MEI was in favour of, and dedicated to, the recruitment of skilled labour not found in South Africa. According to him, these skilled immigrants would assure job creation at a ratio of eighty jobs per one immigrant.⁴⁶ It is arguable that even as late as 1993, the MEI felt that the bulk of these immigrants should be European, and therefore, white. The above aim of the MEI was voiced in the same paragraph wherein they highlighted the bond between Europe and the Afrikaner.⁴⁷

(c) The role of religion in the MEI

The intrinsic link between religion and the MEI has been discussed throughout this study. In this section the religious tradition of the Afrikaner will be explained where-after the role which the Afrikaner churches' religious dogma played in the organisation's motivations and programmes for the assimilation of immigrants will be investigated.

⁴⁴ MVI, Sakelys en stukke. Jaarvergadering, 05/08/93, Bylaag A.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

(i) *The Afrikaner religious tradition*

The Afrikaner churches, especially the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK), the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (GK) and the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* (NHK) are offspring of the reformed churches established in Europe.

Calvinism was established by John Calvin (1509-1564) who was born in Picardy, France and was one of the leading reformers of the sixteenth century.⁴⁸

Calvinism was brought to South Africa by the original Dutch and French settlers and to a lesser extent the English and the Scots. According to De Klerk Calvinism forms the bond which connects the Afrikaner reformed churches.⁴⁹ He also argues that Calvinism represented the life- and worldview of the Afrikaner nation, even though he admitted that not all Afrikaners were Calvinists. Furthermore Calvinism, according to De Klerk, posits that all aspects of society are subject and subordinate to God, including politics, morality, the economy, arts, science and societal patterns. All reality should bow down before Gods manifestation.⁵⁰

In contrast to this sentiment, Andries Treurnicht argued for a more secular outlook on religion and politics, whilst still maintaining the integral role which religion, and Calvinism, played in the lives of the Afrikaner people. Treurnicht speaks of a type of cohesive diversity, in which politics, the state, the nation and the church are separate from one another, whilst still working together. He argued that the liberalist's view that the church and issues of state should be entirely separated was not desirable and criticised the ideal that the Church and the state should be intrinsically linked. Essentially Treurnicht argued for a compromise in which a state could maintain a

⁴⁸ L.W.E. Sherwood (Ed.), *Pears Cyclopaedia: War Economy Issue*, p.42.

⁴⁹ W.J. de Klerk, *Die Calvinisme in 'n Neutedop*, p.2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

national religion, and religion could take its place as one of the most important spheres of a country's make-up.⁵¹

Religion and religious doctrine can have a marked affect on political and social processes such as immigration and the policies bound to it. Not only can national policies be affected by religion, but also the policies and programmes of different organisations such as the MEI. In his book *The Politics of Identity*, Du Preez illustrates the affect which religion can exercise. He argues that “those to whom the religious life is dominant may attempt to impose its categories on politics and education.”⁵² Du Preez goes on to state that “religion must be ‘socially and politically relevant’, it must speak to the present needs of people before it can – if ever – address them on their relation to the next world.”⁵³

It is in this manner that Calvinism and its representative denominations in South Africa have played such an important role as supporters of their specific target group in South Africa – the Afrikaners. The Reformed Churches have held the cause of the Afrikaner close to their hearts during the course of the twentieth century and thus supported programmes and policies which were seen to be beneficial to the Afrikaners' cause.

It is clear from the literature of the MEI that as an organisation, they were more supportive of De Klerk's views on the role of the church in the lives, government and affairs of the Afrikaner people than they were of Treurnicht's arguments. As will be seen, the MEI's documents dealing with religion, stressed the absolute necessity of the religious assimilation of immigrants, essentially they saw it as one of their most important tasks.

The MEI, highlighting its and other Afrikaner organisations' role in supporting this cause, made note of their close cooperation with the Churches. They stated that the task

⁵¹ A.P. Treurnicht, *Credo van 'n Afrikaner*, pp.6-7, 11.

⁵² P. du Preez, *The Politics of Identity*, p.68.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.68-69.

of all cultural organisations, including the MEI, was to advance the cause of the Afrikaner's cultural identity in its broadest form along with narrow cooperation from the church.⁵⁴ W.J. de Klerk supported this by stating that Calvinism could solely maintain the independent identity and freedom of the Afrikaner nation, maintaining its own language, culture and calling in conjunction with the Word of God.⁵⁵

De Klerk continues in laying out the importance which Calvinism has played in the history of the Afrikaner people, unashamedly asserting its patriarchal, paternalistic and inherently superior nature. He argues that the influence of Calvinism on the cultural history of the Afrikaner was far-reaching and included the independence movement, from the border fighters of the Eastern Cape, to the eventual victory which led to the formation of a republic in South Africa. Furthermore, according to De Klerk, Calvinism was central to the extension of Christian National Education, the Afrikaans language movements, and the Afrikaner's policy of paternalism with regard to the non-white communities in the country. Without Calvinism the Afrikaner's typical characteristics such as their independent spirit, emphasis on authority and nationalism would not have been as developed argued De Klerk. In closing he viewed Calvinism as a strong, masculine life regulating world-view, inspired by the Word of God, which strove to maintain order in all aspects of society.⁵⁶

(ii) *The MEI and role of religion in the assimilation of immigrants*

The MEI never hid the fact that its cause was narrowly connected to that of the Afrikaner sister-churches. It was argued that the MEI saw its task not only as an organisation which aimed to assimilate the immigrant with regards to cultural, social and educational aspects, but that it placed great emphasis on attempts to channel and integrate immigrants into one of the three Afrikaner sister-churches.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ MEI, "Die Verhouding tussen die MEI en die kerk", p.1.

⁵⁵ W.J. de Klerk, *Die Calvinisme in 'n Neutedop*, pp.6-7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

In *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte* the MEI also reiterated its aim to integrate immigrants into the Afrikaner's religious domain. The guide stated that immigrant friends should carefully lead immigrants towards the Afrikaner's churches with utmost tact and care, but that this process was a definite desired result.⁵⁸

The MEI was active in assisting in the establishment of immigrant congregations in Pretoria, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Durban. These included English and Portuguese-speaking congregations in Pretoria. The congregations were established with the aim of eventually channeling the immigrants into existing Afrikaans-speaking congregations.⁵⁹

The MEI's deep involvement in the three sister-churches led them to argue that the MEI should be recognised by all three Afrikaner sister-churches as a help organ. They however argued that this wish was obstructed by their involvement with the state, which subsidised the organisation.⁶⁰

In 1993 the MEI still emphasised the necessity that immigrants should be able to assimilate with the least amount of trauma into the Christian-culture of South Africa. This indicates that the role of religion in the MEI's ideals and values regarding the assimilation of immigrants had altered little over the forty odd years of its existence.⁶¹

(d) Assimilation Projects

The penultimate section of this chapter will deal specifically with the projects which the MEI initiated during the course of particularly the sixties and seventies, in order to facilitate the assimilation of immigrants. These projects included camps for immigrant children where they enjoyed contact with Afrikaner children, *Praat-Afrikaans* projects

⁵⁸ MEI, *Die vreemdeling in ons poorte*, pp.13, 16. Italics in original.

⁵⁹ MEI, *Rekenskap van die werksaamhede van die N. Tvlse en Pretoriase Streekkomitee van die Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie.*, pp.34-35.

⁶⁰ MEI, "Die verhouding tussen die MEI en die Kerk", p.6.

⁶¹ MVI, Sakelys en and stukke. Jaarvergadering, 05/08/93, Bylaag A.

where the use of the Afrikaans language amongst immigrants was encouraged, language laboratories where the official languages were taught to immigrants, as well as *vroueoggende*, where immigrant women could come together with Afrikaner women, socialise and learn different skills. Lastly assistance was offered to needy immigrants at branch level throughout the country. This assistance came in the form of job hunting, housing, school-placement, banking and even financial aid.

(i) *Praat-Afrikaans camps for immigrant children*

According to Hattingh, one of the most successful campaigns of cultural assimilation initiated by the MEI was the *Praat-Afrikaans* project. Camps for an equal amount of immigrant and Afrikaner children were held where the use of Afrikaans was promoted. Adult camps of a similar type also occurred, but the focus was mainly on the immigrant youth.⁶² In keeping with the idea that the youth were the key to successful assimilation it was argued further that the point of departure of the MEI in its acculturation activities was to facilitate the speedy, and complete, integration of immigrants into South African society. For this reason it was argued that emphasis was placed on the maximum exposure of immigrants to Afrikaner activities in all spheres of life.⁶³

The camps for immigrant children came to the fore as a means for assimilation in the late 1960s, and by the mid-seventies hundreds of children were participating in them annually. In the book year of 1970-71 some 370 immigrant-children participated in fourteen camps organised by the MEI nationwide.⁶⁴

In the Western Cape the first children's camp was held in 1971. Fifty immigrant and South African children attended this camp. It was found that the children interacted well

⁶² J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.6.

⁶³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1975/76*, p.7.

⁶⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, p.14.

and learnt much about one another's cultures. The camp was financed by the regional committee of the MEI, Western Cape, and the Department of Education.⁶⁵

The camps typically entailed activities such as *volkspele*, *boeresport*, religious instruction and flag raising ceremonies where the immigrant children, by means of contact with the Afrikaans children, were taught about some of the more important facets of South African, and in particular Afrikaner culture.⁶⁶

In August 1984 sixteen immigrant and South African children traveled to the Cedarberg in the Western Cape on a typical immigrant children's camp. For an example of such a camp see Addendum 2.

As can be seen from the programme (Addendum 2) the focus of the MEI's camps for immigrant children included religious services every morning and evening, which was in keeping with the organisation's overtly religious nature. South African customs and national symbols were also discussed with the children on this camp, which would arguably educate them as to the significance of their new country's symbols, traditions and customs.

