

IMW-32  
The Meru

Ndurumanga Estate  
Usa River, Tanganyika  
November 5, 1963

Mr. Richard H. Nolte  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
366 Madison Avenue  
New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Political and economic developments in tribal societies are generally overshadowed by national developments and as a result receive scant attention. Until recently it has mainly been anthropologists who have considered the nature of the African response to European intrusion. Nevertheless it is the problems which arise as a result of this contact which are at the heart of developments within Africa today. The extent to which the new nations can attain their oft-stated goal of becoming modern democracies with increasing rates of economic growth depends on how effectively western political, social, and economic systems can be adapted to local situations with maximum development and minimum social dislocation.

Perhaps the most far-reaching legacies of European colonialism were the introduction into village life of a cash economy, and scientific methods in agriculture and animal husbandry. The response has varied, depending on the nature of the tribe and the degree of European impact. Clearly, many western innovations don't fit African conditions. The introduction of new farming techniques, for instance, often meet with opposition. To Africans, such methods are not self-evidently good if they challenge customary ways of doing things, as aid administrators have often learned to their despair.

Clearly the unit for study of this process is the tribe. The Meru\* of Arusha District in northern Tanganyika (see IMW-4) are interesting in that although fifteen years ago they were far behind other tribes which had similar influences bearing on them (i.e., Chagga), they are today skillfully and eagerly developing their hilly land. Their per capita annual income is now among the highest in Tanganyika.

The reasons for this advance are many and varied. A number of elements which characterize development in other areas are found here too: close contact with Europeans and their methods, a healthy environment which allows, if not encourages, intensive agriculture, and a ready market for their produce. Other elements are purely local, such as the repercussions of the Meru Land Case,

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\* In Swahili the people of Meru are known as WaMeru; one Meru is an MMeru; their country is UMeru; and their language is KiMeru. For the sake of simplicity I shall use only Meru except where necessary for clarity.

and their cultural affinities to the Chagga and Masai.

The Meru are better known than their small number (approximately 40,000) might suggest. It is the Meru who went to the United Nations Trusteeship Council in 1952 for help in regaining a portion of their land which had been alienated to European settlers over their determined opposition. The British narrowly avoided an adverse vote, but more important it marked the end of an era when a colonial power could rule freely, and the beginning of one when a small, unimportant tribe could make its voice heard in a matter concerning its own administration. Their near success at the U.N. suggested the dimensions of nascent African political power, and it encouraged the subsequent rapid growth of African nationalism. Indeed, their petitioner at the U.N., Kirilo Japhet, was one of the founders of TANU.

The Meru, who call themselves VaRwo, inhabit the eastern portion of Arusha District on the southern and eastern slopes of Mt. Meru, a spectacular 14,976 foot volcanic cone which would be considerably more impressive were it not overshadowed by its giant neighbor, Kilimanjaro, forty miles away. Surrounded by the Masai and the Arusha on the south and west and by the Chagga on the east, their's is an attractive and fertile land. Nearby is Ngurdoto Crater, a small gem of a national park where visitors, seated safely on the rim, can observe elephant, rhino, buffalo, and giraffe far below, as well as black and white colobus monkeys sporting in the trees above them. Momela Farm, where King Solomon's Mines, Hatari, and other movies have been filmed, is now part of this national park.

Among the first Europeans to visit the Meru were Count Samuel Teleki and his companion and recorder, Lieut. Ludwig von Hohnel, who together in 1887 carried out explorations in the area. They felt the Meru were like all mountaineers: active,



brave, and independent. Indeed, after being duly warned of their "thievish propensities", Teleki's men were set upon and robbed. Although their primary objective was to climb Mt. Meru, the chief's extortionate demands for hongo (a payment entitling the donor to pass freely and unmolested through tribal land), and a spate of rainy weather combined to defeat them in this objective.

In a more positive vein, von Hohnel records that the Meru, who then numbered about 1,000, lived in a luxuriant area and that bananas formed the chief part of their diet, although various grains were also grown. He noted they bred cattle, sheep, and goats, and that their bees

Black and White Colobus (*Colobus abyssinicus*)

yielded an excellent honey. They then lived in scattered huts, mostly made of straw and in the shape of a hayrick.

