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PETITION FROM THE MERU CITIZENS UNION CONCERNING
TANGANYIKA (T/PET.2/L.1)

Observations of the United Kingdom Government
as Administering Authority

The only specific point raised in this petition on which comment appears to be required is the method of selection of a chief referred to in the final paragraph.

In 1945 Sante Sambege, a former chief of the Meru who had been deposed, was reinstated with the support of the majority of the tribe. His reinstatement, however, was followed by the growth of an opposing faction which steadily grew in strength. Eventually, the opposition to Chief Sante became so evident that the District Commissioner held a number of "barazas", towards the end of 1952 and early this year, to ascertain the real views of the people. As a result of his enquiries the District Commissioner advised the Chief to resign. The Chief accepted this advice.

In the meantime, a Constitutional Committee, under the chairmanship of the District Commissioner and with the Government's Senior Sociologist and fifteen representative Wameru as members, had been sitting to consider a new constitution for the Meru tribe. The Committee held twelve full meetings and several points at issue were referred back for discussion with the tribe. The final recommendations for a proposed new constitution have proved acceptable to the tribe and to the Government. The new constitution provides for the election of a tribal council, consisting of fifty members, to be followed by the election of a new chief. As regards the election of the chief the procedure will be as follows. Each village has the right to nominate one candidate. The list of nominations will then be reviewed at a full meeting of the traditional clan leaders and their assistants and a small panel will be selected. A secret ballot by the tribe, all registered taxpayers being eligible to vote, will then be held to elect the chief from the panel.

In the past the chief of the tribe could be selected from one clan only and the traditional method was for the clan leaders and their assistants to choose the chief from among the members of this clan. The Constitutional Committee has decided that this custom shall no longer hold and that the chief may be a member of any clan.

It is expected that the new constitution will come into effect and the new chief be elected shortly. The chief will be the first president of the tribal council but every two years the council will elect its president. If the chief is not re-elected, it will be taken as an indication that he has lost his popularity and no longer commands the support of his people. He will therefore be asked to resign so that a new election for the chiefship can be held. It is felt that by adopting this procedure the loss of the confidence of his people by the chief will be clearly shown at an early stage and that a replacement can be effected smoothly and without the factional disruptions from which the Meru tribe has suffered in the past.