For this particular camp the Department of National Education granted the MEI R500-00 for expenses. This amount was granted on condition that the MEI provided copies of all correspondence regarding the camp, an audited financial statement, a detailed report of the camp, and thirty copies of the official programme for the camp.⁶⁷ For each lecture given by the speakers, Mrs. Bosman, Ms. Swart and Mr. Smith, in this instance, R10-00 was paid.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: Wes-Kaapland: 1971/72*, p.10.

⁶⁶ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.6; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p.10; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1975/76*, p.8; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1976/77*, p.8.

⁶⁷ Departement van Nasionale Opvoeding: G. Simpson, 19/84, INBURGERING-5/36. (hereafter INB-5/36).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

At the above camp, extreme weather conditions affected the outdoor activities of the camp and thus more time was spent on group discussions. Mrs. Swanepoel argued that the immigrant-children's understanding of South African circumstances are usually broadened after such discussions.⁶⁹

One of the children who attended such a camp wrote a letter, which manifested the religious nature of these camps. The young girl professed the following:

“This camp has taught me many things to do with my future, when I came to camp I was having some difficulty with which way I wanted to go. I was even tired of trying to be a Christian but God works in you Tannie Miems and I love God. He showed me through you that you don't need to keep trying but to trust him and He will help me, and if there is anyone I would like to be like is you Tannie Miems.”⁷⁰

Lectures at other children's camps included South African *volkspele*, the life and works of acclaimed South African poets, responsibilities of a new South African citizen⁷¹, stories about South African history and the role of religion in the life of a South African citizen.⁷²

Hattingh, in his analysis of the MEI after fifty years, indicated that an average of 503 immigrant children per annum participated in camps such as those mentioned above between 1966 and 1992.⁷³

(ii) *Vroueoggende*

⁶⁹ Verslag van Immigrantekinderstaptog in die Sederberge aangebied deur die MEI in medewerking met die Departement van Nasionale Opvoeding, Tak Kultuursake vanaf 24 tot 26 Augustus 1984, 208/841, INB-5/36.

⁷⁰ Letter from Sandra (Kenilworth) In MEI. “Immigrante-kinderstaptog: Saagkuilroete, Heidelberg 2-5 April 1984”, INB-5/32.

⁷¹ MEI, “Staptog vir Immigrante-kindere in die Sederberge (Welbedacht-roete) 26 Junie 1984 – 1 Julie 1984”, INB-5/35.

⁷² MEI, “Immigrante staptog in die Amatolaberge, King Williamstown 24 April - 1 Mei 1984”, INB-5/33.

⁷³ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

As much as children were seen as the easiest immigrants to assimilate and integrate into the new society, the immigrant women, wives and mothers were viewed as the most challenging of immigrants to reach out too. Immigrant wives and mothers are seen as the gateway to the assimilation of the immigrant family as a whole, and thus of vital importance to agencies involved in the assimilation of immigrants, such as the MEI.⁷⁴

As mentioned earlier in this study, B.J. in den Bosch found a correlation in his research between homesickness and a lack of contact with the recipient population. It was found that Dutch immigrants who had less contact with South Africans tended to suffer more readily from homesickness.⁷⁵

The MEI argued that assimilation is facilitated through the living contact between immigrants and South Africans in the form of man to man, woman to woman and family to family interaction.⁷⁶

Furthermore the MEI argued that immigrant-friends should pay special attention to the immigrant woman or wife as she is the one who can most easily become lonely and fall into a state of homesickness and longing for her people (family and friends) back home.⁷⁷

One of the MEI's responses to this problem was to organise women's mornings (*vroueoggende*) where immigrant wives, mothers and women could have contact with South African women on a regular basis. The *vroueoggende* also served as a platform for the assimilation and education of immigrant women into the greater South African community.

⁷⁴ W.A. Bryant, "Adaptation of Immigrant wives in South Africa", In MEI, "Referate gelewer by RGN-Simposium in verband met immigrante-inburgering tydens die jaarvergadering van die Maatskappy vir Europese Immigransie Pretoria, 18 November 1986", p.1.

⁷⁵ B.J. in den Bosch, "De verskillende aspekte van de aanpassing der Nederlandse immigranten in Zuid-Afrika", p.81.

⁷⁶ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1975/76*, p.7.

⁷⁷ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in ons Poorte*, p.13.

In the book years of 1970/71, 1971/72, 1972/73 and 1973/74 the Western Cape regional office of the MEI organised six, seventeen, twelve and seventeen functions, respectively, for immigrant women in conjunction with the Department of National Education.⁷⁸

Information programmes for housewives included information regarding youth movements, community resources in Cape Town, children's library services, the purchase of fish and meat, consumer information, architecture, theatre, the Milk Board and the making of Christmas cards.⁷⁹

The programmes and outings which immigrant women were invited to attend included information which could be used for the immigrants' children. The information regarding youth movements and children's libraries are an example of this. In this manner, the MEI could thus reach not only the mothers through these *vroueoggende* but also their children.

The MEI argued furthermore that with the integration of the immigrant it is the small things which are of importances, such as friendly contact between the immigrant woman and South African women. Such contact could lead to the solving of small, but irritating problems.⁸⁰

(iii) *Language Laboratories*

Immigrant's knowledge of South Africa's two official national languages was a major priority for the MEI. Knowledge of Afrikaans was encouraged on numerous occasions by the MEI, and also mooted as a necessity for successful domicile in the Republic.⁸¹

⁷⁸ MEI, *Rapport. Afrikaanse Immigrante-komitee vir Wes-Kaapland: 1970/71*, p.12; MEI, *Jaarverslag: Wes-Kaapland: 1971/72*, p.9; MEI, *Jaarverslag: Wes-Kaapland: 1972/73*, p.8; MEI, *Jaarverslag: Wes-Kaapland: 1973/74*, p.3.

⁷⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: Wes-Kaapland: 1973/74*, p.3.

⁸⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1975/76*, p.10.

⁸¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p. 6.

The MEI's answer to the problem of language learning in South Africa was the establishment of language laboratories across the country, in cooperation with academic institutions, government and other organisations.

Much work was done to convince the government to assist in the teaching of the official languages to immigrants. Negotiations with the authorities in order to assure free access to language classes and language laboratories at local technical colleges, for immigrants who could not speak one of the official languages, succeeded in the early 1970s.⁸²

The private sector was also approached prior to this and in 1968 the Board of Directors of the MEI agreed to replace an annual donation of R1 200 from Rembrandt with 150 sets of 'Tegnisc-disc-language courses' to the value of R1 725 from the same organisation. The courses, which assisted immigrants in learning Afrikaans, were available for German-, English-, French-, Greek-, Italian-, and Portuguese-speaking immigrants at the regional offices of the MEI at a cost of R11,50 per course.⁸³ At a later stage these language courses were made available to immigrants to borrow at no cost by the regional offices of the MEI.⁸⁴

Addendum 3 summarises the attendance of MEI language laboratories on an annual basis between 1970 and 1977. 1975 saw a huge peak in the attendance of the classes, which might be ascribed to the fact that an extra-large contingent of immigrants (50 337) entered South Africa during that year.⁸⁵ Thus an annual average of 1 001 immigrants attended these courses during the above-mentioned period (1970-77). See the table in Addendum 3 for figures of the attendance of language classes offered by the MEI during this period.

⁸² J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.6.

⁸³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, pp.4-5.

⁸⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: Wes-Kaapland: 1973/74*, p.2.

⁸⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1976/77*, p.4.

Hattingh in 1999 calculated that the MEI had attracted an annual average of 526 immigrants to their various language laboratories around the country between 1966 and 1992.⁸⁶

(iv) *Branch assistance to immigrants*

By the end of the 1960s, the MEI had established regional offices throughout South Africa, where full-time employees were available to offer their assistance and services to immigrants. Regional offices were to be found in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Germiston, Springs, Vanderbijlpark, Welkom, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage.⁸⁷ Regional offices were a useful means for direct contact between officials of the MEI and immigrants and the closure of these offices affected the ability to maintain this level of close contact.

The regional offices assisted immigrants with a variety of problems which they experienced in their new country. These problems or difficulties which the average immigrant experienced, and where the MEI assisted them, included the attainment of permanent residence in South Africa, as well as the finding of employment, housing and schools for children. The MEI even offered financial assistance to immigrants who were in financial difficulty. The MEI also drove immigrant-housewives to shops and other places where they needed to be.⁸⁸ From the 1960s all regional offices of the MEI were required to keep a detailed record of all their activities involved in the assistance of immigrants.⁸⁹

The table in Addendum 4 summarises some of the assistance offered to immigrants by the regional offices of the MEI between 1966 and 1992. The figures represent an annual average for these activities.

⁸⁶ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

(e) Naturalisation

The acceptance of South African citizenship by immigrants was ultimately an end-goal for the MEI, and their task of assimilating immigrants was aimed at achieving this goal. The MEI's task included the preparation and education of the immigrant along the pathway of eventually accepting citizenship of the Republic.⁹⁰ Highlighting the necessity of immigration and the full integration of such immigrants into the South African society the MEI argued that the immigrant is present in South Africa due to his or her talents and abilities, and was therefore needed to assist in the further development of the country. Thus the immigrant is here because South Africa needs him or her. Consequently they argued that this fact places a great responsibility at the door of every South African, as the immigrant is an investment in the future of their country. Any immigrant who is not successfully integrated into society and chooses to leave the country is a tragic loss, especially if the immigrant was unable to integrate due to the inability on the part of South Africans to make him or her feel at home. This according to the MEI would represent a serious flaw in the character of the South African populace.⁹¹

The MEI encouraged immigrant-friends to not rush the process of denationalisation, but to rather establish a climate where the immigrant could better understand the Afrikaner, and their world view, so as to eventually allow for the immigrant to identify him or herself with the unique culture of the Afrikaner.⁹²

Mass-citizenship ceremonies were held by the regional offices of the MEI throughout the country, where up to 123 immigrants accepted citizenship at one such ceremony.⁹³ Between 1966 and 1992 an average of 1 303 immigrants per annum accepted South African citizenship under the direction of the MEI.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p.7.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁹² MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, p.11.