Culturally, the Meru are a Bantu tribe, an offshoot of the Chagga whom they resemble both in language and culture, although they have not developed educationally, politically, nor economically in the way the parent tribe has, nor have they been so responsive to



WaMeru

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missionary influence. In general they have been a difficult tribe to administer. Traditionally they share a common origin with the western Chagga. Legend has it that about 200 years ago two Chagga brothers split off from their clan. One went up to the west side of Kilimanjaro to what is now Machame, and the other went to Meru (to Sakila hill), and they were to light fires signalling their arrival. Sometime later the Meru were conquered by the Masai, and in coming to terms with them adopted certain of their customs, notably the age-set system. Many of these customs are now on the wane through the influence of Christian missions, although this process is not yet complete.

The tribal area is divided into 14 parish units or mitaa. The Meru have never lived in villages as we know them, preferring rather to live in small family units, each with its own plot of farmland. These are usually 100 to 200 yards apart even in the most thickly populated areas. The tribe is composed of more than 25 clans, generally exogamous units meaning that marriages are usually contracted with members of another clan. In the mitaa each clan has a leader, a deputy leader, and a number of helpers. There is also a leader responsible for sacrifices and the spiritual aspects of clan life. Although anyone with ability can become a clan leader in a mitaa, members of a clan's senior branch have certain advantages.

Parallel with the clans are the age-sets of which there are five together with the uncircumcized youth. Traditionally age-sets were of political and military importance. For a long time, however, their political functions have been increasingly exercised by a chief, an innovation borrowed from the Chagga and



Ngurdoto Crater

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strongly encouraged by a European administration seeking to pin-point authority and responsibility. At the same time their military functions have become unnecessary, and so the importance of age-sets is on the decline.

An age-set has one or two leaders, washili, in each mitaa, and each washili has an assistant. Although the two older age-sets have only one leader apiece, the three younger ones have adjusted to the influence of the Christian missions, each having two washili, one Christian and one pagan. The washili were important in Meru; as representatives of the people they were traditionally responsible for the maintenance of roads, schools, and irrigation furrows. Although Christians are in a minority, they have managed to achieve equal representation in the age-sets through this system of divided leadership. In practice Christians have an even more important political role in the tribe than do pagans.

Finally, there is also a headman, jumbe, in each of the mitaa. Chosen by the clan and age-set leaders together, he is the representative of the local authority and, until recently, of the Chief, Mangi. Although jumbes are usually appointed by the washili, they rarely come from the ranks of the traditional leaders because of the danger of conflict between his obligations to the people and to the government.

According to Henry Fosbrooke, an ex-Government Sociologist, much of the Meru's subsequent "political malaise... derives in large measure from the coexistence within the tribal political structure of two important institutions, a mangi, borrowed from the Chagga, and age-sets, borrowed from the Masai".

An observer who knows them intimately has written:

Ordinarily, the WaMeru are divided amongst themselves, first as pagan and Christian, and, further, as East and West (the latter being the cradle of the tribe and the center of the ruling Clan). Unity comes only through some overriding, major issue

such as a threat to the security of the land they occupy. The tribe lacks some of the traditional courtesy, good manners and, particularly, kindness to strangers usually associated with the Bantu (perhaps due to the overlay of Masai). They are a stubborn, suspicious, proud and parochial people, who, nevertheless, are responsive to firm and patient handling. Having accepted a new idea the WaMeru may be relied upon to give it their full support. They are able and industrious cultivators, and make excellent use of the high, fertile land on the mountain slopes, and are also beginning to adapt themselves to quite different conditions on the plains.

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During my stay in Arusha, I will concern myself with the origins of economic and political development among the Meru. To begin with, there follows a somewhat lengthy account of the Meru Land Case. I have gone into this matter in some detail not because it is the fons et origo of Meru development (it isn't), but rather because it gave a considerable impetus to such development, and also because it is a convenient starting point which can be pinpointed in an otherwise vague and gradual process. Clearly, however, other factors are of even greater importance. One would expect something to happen at the point when a progressive mission had secured sufficient adherents; when a proportion of these had had some education; when this has coincided with the fruits of an introduced cash crop (in this case coffee); and when the tribal leadership had been exposed to outside influences. Indeed, a pertinent question concerning the Meru is why things didn't happen sooner.