⁹³ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7.

The MEI did much to create a more ceremonious atmosphere to the process of accepting citizenship, through the organisation of these functions. The offering of tea and snacks and the organisation of flags of the immigrants' countries of origin for utilisation during these ceremonies was aimed at making the entire process a special one to be remembered by the immigrant.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: Wes-Kaapland: 1973/74*, p.3; Discussion held with Mrs. Miems Swanepoel in August 2004.

4. AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE MEI UPON ASSIMILATION OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS TO SOUTH AFRICA (1949-1994)

(a) Introduction

In this chapter the impact which the *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* exerted upon the assimilation of European immigrants to South Africa will be evaluated. The chapter will place the organisation as a whole, and its operations, in context, with regard to immigration to South Africa in general.

It will be posited that the MEI was broadly speaking an Afrikaner organisation. The MEI was inspired by social and political movements in Afrikaner circles throughout its existence. The organisation was dominated by, in particular Afrikaner men, which arguably affected the direction of the organisation's operations. The amount of dealings with immigrants with regard to the Afrikaans language and relations with Afrikaners will be analysed in order to place these activities in context with immigration and assimilation in general during the period in question.

Furthermore, throughout this study, the intrinsic link between the Afrikaner churches and the MEI has been highlighted. The Churches were instrumental in the development of the organisation, and in extending its efficacy, as an organ of immigrant assimilation. It has further been argued that at times the churches and the MEI were inseparable, and that they utilised each others organs to spread their work. As with the previous section the level of success in integrating immigrants into the Afrikaner churches was measured.

The most important work done by the MEI was in the field of immigrant assimilation, and most of its funds and manpower were directed towards this aim. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century the organisation initiated varying programmes to aid in the assimilation of immigrants.

The ultimate outcome of successful assimilation, for the MEI, was the naturalisation, or acceptance of South African citizenship by immigrants. The MEI's role and impact in this regard are also evaluated in this chapter.

(b) The MEI and the promotion of the Afrikaners' cause

Throughout this study the fact that the MEI remained closely tied to the Afrikaner's political, social and economic cause has been highlighted. The MEI was essentially established from other organisation's which were narrowly linked to the advancement of the Afrikaner, and in particular the advancement of immigration to bolster the Afrikaner population in South Africa.¹ These included the *The Deutsch Afrikanischer Hilfssausschuss* (DAHA), the *Vrouenoodleningskomitee* (VNLK) and the *Dietse Kinderfonds* (DKF).² In the 1950s, a number of the prominent people involved in the MEI, had previously been involved in the above-mentioned organisations, whilst also being vociferous supporters of the Afrikaner cause. These included E.C.G. Schweickert, J.J. Bosman, Oswald Pirow and W. Buhrmann, all prominent politicians and businessmen.³

The middle part of the twentieth century was a time of great advancement, politically, socially and economically for the Afrikaner people of Southern Africa. Having dwelled in the shadows of the English-speaking white minority for decades, there was an asserted effort on the part of the Afrikaner intelligentsia to uplift Afrikaners in all sectors of society. Prime Minister at the time, Dr. D.F. Malan, in a speech at the second economic *Volkskongres* held in 1950 echoed this sentiment when he stated that "The Afrikaners...had to get a place in the economic sun not by pushing others out or being carried on the shoulders of others but in their own right and relying on their own strength."⁴

¹ W. van der Merwe, *Vir 'n Blanke Volk*, pp.17-19; E. de Lange, "Gesiedenis van die Dietse Kinderfonds", p.2.

² See Chapter 2, Section b, sub-sections i, ii, iii.

³ See Chapter 2, Section b, sub-section iii.

⁴ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, p.489.

The MEI was mandated by the Department of Immigration to concentrate on the assimilation and naturalisation of non-English speaking immigrants.⁵ It is for this reason that it is not surprising that the organisation actively lobbied and concentrated their efforts on assimilating immigrants into the Afrikaans-speaking stream of white South Africa. One could argue that in fact, the government issued this mandate to the MEI, in order that the organisation should increase the amount of immigrants who assimilated into the Afrikaans stream of white South Africa.⁶

The MEI was originally established in order to recruit and encourage immigration from Western Europe (excluding the British Isles) to bolster the white population of the country, and especially to attract potential immigrants who would easily assimilate into the Afrikaner population.⁷ Throughout the next half century the organisation continued tirelessly in this regard, never hiding the fact that the cause of the Afrikaner people was central to its aims.

In the MEI's programmes of assimilation, it actively promoted the channelling of immigrants into the Afrikaans stream of society. Immigrant friends were encouraged to assist immigrants in the placement of their children in Afrikaans-medium schools, to learn Afrikaans and to even give immigrants "suitable" Afrikaans reading material.⁸

Hattingh argued that the role which the regional offices of the MEI played in the assimilation of immigrants into Afrikaner society was vital. According to Hattingh large numbers of immigrants were able, thanks to the tireless work of the regional offices, to be integrated into Afrikaans schools, churches, cultural organisations and other organisations.⁹

⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.253.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ J.P. de Lange, *Die maatskaplike en kulturele inburgering van die immigrant*, p.6.

⁸ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.5. MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, pp.11-14.

⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI. 1949-1999*, p.7.

The MEI made it clear on numerous occasions to immigrants that in order to function effectively in South Africa they would have to master not only English but also the other national language, Afrikaans.¹⁰ In order to help achieve this the MEI offered language classes, both in English and Afrikaans, but with a clear focus on transferring the Afrikaans language to immigrants.

Between 1966 and 1992 an annual average of 526 immigrants were involved in language classes with the MEI, this therefore meant that during this period approximately 14 200 immigrants participated in these language courses.¹¹ According to the same source the MEI received an annual average of 7 652 visits by immigrants to their offices nation wide between 1966 and 1992. Using the same calculation one could deduce that approximately 206 600 immigrant visits occurred during the period in question.¹² Between 1966 and 1978 an annual average of 36 820 people immigrated to South Africa or 478 692 in total.¹³

When one evaluates the above figures the extent of the impact of the MEI's language classes can be placed in context with the national immigration figures. 6,87% of immigrants who visited the MEI's offices, which is the only means of interpreting the number of immigrants the MEI dealt with on an annual basis¹⁴, were involved in language courses. Here too one must also understand that the MEI's records do not stipulate that these visits were by separate individual immigrants, and therefore we could assume that some of these visits were return visits by the same immigrants. Furthermore, it is important to note that these visits by immigrants to the MEI's offices, were most certainly not from new immigrants, who had arrived in a particular year alone, but that

¹⁰ MEI, Konstitusie: Streekkantoor Wes-Kaapland, p.2; MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, p.13.

¹¹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.254.

¹⁴ In the records of the MEI, which came into my possession by means of the Western Cape Regional Office of the MEI, there are no official data of the total number of immigrants approached and dealt with during the period of this study. It is for this reason that the visits to offices, of which an annual record was kept, is the most accurate available in determining the numerical scope of the MEI's contact with immigrants.

immigrants already resident in South Africa for a number of years, could well have visited the MEI's offices on a regular basis. When one looks at the national immigration figures the impact of the MEI's language courses are diminished further. The 526 immigrants enrolled on average annually in the language courses represent only 1,43% of the annual average of immigrants to South Africa, totalling 36 820.

1975 represented a peak in the number of immigrants who were attending language courses with the MEI. In that year 2 126 immigrants participated in the said courses. During 1975 the MEI received 7 816 visits to its regional offices.¹⁵ 1975 saw a peak in the national immigration figures. During that year 50 337 immigrants migrated to the Republic.¹⁶ Utilising the same calculations as used in the previous paragraph one can again assess the level of involvement of the MEI both in the assimilation of immigrants which they dealt with directly and also the entire national immigration. Thus the 2 126 immigrants attending language courses represents 27,2% of the immigrants who visited the MEI's regional offices. Those immigrants attending language classes represented 4,22% of the national immigrants of 1975.

1989/90 was a low point for the MEI regarding immigrants attending language classes. Only 120 immigrants attended these classes representing 3,69% of the 3 248 visitors to the MEI's regional offices.¹⁷ In the book year of 89/90, 18 544 people immigrated to South Africa.¹⁸ The 120 immigrants attending the MEI's language courses represents a meagre 0,65% of these immigrants.

The MEI aimed to channel immigrant children into Afrikaans medium pre-schools and schools, in order to strengthen the Afrikaans-speaking population. They actively

¹⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag 1974/75*, p.9.

¹⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.254.

¹⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag 1990*, p.3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

encouraged immigrant friends and immigrants themselves, to place immigrant children in these schools.¹⁹

Between 1966 and 1992 an annual average of 98 immigrant children were channelled into Afrikaans medium schools and pre-schools²⁰ a total of approximately 2 646 for the whole period. Once again utilising the MEI's figures for office visits of immigrants as a means of determining the number of immigrants the MEI dealt with we see that the amount of success in this department was almost negligible. If we hypothetically assume that of the 7 652 visitors per annum to the offices of the MEI, fifty percent were children (3 826), that translates the 98 channelled children to a meagre percentile of 2,56%. Utilising the national immigration figures, and again hypothetically assuming that half of the 36 820 immigrants were children (18 410) the percentile of channelled children drops significantly to 0,53%.²¹

As with the language courses, 1975 was a peak year for the MEI regarding the channelling of immigrant children into Afrikaans-medium schools and pre-schools. During this year the MEI channelled 195 children into the above-mentioned schools.²² This represents 4,99% of 3 908 immigrants, which represents half of the 7 816 total immigrant visits to the MEI's offices.²³ Once again the 195 channelled children only represents 0,77% of the 25 169, which represents half of the total immigration figure (50 337) for 1975.²⁴

¹⁹ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, pp.11-12; MEI, *Jaarverslag 1967/68*, p.5. Also see Chapter 3, Section b, subsection iii.