Nevertheless the Meru Land Case does present a turning point. The gradual evolution of



Lake Duluti

## Mount Meru

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pressures leading to change combined with the impact of the Land Case created a situation where tribal life could no longer continue as before. Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the case, the result has benefitted the Meru tremendously as Kirilo Japhet later emphasized: "The Meru Land Case... was the key to the awakening of the WaMeru to modern progress. The beginning was bitter, but instead of defeating our people, out of it has come much good."



Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ian Michael Wright".

Ian Michael Wright

The line drawing of a colobus monkey on page three is reproduced by courtesy of Miss Ruth Yudelowitz.

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

The Meru Land Case

November 17, 1951 -- April 22, 1962

Ian Michael Wright

### THE MERU LAND CASE

It is not easy to convey the intense lifelong passion most Africans feel for the land. In subsistence economies land assumes a very special importance. It serves as a link between the past and the present, it is the source of authority, and from a material standpoint it is the sole means of support, poor as it may be, for the great majority. In contrast to the system of individual rights we know, the dominant African conception is that of communal ownership where each member of a tribe has a legitimate claim to the land of the community.

Guy Hunter, in his comprehensive The New Societies of Tropical Africa, has pointed out that for these reasons, "Land means not only the patch actually under cultivation, but the surrounding 'bush', which seems unoccupied to the European but is in fact the reservoir of wild foods, of game, perhaps of fish. It is also a recreation ground, it often contains the sites of old villages and the graves of ancestors; it is as much a part of life as the village clearing and its huts....Land and the community are inseparable in these conditions." He goes on to say, "This psychology of the subsistence economy (combined, too, with malnutrition and debilitating disease) was at the root of many European judgements on African mentality---on lack of forethought, lack of effort, lack of persistence, lack of individual ambition, the obstinate refusal to alter land tenure, the elevation of communal loyalty to a shibboleth beyond all sense and reason."

The importance of land to the African has made him extremely sensitive to the attitude of colonial administrations to his own rights and to the alienation of land to non-Africans and, more than any other factor, has influenced the relationship between the colonial administration and the people. In Tanganyika less than 1% of the land has been alienated. Since it has been considerations of climate and soil which have directed the stream of European settlement, however, this represents some of the best land in the territory.

The Meru have had contacts with Europeans for more than a century. Because of the attractiveness of their mountain and its land, a high proportion of their problems in coming to terms with them have centered about the land and its ownership. At the outset the German régime hoped for a large influx of settlers and therefore set about encouraging them. An Imperial Decree of 1895 declared all land Crown Land subject to individual and corporate rights. Areas were to be reserved for Native occupation, and a local Ordinance required them to reserve for the Natives at least four times the amount of land under cultivation. Lord Hailey comments that, "The provision contemplated was thus more systematic than any scheme of colonization organized by the Kenya Administration, but the precautions for the protection of Native rights seem to have been neglected in practice."





When the Germans first took possession of what is now Arusha District in the last decade of the 19th century, they were impressed by its pleasant climate and apparent agricultural potential. At that time the Arusha and Meru tribes lived in scattered settlements high on the mountain which afforded some protection from raids by the few Masai bands which roamed freely below. Since the District appeared almost entirely empty, it seemed clear that European settlers could best develop the land, and so large areas were set aside for their use where farming would be attractive and, it was hoped, profitable. Very little delimitation of tribal land was carried out though, and the alienations dangerously reduced the area available for tribal cultivation.

The Meru do not seem to have objected to this. On the contrary, their chiefs were usually associated with the alienations, often receiving presents for their efforts (which follows Meru custom). Today the Meru insist that neither the chiefs nor the people fully realized they were giving land away for the permanent and exclusive use of Europeans, since the whole concept of absolute ownership of land was contrary to tribal custom. At the same time their numbers were few, and they hardly anticipated their later population increase. Also, on the whole they were not directly affected by the changes, since the new owners allowed them to graze their cattle and squat freely on the land probably, among other reasons, to ensure an adequate supply of labor.

Contrary to general expectations, however, there was only a trickle of missionaries and settlers. Soon after the turn of the century, a group of Afrikaners known as the Irreconcilables settled to the north of Mt. Meru. Ironically, they had trekked overland to Tanganyika after the Boer War, because they refused to live under English rule in South Africa. Other settlers followed, and a few began to realize the alienations were being carried out without any regard for the future needs of the Meru, but their warnings went unheeded. A later official report (the Wilson Report) observed, "An iron ring of alienated land was clamped around the native lands on the mountain."