²⁰ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7

²¹ The accuracy of the hypothetical assumptions are not of major importance as even if only half, or 25%, of the estimated amount given (18 410) were in fact children, the figure would still represent a rather negligible 1,06% of all immigrant children.

²² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p.9.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.254.

In the book year of 1978/79 only 24 immigrant children were channelled to Afrikaans-medium schools, representing 1,51% of half of the visitors to the MEI's offices (1 585).²⁵ The 24 immigrant children represents a percentile of 0,28% of half of the immigrants to South Africa during this period (8 652).²⁶

One of the other means which the MEI utilised in order to assimilate immigrants into the Afrikaans-speaking population, or at least allow for a better understanding of Afrikaners for the immigrants was by organising contact between immigrant and Afrikaner families.²⁷ These Afrikaner families and individuals were known as immigrant friends.²⁸

For the twenty-seven years between 1966 and 1992, Hattingh states that there was an annual average of 735 immigrant friends involved with the MEI and the immigrants under its auspices.²⁹ The MEI's records of immigrant friends indicate that the figure was fairly stable throughout the period in question (1966-1992), usually between approximately 650 and 850, which correlates with the annual average of 735. The late seventies saw a peak in the amount of immigrant friends, with 1 134³⁰ in 1977 and 1 118³¹ in 1979/80. The 1980s saw a decline in the amount of immigrant friends, with 530³² in 1986/87 and 481³³ in 1988/89. Immigration to South Africa was at a low point in the late seventies, following the unrest of the 1976 Soweto Riots. In 1977 there were 24 724 immigrants to South Africa and 18 565 in 1978.³⁴ It is thus surprising that the number of immigrant friends peaked during this period, as there were less new immigrants to deal with. It is perhaps more understandable that the number of immigrant

²⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1978/79*, p.11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7.

²⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p.10; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, p.12.

²⁸ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, p.6.

²⁹ J.H. Hattingh. *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

³⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1976/77*, p.7.

³¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11.

³² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.254.

friends was on the decline during the late eighties, as immigration was at its lowest in decades. Unrest and the ongoing state of emergency during the late eighties seriously damaged the country's desirability as an immigration destination and by 1987 as few as 7 953 individuals chose to immigrate to South Africa.³⁵

The above three assimilation projects discussed, language courses, the channelling of immigrant children into Afrikaans-medium schools and the immigrant friend scheme, are evidence of the overt attempts made by the MEI to strengthen the Afrikaner section of white South Africa by means of immigration.

There are numerous statements throughout the documents and annual reports of the MEI, which clearly justifies the categorisation of the MEI as an organisation aiming to advance the cause of the Afrikaner people of South Africa.

(c) The MEI and the Church

Along with the advancement of the Afrikaner people which the MEI maintained, the other central motivation and inspiration for the organisation was that of religion. From its very beginnings until the present the MEI has never hidden the fact that they were driven by religious values in their attempts to assimilate immigrants. As mentioned earlier in this study the MEI maintained at all times that its operations "were based on the foundation of the Holy Scripture as expressed in the three form of unity with the aim to assist immigrants with their spiritual, social and physical needs."³⁶

The guide for immigrant friends, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, poignantly stated that the religious assimilation of the immigrant must be handled with the greatest of care, exceptional tact and over a long period, but that it may not be neglected.³⁷ The annual report of 1988 reiterated the importance of the religious assimilation of immigrants, it

³⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.8.

³⁶ MEI, "Die verhouding tussen die MEI en die Kerk", p.2.

³⁷ MEI, *Die Vreemdeling in Ons Poorte*, p.16.

argued that immigrants should be subtly led towards the Afrikaner's religious sphere, but that this was an essential endeavour which could not be neglected.³⁸

As late as 1993, the religious nature of the MEI was still being emphasised at its annual general meeting. The MEI's vision was partly seen to entail the recruitment, on merit, of persons who could fill vacant professional positions, provide capital, provide jobs and assimilate into the Christian South African population in the least traumatic and overt manner.³⁹

As far as the MEI's operations are concerned, in their records there are too major quantifiable indices of their operations regarding the religious assimilation of immigrants. The first of these is the distribution of Bibles, in English, Afrikaans and the mother tongue of the immigrants. Secondly, the involvement of churches and other religious organisations in the MEI was recorded annually.

Bible distribution on the part of the MEI came as a result of the sister churches distribution of Bibles to Hungarian refugees in their own language in 1958. Hattingh states that this event was the beginning of the Bible outreach action of the MEI to immigrants in their own language. All Bibles throughout the years, which were distributed by the MEI to immigrants were donated by the Bible Society of South Africa after negotiations initiated by Mr. A.B. van N. Herbst, honorary secretary of the MEI from 1957-1968.⁴⁰

According to Hattingh an annual average of 248 Bibles were distributed amongst immigrants by the MEI.⁴¹ 1971 and 1973 saw a peak in the distribution of the said Bibles when 699⁴² and 677⁴³ were donated respectively. Conversely after 1979 the

³⁸ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.12.

³⁹ MVI, "Sakelys en ander stukke: Jaarvergadering, 05/08/93, Bylaag A.

⁴⁰ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁴² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, pp.12-13.

distribution of Bibles by the MEI declined markedly, and as few as 29 Bibles were issued in the book years of 1979/80 and 1987/88.⁴⁴

The decline in the distribution of Bibles in 1979/80 was justified by the MEI due to the decline in immigration, and a lack of bilingual Bibles available to the company.⁴⁵ The MEI's annual report stated that they were expecting a new consignment of Bibles in that year which would increase their distribution. By 1983/84 and 1984/85, however, only 72 and 64 Bibles were donated respectively, and would not increase much over the next decade.⁴⁶ In 1989, the lack of Bible distribution was explained by the MEI in terms of a lack of co-operation between the company and the Afrikaner sister churches.⁴⁷

Throughout the sixties and seventies the MEI attempted to attract greater involvement from an array of organisations but particularly from the three Afrikaner sister-churches.⁴⁸ The MEI kept an annual record of involvement of organisations, including church councils and other religious bodies. An annual average of 725 such councils and bodies were involved with the MEI between 1966 and 1992.⁴⁹

The involvement of the above-mentioned organisations was at its peak during the 1970s, with 1 080⁵⁰ of them involved during 1976 and 1 137⁵¹ in 1979/80. In this instance the least involvement, on record, enjoyed by the MEI was in the late sixties when strict records were kept for the first time. In 1967/68 only 338 councils and bodies were

⁴³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1973/74*, p.9.

⁴⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13.

⁴⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11.

⁴⁶ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12.

⁴⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10. [no specific reason for the lack of cooperation could be found in the limited literature available from the MEI. It is postulated that the decline in immigrants led to a decline in interest on the part of the Afrikaner churches, who would rather spend their efforts on other organizations attracting more interest.]

⁴⁸ See chapter 2, section.d.

⁴⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

⁵⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1976/77*, p.7.

⁵¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11.

involved with the MEI.⁵² Furthermore the records indicate a decline in collaborating councils and bodies during the 1980s, dropping from 891⁵³ in 1984/85 to 731⁵⁴ in 1988/89. The above-mentioned decline and levelling out in the late 1980s was explained, along with possible solutions, by the MEI as follows:

The number of cooperating bodies remained fairly constant during the last year. The reason for this must be viewed in terms of the decline and later increase in immigration to South Africa. The low immigration figures stemmed the stimulation for involvement on the part of church, cultural and other organisations to work with the MEI.⁵⁵

Other attempts made by the MEI to assist in the religious assimilation of immigrants included the establishment of Reformed congregations where immigrants could hear the Message in their own languages. An example of this was Ds. P.A. Pienaar, who during the 1970s and 1980s learnt Portuguese and thereby established the *Igreja Reformada Portuguesa* (The Portuguese Reformed Church).⁵⁶

(d) Assimilation programmes and other services

From the founding of the MEI in 1949 until the establishment of the Department of Immigration in 1961, the MEI focussed on the recruitment of immigrants in Europe, and begun developing their programmes of assimilation. In 1967 the MEI was officially recognised by the government, along with the 1820 Settlers Organisation, as the sole providers of advise and assistance to immigrants. Hattingh states that a beginning was made by the MEI as from 1967 to create a set, ordered programme of assimilation and cultural transfer in the educational, cultural, religious and economic terrains. Each regional office was supported by a permanent committee composed of voluntary regional

⁵² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.6.

⁵³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12.

⁵⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.3.

committee members, an established programme of action was planned annually by the regional office and implemented in association with the regional committee.⁵⁷

An idea of the different forms of assistance which the MEI offered immigrants, and other forms of aid they felt they could attempt to offer was outlined in the annual report of 1973/74 which can be viewed in Addendum 5.

An analysis of the facts and figures regarding the MEI's projects of assimilation and other services they offered to immigrants during the period 1966 till 1992 will be discussed below to determine the scope of their operations, once again to illustrate the impact of the MEI in this terrain in context with national immigration.

Immigrant functions were one of the major means by which the MEI could get immigrants and South Africans in contact with one another. An average of 271 such functions were organised annually by the MEI between 1966 and 1992.⁵⁸

In 1967/68 only 29 immigrant functions were organised, which was the least throughout the twenty-seven year period.⁵⁹ This low figure can be attributed to the fact that the idea of organising immigrant functions was only in its infancy at this time. In the following years the number of immigrant functions showed a steady increase, eventually peaking in 1983/84 when the MEI organised 577 such functions.⁶⁰ Immigrant functions was the one area in which the MEI's figures remained steady throughout the years, usually in the region of 400 per annum, after the mid-seventies. The MEI explained the importance of these functions in terms of the fact that at such functions the opportunity was present to expose immigrants to South Africans, their culture, language, traditions and *vice versa*.⁶¹

⁵⁷ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁵⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.6.

⁶⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

From the early sixties the MEI begun utilising these camps for children in order to assist in speeding up and easing the assimilation process. Regarding these camps the MEI argued that one of their most important projects was the *Praat-Afrikaans* camps, where an equal number of immigrant and South African children could come into direct contact with one another.⁶² Between 1966 and 1992, 503 children attended these camps per year on average.⁶³

The peak in attendance of the camps for children was during the book year of 1978/79, when 941 children participated in the 'Praat-Afrikaans-Projekte' camps.⁶⁴ In 1973 764 children attended the camps, which represents the second highest attendance during the twenty-seven year period.⁶⁵ The lowest points in attendance were in 1984/85 and 1989/90 when 242⁶⁶ and 300⁶⁷ children participated in camps respectively. The low attendance in 1984/85 was blamed by the MEI on the fact that a number of regional offices were disrupted by the loss of regional directors.⁶⁸

In general the attendance of 'Praat-Afrikaans-Projekte' camps was steady, yet erratic, between 1966 and 1992. For the most part the figure floated between approximately 350 and 650 throughout this period, again correlating with the average of 503 between 1966 and 1992. The eighties, however, saw a general decline in the attendance of these camps, with the annual average for this decade being only 350.⁶⁹

⁶² J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁶⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11.

⁶⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1973/74*, p.9.

⁶⁶ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12.

⁶⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

⁶⁸ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, pp.12-13.

⁶⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

Once again this decline can be attributed to the general decline in immigration figures for especially the late 1980s. In 1987, a mere 7 953⁷⁰ immigrants entered South Africa, in 1988 only 10 400⁷¹ people immigrated to the Republic, whilst in 1989 and 1990 the figures were 11 270⁷² and 14 499⁷³ respectively. These immigration figures are therefore clearly lower than those of the 1970s when as many as 50 337 (1975) and 46 071 (1976) people were immigrating to South Africa.⁷⁴

The annual figures for immigrant visits to the MEI's regional offices indicates a sharp decline throughout the sixties and seventies, with a levelling out from the late-seventies through to the early nineties. 1967/68 saw a peak in the visits of immigrants to the MEI's offices, when 17 044 such visits occurred.⁷⁵ In 1970 and 1971, 12 881 and 12 101 immigrant visits to regional offices occurred respectively, showing a decline from the late seventies, but still good numbers in proportion to national immigration figures.⁷⁶

If one utilises the calculation which was used in the second sub-section of this chapter⁷⁷ we can see that the 17 044 visits to the MEI's offices during the book year of 1967/68 represents 21,44% of the total national immigrants during 1967 and 1968 (79 485).⁷⁸

As mentioned above, the late 1970s and 1980s saw a steady decline, and then levelling out of the number of immigrant visits to the MEI's offices. The average number of visits

⁷⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.8.

⁷¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.7.

⁷² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

⁷³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1991*, p.3.

⁷⁴ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.254.

⁷⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.6.

⁷⁶ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, pp.12-13.

⁷⁷ See footnote 14 on p.85.

⁷⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, *South Africa 1980/1: Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa*, p.254.

during the eighties was 3 617.⁷⁹ The low point during this period was in the book year of 1988/89 when only 2 870 immigrants visited the offices.⁸⁰ This figure represents 13,24% of the 21 670⁸¹ national immigrants during 1988 and 1989.

An explanation for this sharp decline in the late-seventies given by the MEI, is that a number of staff cuts had occurred, and furthermore, that the majority of regional chairpersons of the regional offices were at that stage beginning to work only half days, so as to save money on salaries.⁸²

Furthermore, the decline in the mid-1980s was attributed to the fact that in six of the ten regional offices of the MEI, new regional chairpersons had been appointed, which strained the efficacy of these offices. In the offices at Durban, Germiston, Pretoria, Springs, Vanderbijlpark and Welkom the regional chairpersons' positions were vacant for between two and twenty months, this naturally affected the ability of these offices to deal with immigrants in large numbers.⁸³

In the same year the MEI also explained the decline in visits to its offices in terms of new immigration conditions, which stipulated that immigrants could receive permanent residence on condition that they were already assured of a fixed job on arrival in South Africa.⁸⁴ The lower immigration figures for this period (28 691 in 1984)⁸⁵ was another reason cited by the MEI for the decline in immigrant visits to offices.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

⁸⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.7; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

⁸² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11.

⁸³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.

It is difficult to determine the exact amount of immigrants the MEI dealt with since the late-1960s, due to lacking official records. One can, however, clearly appreciate that in the late-1960s and early 1970s, when between 9 066 and 17 044 annual visits to offices occurred, that the MEI was certainly dealing with a large number of immigrants on an annual basis. We can therefore assume that during this period at least, their affect on the assimilation of immigrants on a national basis was noteworthy.

Coupled with visits to regional offices, was the instances of visits by MEI staff to the homes of immigrants. In 1970, the peak year for these visits, 2 305 MEI staff member visits to immigrants in their homes occurred.⁸⁷ By 1987/88 the corresponding figure for home visits was a mere 355.⁸⁸ The decline in home visits mirrors the above-mentioned decline in visits to regional offices, and one can therefore assume that the reasons for the drop in these home visits were in turn mirrored by those which had led to the decline in visits to regional offices.

One of the other major services the MEI offered was to assist immigrants in finding employment, or new employment. An annual average of 544 immigrants were assisted in this way between 1966 and 1992.⁸⁹

The records of the MEI, in this instance, once again show a steady decline from the late-1960s through to the 1980s. In the book year of 1967/68, 2 572 immigrants were assisted in finding employment, or re-employment, by the MEI.⁹⁰ This figure was greatly in excess of any other year's figures for assistance in finding employment, and indicates manifestly the scope of hard work undertaken in that year by the staff of the MEI. By 1970, 732 immigrants were assisted in this regard.⁹¹ The MEI attributed the decline in the seventies to the fact that greater success was being achieved in attracting immigrant

⁸⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, pp.12-13.

⁸⁸ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13.

⁸⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

⁹⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.6.

⁹¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, p.12.

friends, who could in turn assist immigrants with regard to finding employment, housing, and other day to day obstacles faced by the immigrant.⁹²

Once again, the late-1970s saw a rapid decline in the number of immigrants assisted in finding employment or re-employment. The MEI's records indicate a levelling of this statistic throughout the 1970s, in that the amount of immigrants assisted in this regard remained between 445⁹³ and 652.⁹⁴ By 1978/79 and 1979/80 as little as 155 and 133 immigrants were assisted in finding employment respectively.⁹⁵ Throughout the 1980s this statistic remained very low, and the MEI once again attributed the decline in this regard to the immigration limitations which stipulated that individuals could only immigrate to the Republic on condition that they had procured fixed employment here before their arrival.⁹⁶

The MEI assisted immigrants in procuring housing for themselves and their families throughout the twenty-seven year period between 1966 and 1992. The organisation managed to find housing for an annual average of 703 immigrants in this period.⁹⁷

The statistics for the assistance in the finding of housing for immigrants reached its peak in 1970 and 1971 when 2 236 and 2 276 immigrants were assisted in this regard, respectively.⁹⁸ Conversely the 1980s feature a statistical decline in the procurement of housing for immigrants. The annual average number of houses and accommodation found for immigrants in the 1980s was a mere 150⁹⁹, 79% less than the annual average for the entire twenty-seven year period. The low point in this regard was during the book

⁹² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, p.11.

⁹³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1973/74*, p.9.

⁹⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1976/77*, p.7.

⁹⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11.

⁹⁶ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.13.

⁹⁷ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

⁹⁸ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, pp.12-13.

⁹⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

year 1986/87, when the MEI only assisted 77 immigrant families and individuals in finding accommodation.¹⁰⁰

From 1966 till 1992, the MEI helped those immigrants in financial need with loans and grants from its own funds. An average of R3 419 was distributed amongst such needy immigrants per year between 1966 and 1992.¹⁰¹

The records for the above period indicate that there was a steady decline in the amount of money made available for immigrants over the three decades. The year in which the most money was distributed amongst immigrants, was in 1970 (R9 008).¹⁰² In the 1970s the amount varied between R2 274¹⁰³ and R3 520¹⁰⁴ and indicates a consistency during this period with regard to financial assistance. Again, it is in the 1980s where a dramatic decrease occurs in the financial aid to immigrants. During this period a meagre average of R612 was distributed amongst immigrants per annum.¹⁰⁵ In the book year of 1986/87 the MEI summarily made no funds available to needy immigrants.¹⁰⁶

The sharp decline in aid distributed amongst needy immigrants from 1970 to 1971 (down from R9 008 to R124) was justified by the MEI, in that they argued that the average amount of money given per immigrant increased in 1971 from R26,49 (1970) to R54 per immigrant.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless they offer no explanation for the fact that 340 immigrants were assisted in 1970, as opposed to 2,3¹⁰⁸ in 1971, which represents an enormous decline. The decline in the 1980s in financial aid can again be ascribed to the drop in the

¹⁰⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13.

¹⁰¹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

¹⁰² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, pp.12-13.

¹⁰³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1976/77*, p.7.

¹⁰⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p.9.

¹⁰⁵ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

¹⁰⁶ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13.

¹⁰⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, p.12.

¹⁰⁸ 2,3 individuals comes about when one calculates that R54 goes 2,3 times into R124. It would appear that there might have been a miscalculation on the part of the MEI in their annual report of 1970/71.

amount of immigrants which entered the country during this time, and also the limitations which required immigrants to have procured a fixed job before arrival, thus allowing for less financially needy immigrants.¹⁰⁹

A means of determining the scope of financial assistance offered to immigrants is by viewing the amount of aid given as a percentage of the amount of funds raised by the MEI. In 1970 the MEI granted R9 008 to needy immigrants, which represents 118% of the R7 619 raised by the company in that year.¹¹⁰ In 1975 the aid of R3 520 as a percentile of the funds raised in that year (R16 731) equates to 21%.¹¹¹ The corresponding percentage for 1984/85, when R854 was distributed amongst financially needy immigrants, represents a mere 2,38% of the R35 933 raised in that year.¹¹²

The MEI's fundraising projects indicate a steady increase throughout the period in which records were maintained by the company. In 1967/68, R6 137¹¹³ was raised by the MEI, whilst the peak during the above-mentioned period was reached in 1986/87 when the company raised R54 327.¹¹⁴

One of the most important sources of privately raised funds for the MEI, was their ownership of a number of parking areas. Between 1966 and 1999 the MEI raised R3 747 759 in parking fees charged at these parking areas.¹¹⁵

Mention should also be made of a shift in focus or mediums of publicity which occurred in the late 1970s and 1980s for the MEI. One of these was a realisation of the need to publicise the workings of the MEI by means of addressing meetings of convocations,

¹⁰⁹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.13.

¹¹⁰ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, pp.12-13.

¹¹¹ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p.9.

¹¹² MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.13.

¹¹³ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.6.

¹¹⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13.

¹¹⁵ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, pp.11-12.

companies and other organisations. The second was the recognition of the role which the press could play in publicising the MEI's work. Records of these two forms of publicity were kept in the MEI's annual reports from 1973 and 1984 respectively. The annual averages for these two statistics were 140 for talks about immigration and 82 for radio, television and press exposure.¹¹⁶

(e) Naturalisation

The naturalisation of the immigrant was a definite final aim for the MEI, in that only citizens of the country could be guaranteed to ultimately increase the number of whites and/or even Afrikaners. The MEI argued that it was the task of the regional offices and the MEI in general to prepare immigrants for citizenship of the Republic, as well as how to achieve this. The aim of this was not to be over-protective of the immigrant, or to antagonise the South African population by placing an over-emphasis on immigrants, but in order to smooth out the assimilation process to allow for it to occur as speedily as possible.¹¹⁷

According to Hattingh an annual average of 1 303 immigrants accepted South African citizenship between 1966 and 1992.¹¹⁸ As to whether this figure refers to immigrants which the MEI dealt with directly is not known for certain. It can, however, be doubted when one looks at the official records of citizenship acceptance in the individual annual reports. In Addendum 6, a table constructed from individual annual reports with the amount of immigrants, per year, illustrates the amount of immigrants the MEI assisted in accepting citizenship.

Thus, by calculating the individual annual report's, records of immigrants accepting South African citizenship, with only statistics for a few years missing (1972, 1976, 1981, 1982, 1991 and 1992), the annual average is 588 as opposed to Hattingh's 1 303. If the

¹¹⁶ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

¹¹⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, pp.7-8.

¹¹⁸ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

missing six years did indeed contain the missing numbers of immigrants accepting citizenship, allowing for Hattingh's calculations to work out, it would mean that the annual average of acceptance of South African citizenship for the missing six years would have to be 3 136. When one looks at the other years, of which we have the records available, we see that the peak was in 1989/90 when 1 099 immigrants naturalised. It could thus be argued that it is most unlikely that an annual average 3 136 immigrants would have accepted South African citizenship in the six years for which statistics are not forthcoming.

Included in the immigrant functions organised by the MEI, were the mass naturalisation functions held nation wide and organised by the regional offices of the MEI in conjunction with the Department of Internal Affairs. As many as 123 immigrants accepted South African citizenship at one such ceremony.¹¹⁹

The MEI arguably attempted to the best of its abilities, and with its own anachronistic influences, to assist immigrants in settling in South Africa. This chapter has indicated that although there was no lack in effort on the MEI's part, their impact, however, on a national scale was minimal.

¹¹⁹ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.8.

CONCLUSION

Migration, including immigration and emigration, have been a part of human history since its very beginnings. Prehistoric humankind trekked across the continents in search of new lands where they could find more plentiful living space and sustenance. Many millennia later, with the use of technology, such as vessels and domesticated animals, humankind began spreading all across the globe on voyages of discovery and later colonial conquest.

Migration, or more particularly in this case, immigration, was relatively uncontrolled prior to the twentieth century. In most cases, if an individual possessed the means to migrate to another part of the world, they were free to do so. In the twentieth century, however, immigration came increasingly under the control of governments, who begun controlling specifically which kinds of immigrants they were searching for to enter their countries.

For the most part these governments were searching for immigrants who could contribute to the welfare of their states, for example, immigrants who possessed certain required skills were welcomed, whilst unskilled immigrants were turned away, or not afforded the permission to immigrate. Thus, it could be argued, immigration became, in the twentieth century, a complex and controlled human endeavour.

It is this controlled process of human immigration, which forms the foundation of this study. More particularly, it is the processes which subjects of the said controlled immigration process undergo when they settle in a new country, which constitutes the major focal point of this research. These processes are specifically known as assimilation and naturalisation.

In the first chapter the most important concepts pertaining to the immigration experience were unpacked by focusing on definitions of the said concepts and ideas and theories found in literature on these processes from numerous disciplines and from around the

world. In the chapter the terms discussed included: identity, identity formation, assimilation and naturalisation.

Identity and identity formation were analysed solely on grounds of their connection to the assimilation and naturalisation processes, therefore it is reiterated that no attempt was made to discuss these processes as they occur in all walks of human life. It was posited that the process of immigration automatically affects the identity of an immigrant in that the immigrant alters certain aspects of his or her identity within their new environment and when surrounded by new networks of exchange, which differed from those of their country of origin. It was argued that an individual's personality is composed of a number of different identity traits, which combine to form a compound identity. When certain of those identity traits are altered, as is the case with immigrants who acquire new languages and cultural practices, this invariably alters their compound identity. The process of identity formation was included in the conceptual apparatus, due to the fact that if one assumes that immigrants' compound identities are altered by the process of immigration, their altered identity represents the ongoing identity formation process which all human beings undergo throughout their life. The work of E.H. Erikson was utilised in order to illustrate how the process of immigration can be seen to form a part of this life-long identity formation process.

Assimilation is the process which immigrants undergo in their new society in order to become more akin to the indigenous population of their new country. If, as mentioned before, the immigration process formed the foundation for this study then the process of assimilation represented the backbone of the thesis. The *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* (MEI) concerned itself chiefly with the assimilation of European immigrants into the white, but particularly Afrikaner, stream of South African society.

It was indicated that different definitions of the term assimilation exist. These ranged from the argument that successful assimilation represents the total integration into the new society, leaving the immigrant indistinguishable from the indigenous population, to

the argument that successful assimilation infers that the immigrant can also function suitably in his or her new society, even if they differ from the local population.

These differing definitions are important with regard to this study of the MEI's programmes of assimilation. Throughout the twentieth century immigration-states' policies altered as the definition of the term assimilation developed. This occurred in the United States and Australia, where policies with strict requirements of total assimilation were gradually replaced by pluralistic policies which encouraged the diversity which immigration affords society. In South Africa, and in the case of the MEI, the emphasis on total assimilation was maintained long after the above-mentioned countries had abandoned these strict expectations.

The above is illustrated by the MEI's conservative approach which articulated its preference for immigrants who could easily be assimilated into the cultural, religious and social (including language) identity of white South Africa, and more particularly that of the Afrikaner. The MEI was still calling for immigrants fitting these criteria as late as 1993.

Naturalisation can be seen to represent the next phase in the immigration process. For most states and organisations linked to immigration, such as the MEI, naturalisation was seen as the ultimate outcome of their work with immigrants. When an immigrant chooses to become naturalised, he or she pledges allegiance to their new state and feels that he or she can perform the universal roles required of him or her in his or her new society. Furthermore, the acceptance of citizenship removes all legal restrictions and obstacles allowing the immigrant to participate fully on all three major levels (economically, socially and politically) within his or her new society. It was in the fields of assimilation and naturalisation where the MEI, as an organisation dealing with immigrants, concentrated its main efforts.

In Chapter two a brief analysis of the MEI's history was entered into in order to gain a fuller understanding of the establishment and motives of the organisation. The

establishment of the MEI was not a spontaneous incident, but was rather facilitated by a number of ideas and movements which had preceded the organisation. The Afrikaner churches had expressed an interest in attracting Protestant immigrants to South Africa in the wake of the Second World War.

It was, however, three social-welfare organisations which launched the idea of attracting European, initially German, immigrants to South Africa, and who would essentially lay the cornerstone for the formation of the MEI in 1949. The *Deutsch Afrikanischer Hifssausschuss* (DAHA) was established after the First World War to support sufferers in Germany and those Germans who had been victims of attacks in South Africa during the war. The organisation was re-launched after the Second World War to perform the same duties. From the DAHA the *Vroue Noodleningskomitee* (VNLK) was formed which attempted to put more of an Afrikaner 'stamp' on the assistance provided to the German people. It was also the VNLK who first mooted the idea of bringing German orphans to South Africa. The *Dietse Kinderfonds* (DKF) was established as an offshoot of the VNLK, and dealt expressly with the immigration of German orphans to South Africa. The immigration aspects of these organisations were incorporated into the newly formed MEI in 1949.

The 1950s and early 1960s saw the MEI undergo a period of consolidation, in which it began sending feelers out to attract government and other organisations' involvement. Immigration to South Africa was minimal in these early years and the MEI initially struggled to continue its work. This was largely due to the Nationalist government's strict immigration policies during the fifties, which discouraged mass immigration whilst in the rest of the world immigration was peaking. These policies of the National Party (NP) were partly in reaction to the Smuts government's open door policy which led to large-scale British immigration after the Second World War, and which according to the NP and organisations like the MEI, upset the language balance of South Africa.

The 1960s, 70s and early 80s represented a golden era for the MEI. Immigration was on the rise, the state subsidised the organisation and a number of cultural, religious and

social organisations became involved in the programmes of the MEI. This situation allowed the MEI the necessary manpower, infrastructure and finances to extend its programmes of assimilation and naturalisation. A number of affiliations (international and local) and publications allowed the MEI to spread its message to prospective immigrants and South Africans alike.

The 1990s ushered in a new dispensation for South Africa and all organisations and institutions in the country. The MEI was suddenly in an acutely different position to the previous three decades. The new government suspended its subsidy to the MEI in 1993, other organisations withdrew their direct support and immigration from Europe plummeted. The MEI was forced to make do with little finances and support to continue its calling.

The penultimate chapter of this study dealt with the MEI at operational level, and investigated the forces and organisations which influenced and motivated the company, and particularly the programmes which it put in place to achieve its goals of assimilating immigrants into white South Africa.

Even though the available documents of the MEI were of limited scope it was, however, not possible to discount the influence which forces such as Afrikaner nationalism, the Afrikaner churches and government policies exerted on the policies of the MEI in turn.

Throughout its 56 years of existence the MEI was directed, managed and chaired exclusively by prominent Afrikaner men, who amongst others included a number of people who were vociferously in favour of the advancement of the Afrikaner people. Former directors of the MEI included former NP government cabinet ministers and Ministers of the three Afrikaner sister churches. Whilst men ran the upper echelons of the organisation, it was Afrikaner women who largely occupied the positions in the MEI at operational level. In essence, men were involved in the real decision-making and policy-making of the organisation, whilst women were left to the more gentle and coaxing tasks of making immigrants feel at home and comfortable in their new society.

In their literature the MEI vociferously advocated the importance of bilingualism in South Africa and the absolute necessity of teaching immigrants the Afrikaans language, culture and history. Projects included the channeling of immigrant children into Afrikaans-medium schools. Ultimately the MEI never hid the fact that they feared that immigrants who assimilated into the English-speaking stream of white South Africa would lead to an imbalance in the language scale of South Africa, and that in its turn it would eventually lead to the outnumbering of Afrikaners by English-speakers.

The role of religion in the MEI was overt and extensively emphasised. The MEI never claimed to be a secular organisation and its foundation and aims, according to its own statutes, were based on religious values as represented by the three forms of unity of the Holy Scripture. Their literature encouraged the subtle, but necessary, assimilation of immigrants into the three Afrikaner churches and at times the MEI was even referred to as “the Church” by immigrants and residents of towns in which they had offices.

In chapter three the assimilation programmes of the MEI were discussed in detail. The MEI’s programmes were generally successful considering their limited scope with regard to the number of immigrants who participated. They focussed heavily on the assimilation of women and children and two of the programmes through which they attempted to aid them in this task were *Vroueoggende* (women’s mornings) for immigrant housewives and *Praat-Afrikaans* (speak Afrikaans) camps for immigrant children.

On an annual basis several hundred immigrant children would attend camps with a similar number of Afrikaner children, where they would be taught about South Africa and the Afrikaner’s history, culture and language. These camps also contained a strong religious core, with religious services held at least twice a day. The government subsidised these camps throughout the sixties, seventies and eighties.

At the *Vroueoggende* immigrant women would spend the day with Afrikaner women learning to cook South African foods, shop, South African customs and to take domestic servants (blacks) into service and how much to pay them.

The teaching of the Afrikaans language to immigrants was another major priority of the MEI. Language laboratories were established throughout South Africa where immigrants could learn the official languages at a minimal cost or even free of charge. The government and private sector were approached to assist in the creation and maintenance of these laboratories, and by the 1970s success was achieved in this regard.

By the late-1960s the MEI had established ten regional offices throughout South Africa. These offices were in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Germiston, Springs, Vanderbijlpark, Welkom, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. The MEI argued that their most successful work was achieved at branch level, where immigrants came in direct contact with officials of the MEI who could assist through the offering of a number of services, such as the procurement of housing, employment, schools and the extension of financial loans.

The final chapter of this study evaluated the impact of the MEI's programmes of assimilation in context with national immigration during the organisation's existence. The MEI was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively on four different levels. The first being their success with regard to assimilating immigrants into the Afrikaner stream of white South Africa. Secondly their success with the religious assimilation of immigrants was evaluated. The MEI's impact with regard to other assimilation services, excluding religious and Afrikaner-related issues, was the third to be evaluated. Lastly the MEI's involvement and successes in the naturalisation of immigrants was analysed.

The MEI was overtly an organisation which promoted the Afrikaners' cause, and encouraged the assimilation of immigrants into the Afrikaner stream of white South Africa. They were mandated by the government in 1966 to care for all non-English-speaking European immigrants, which opened the way for the assimilation of these immigrants into the Afrikaans-speaking community. Prominent Afrikaners headed and administered the MEI throughout its existence.

Two of the major services offered by the MEI which manifested their aims to assimilate immigrants into the Afrikaner stream of white society were the language laboratories where Afrikaans was taught to immigrants and the channeling of immigrant children into Afrikaans-medium schools.

The MEI's impact with regard to its assimilation programmes where the promotion of Afrikaans was concerned was quantitatively evaluated by utilising figures of immigrant visits to regional offices kept by the MEI between 1966 and 1992 and national immigration figures.

It was found that their impact in this regard was relatively minimal both with regard to immigrants under their auspices and immigrants on a national scale. An average of 6,87% of immigrants who dealt with the MEI directly attended language laboratories, whereas the figure represented only 1,43% of national immigrants. Only 2,56% of the MEI's immigrant children were channeled into Afrikaans-medium schools and only 0,53% of national immigrants. These figures clearly indicate that although the MEI worked arduously to achieve the successful assimilation of immigrants into Afrikaner society, successes were minimal at best to negligible at worst.

On the religious assimilation front the distribution of Bibles to immigrants serves as a good indicator of the MEI's successes and failures. Again in this regard the impact of the MEI must be seen as minimal. An annual average of 248 Bibles distributed to an annual average of 36 820 immigrants leaves much to be desired, even considering that if hypothetically those immigrants could represent 9 000 families¹, then only 2,8% of those families would have received a Bible.

Between 1966 and the early 1990s the MEI did manage to attract an increasing number of religious bodies to their cause, which accompanied the general growth during this period

¹ The figure of 9 000 is calculated by dividing the figure 36 820 (average annual immigrants during the period in question) by four, representing a family of four. This figure, ultimately considering the meagre percentages, has no particular bearing on the point being made that the impact of Bible distribution was minimal, and is solely ventured in order to illustrate this point further.

of the MEI. In 1967/68 only 338 such organisations were involved with the MEI, but by 1979/80 this had increased to 1 137, showing an increase of more than 300%.

1966 saw an asserted attempt by the MEI to standardise its programmes of assimilation nationally, and also led to proper records being kept nationwide of these programmes. Services, which the MEI offered, included, as mentioned earlier, camps for immigrant children, *Vroueoggende* for immigrant women, and assistance in the procurement of employment, housing and permanent residence.

The services offered by the MEI indicate a general increase from the late-1960s till the early 1980s. From the early 1980s there was a general decline in the amount of services which were offered to immigrants by the MEI. The increase in immigration to South Africa during the late sixties and seventies, coupled with the growth of the MEI during this period, is the best explanation for the increase in these services. In the 1980s immigration to South Africa was on the decline, and this would explain the MEI's inability to build on the growth of the sixties and seventies.

The increase in immigration during the above-mentioned period led to an increase in the number of immigrants who accepted South African citizenship. Naturalised immigrants under the auspices of the MEI peaked in the late 1980s, with 1 099 immigrants accepting citizenship in 1989/90. This trend indicates that although immigration figures were on the decline during this period, the MEI did well to increase the amount of immigrants accepting citizenship.

The Board of the MVI (*Maatskappy vir Immigrasie*)² agreed to disband the organisation on 31 March 2005, after 56 years in existence. Financial matters were the major motivation for disbanding. Since the suspension in 1993 of the government subsidy the MVI found it increasingly difficult to operate, leading to the closure of its six other branches (excluding Cape Town and Pretoria). The reasons for the total disbanding of

² In 1992 the name of the organisation was changed from the *Maatskappy vir Europese Immigrasie* to the *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie*.

the organisation twelve years down the road, was exactly the same as the closures of 1993.

It is arguable that the MVI failed to adapt readily to the changes in post-apartheid South Africa. Up till its disbanding, the organisation still maintained strong links to the Afrikaner sister churches and Afrikaner organisations such as the FAK and the pro-Afrikaner trade union *Solidariteit*, which arguably led to the perpetuation of the organisation's nature of Afrikaner exclusivity. The majority of immigrants to South Africa in the twenty-first century are Africans from countries to the north of South Africa. These 'new' South African immigrants have apparently been unable to find solace with an organisation of the nature of the MVI. Also the officials of the MVI have at times found it difficult to deal in turn with this new wave of immigrants from the north of South Africa's borders. Cultural differences are perhaps the most prominent reason for this failure to adapt. The MVI, at its end, was an organisation constituted of reformed church-going white Afrikaners and almost exclusively men, this in a South Africa which is continuously becoming more and more driven towards greater representation of peoples of all races, religions and gender within all institutions and organisations.

In the 1990s the MVI was still calling for the immigration of assimilable Christians who could adapt readily and amalgamate themselves within the South African population, so as not to be overtly different from the greater populace. Other immigration states, such as the United States, Australia and Canada, had moved away from this assimilationist or 'Americanizationist' approach to one of cultural pluralism. It is arguable that the above difference between the MVI's policies on immigration and assimilation and the reigning international discourse, also lent a sense of overt 'backwardness' to the MVI, and its approaches, which hampered its task of integrating immigrants into a changing South Africa.

ADDENDUM.1.

**TABULATION OF MEI'S ANNUAL AVERAGE ACTIVITIES
REGARDING IMMIGRANTS 1966-1992 ¹**

ACTIVITY/ACTION	ANNUAL AVERAGE 1966-1992
No. of cooperating church councils/bodies	725
No. of functions organised	271
No. of immigrant children participating in camps	503
No. of immigrants participating in language classes	526
No. channeled to Afrikaans-medium schools and pre-schools	98
Immigrants advised regarding permanent residence	441
Assistance in finding housing	703
Financial assistance to immigrants	R3 419
No. of immigrant friends	735
Talks and speeches regarding immigration	140
Radio/TV/press exposure	82
Visits by immigrants to offices	7 652
Job placement or replacement of immigrants	514
No. of immigrants naturalised	1 303
Bibles issued in immigrant's own languages	248

¹ J.H. Hattingh, *Die Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

ADDENDUM.2.

A PROGRAMME OF A TYPICAL CHILDREN'S CAMP (PRAAT-AFRIKAANS)

"FRIDAY 24 AUGUST 1984

16h00: Depart from Bellville Civic Centre (Icebreaker in the bus)
19h30: Arrive at Perdekloof Forestry Station
20h00: Supper around the braaivleis fire
21h00: Lesson: South African Customs
Mev. T. Bosman (Group discussion)
22h30: Evening church service: Mev. M.C. Swanepoel
22h45: Coffee
23h30: Lights out

SATURDAY: 25 AUGUST 1984

06h00: Awake and preparation of breakfast
06h30: Breakfast
07h00: Morning church service: Mnr W. Smith
07h30: Depart for Eselsbank via Tafelberg
12h30: Arrive back at Perdekloof
13h00: Lunch
13h30: Lesson The Fauna and Flora of the Cedarberg:
Mej. I. Swart (Group discussion)
15h15: Depart from Perdekloof to the Stadsaalgrotte
17h00: Preparation of supper
18h30: Supper
19h00: Lesson Our national symbols:
Mnr. W. Smith (Group discussion)
20h30: Evening coffee
21h00: Evening church service: Mev. T. Bosman
21h30: To bed and lights out

SUNDAY 26 AUGUST 1984

06h30: Awake and preparation of breakfast
07h00: Morning church service
07h15: Breakfast
08h00: Depart for Panoramagrot
12h30: Arrive at Welbedacht and prepare lunch
13h00: Lunch
13h30: Lesson South African national festivals:
Mnr W. Smith (Group discussion)
14h30: Depart from Welbedacht to Clanwilliam
15h30: Arrive at the Flower show in Clanwilliam
16h45: Depart for Bellville
20h30: Arrive at Bellville Civic Centre."²

² MEI, "Immigrante-kinderstaptog in die Sederberge" Program, INB-5/36.

ADDENDUM.3.

**ANNUAL ATTENDEES OF MEI LANGUAGE COURSES
BETWEEN 1970³ AND 1977⁴**

YEAR	TOT. ATTENDEES
1970	753
1971	385
1972	n/a
1973	852
1974	997
1975	2 126
1976	924
1977	970

³ The 1970s were a peak period for immigration in South Africa, thus this period has been extracted when looking at the attendance of language classes. The average of 1 001 for this period, as opposed to the average of 523 for the period 1966-1992 strengthens this argument.

⁴ MEI, *Jaarverslae: 1970-1977*.

ADDENDUM.4.

**ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE MEI
TO IMMIGRANTS BETWEEN 1966 AND 1992
(FIGURES ARE AN ANNUAL AVERAGE FOR THIS PERIOD)⁵**

ACTION/ACTIVITY	ANNUAL AVERAGE 1966-1992
Visits to regional offices by immigrants	7 652
Advised regarding permanent residence	441
Assisted in finding housing	703
Assisted in finding employment	514
Financial assistance (in Rands) given	R3 419

⁵ J.H. Hattingh, *Maatskappy vir Immigrasie: Die Verhaal van die MEI/MVI 1949-1999*, p.7.

ADDENDUM.5.

ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY THE MEI TO IMMIGRANTS AND OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE WHICH WERE INVISAGED (1973/74)

- (i) Basic assistance and counselling offered to immigrants during visits to the offices of the MEI and during visits by MEI officials to immigrant's homes.
- (ii) The placement of immigrant children in Afrikaans-medium pre-schools and schools.
- (iii) The placing of immigrants in the care of immigrant friends.
- (iv) The referral of immigrants to the Department of National Education and the MEI's own language laboratories.
- (v) The referral of immigrants to Afrikaans churches
- (vi) The invitation of immigrant women to excursions and talks.
- (vii) Day and weekend excursions for groups or individuals.
- (viii) After-hour talks, films and demonstrations on the history of South Africa, and particularly that of the Afrikaner.
- (ix) Social activities, eg: monthly dinners with South African families.
- (x) Camps for children with South African children in conjunction with, or without, the National Department of Education.
- (xi) Farm holidays for children in cooperation with *Rapportryerskorps* and other organisations.
- (xii) Big immigrant and international evenings where immigrants and South Africans have the opportunity to interact.
- (xiii) Naturalisation functions on special days, such as Republic Day and Kruger Day.
- (xiv) Receptions at regular naturalisation functions, eg: at the landdrost.

What can be done in addition to the above:

- (i) Each regional offices should be expanded into an acculturation centre with modern resources such as projectors, tape recorders and language laboratories.
- (ii) Narrower cooperation between the MEI and educational institutions, so as to procure the use of these institutions facilities.
- (iii) All mass media should be involved in order to publicise immigration and the assimilation of immigrants.
- (iv) The creation of a multi-lingual newsletter to increase knowledge of the country and other issues.⁶

⁶ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1973/74*, pp.9-10.

ADDENDUM.6.

IMMIGRANTS ACCEPTING SA CITIZENSHIP UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MEI (1967-1990)⁷

YEAR	TOTAL ACCEPTING CITIZENSHIP
1967/68	345
1970	291
1971	695
1972	N/a
1973	201
1974	223
1975	413
1976	N/a
1977	434
1978/79	690
1979/80	595
1981/82	N/a
1983/84	495
1984/85	647
1986/87	800
1987/88	1064
1988/89	825
1989/90	1099
<i>1967-1990 annual average</i>	588

⁷ MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1967/68*, p.6; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1970/71*, pp.12-13; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1973/74*, p.9; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1974/75*, p.9; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1976/77*, p.7; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1979/80*, p.11; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1984/85*, p.12; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1988*, p.13; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1989*, p.10; MEI, *Jaarverslag: 1990*, p.3.

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Addendum .7.

Wersaamhede van die MEI (Nasionaal)

	67-68	70	71	73	74	75	76	77	78-79	79-80	83/84	84/85	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90
Cooperating Church councils & organisations	338	382	374	412	441	615	1 080	721	926	1 137	1 110	891	810	766	731	n/a
Immigrant functions organised	29	150	189	179	202	242	236	309	250	200	577	402	447	402	412	320
Amount of Bibles issued	290	549	699	677	163	250	137	242	209	29	72	64	43	29	39	n/a
Children attending camps	432	678	370	764	536	585	360	453	941	538	409	242	358	379	413	300
Children channelled into Afrikaans schools	170	159	96	129	124	195	147	124	24	39	30	27	26	35	66	n/a
Immigrant visits to regional offices	17 044	12 881	12 101	9 066	7 151	7 816	10 006	7 644	3 170	4 010	4 547	3 739	3 867	3 039	2 870	3 248
Immigrants visited at home	1 915	2 305	2 100	1 453	811	939	1 125	1 078	605	543	496	967	506	355	394	n/a
Immigrants placed in service or in new service	2 572	732	548	535	445	453	652	498	155	133	178	118	84	373	211	n/a
Language classes attended	482	753	385	852	997	2 126	924	970	354	158	223	195	194	138	235	120
Immigrant friends	n/a	624	808	884	820	661	929	1 134	964	1 118	1 024	709	530	481	n/a	n/a
Immigrants assisted in naturalisation	345	291	695	201	223	413	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Immigrants assisted with permanent residence	947	263	284	187	247	292	328	188	331	351	436	320	392	492	899	n/a
Immigrants assisted in finding housing	970	2 236	2 276	736	585	589	733	434	130	236	220	149	77	114	108	n/a
Financial assistance to immigrants in ZAR	R7 908	R9 008	R124	R2 920	R2 754	R3 520	R2 274	R219	R1 389	R316	R 2100	R854	R0	R100	R300	n/a
Immigrants met on arrival in South Africa	11 429	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Funds raised	R6 137	R7 619	R9 375	R11 126	R12 186	R16 731	R26 018	R20 745	R24 998	R17 046	R19 144	R35 933	R54 327	R47 050	R49 606	n/a
Meetings held	n/a	n/a	n/a	144	104	97	97	102	142	210	98	175	145	77	134	n/a
Executive officers informed regarding the MEI	n/a	n/a	n/a	215	356	398	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Immigrants accepting SA citizenship	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	434	690	595	495	647	800	1 064	825	1 099
Amount of radio broadcasts	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	37	56	38	100	n/a
Amount of press publicity	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	143	129	104	90	n/a