Meanwhile, the benefits of security, law and order, education, and medical services had led to a rapid population increase, and the German Administration took steps to prevent further alienation. The First World War intervened and Germany lost control of Tanganyika. The Mandatory Instrument under which the British Government took charge in 1920 was noticeably vague in its references to native land rights and policy. It restricted itself to prescribing that no rights were to be given to non-Africans without the previous consent of the Government. The practice of consulting the Native Authority concerned before granting such rights to non-Africans was later made mandatory, in 1950.

Nevertheless, the new administration adopted a cautious attitude and issued no new freehold titles, restricting itself entirely to leaseholds. It felt bound, however, to honor the

rights granted by the Germans. Thus alienated land for the most part remained alienated regardless of whether it was actually occupied by European settlers at the outbreak of the War or not. This distinction is important, because much of the land claimed by the Meru in 1951 was in fact alienated by the Germans although never actually settled by either the Germans or the British. Instead it was used freely for grazing by Europeans and Africans alike. The latter, since they could see no occupants and were not attuned to the intricacies of western legalities, considered it theirs for the taking.

Today, it is said the Africans' first fears that all was not well arose at the end of the First World War when the German farms were sold to British and Greek settlers rather than to Africans. The Wilson Report noted that, "There would appear even then to have been no proper appreciation of the future land needs of the Arusha and Meru tribes, and the realienation of the majority of the farms so thoughtlessly demarcated by the Germans proceeded without protest. An unparalleled opportunity for readjustment was lost. This was very soon realized, but it was then too late. The farms had been sold and the ring was once more in place."

During the redistribution of ex-enemy property in 1920, eight German farms were retained for the use of the Arusha tribe but none for the Meru. In 1928, however, a group of Meru banded together and bought Farm No. 31 (known as Kilimambozi) at Ngare Nanyuki, which together with Farm No. 328 was later to assume special importance. In 1931, as a result of the recommendations made in the Land Development Commission Report, two further farms were acquired for the Meru, one of which was Farm No. 328 at Leguruki. They were bought by the tribe acting through its treasury encouraged by the Government which had decided the Meru should pay for them by a two shilling annual increase in the poll tax over a twenty-seven year period. This decision was made at a time of severe financial stringency in Tanganyika, and in fact they paid the tax for only six years, the remaining payments being waived.

These various transfers proved little more than a palliative. Not only did the Meru continue to demand more land, but the Europeans were doing the same, especially the Afrikaners who prefer (as do the Meru) to divide their land amongst all their sons. In order to solve the problem once and for all, the Government initiated a thorough investigation, but this was interrupted by the Second World War. A situation similar to that after the First World War then arose when a good proportion of the alienated land was vested in a Custodian of Enemy Property (showing that many Germans had bought farms in the inter-war years). In 1946 the Government took over these properties and announced they would be disposed of in the best interests of the territory. Soon after, a one-man Commission of Mr. Justice Mark Wilson was appointed to formulate a comprehensive plan for the redistribution of alienated and tribal land on and around Mt. Meru and Kilimanjaro. His terms of reference included recommendations for ways

Mt. Meru from Kilimanjaro

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to improve "the homogeneity of alienated and tribal lands".

Wilson's was a formidable task indeed. Over the years pressure had so built up between the two groups' competing claims and desires that any compromise was destined to founder on the rocks of pure obstinacy. This quality was evident on both sides.

The Meru, increasingly angry the land had been alienated in the first place, wanted

every acre handed over to them. The Europeans, on the other hand, expected the Government to guarantee the farms they had bought or leased. With motives somewhere between personal gain and a desire to see the fullest possible economic development of the area, they also hoped to obtain the exclusive use of the Sanya Corridor, a block of land stretching between the two mountains, for large scale cattle ranching to supply the territory's and the world's growing demand for meat and dairy products. This would also link the alienated lands of Ngare Nanyuki and Arusha on the west with those of Ngare Nairobi and Moshi on the east.



Wilson found himself not only between the conflicting desires of European and African, but the Government itself was in the process of re-evaluating its land policy and moving away from its traditional one of tribal land protectionism toward one of land utilization in the interest of the territory's economic development. Until the Second World War the Government had followed a policy formulated in 1928 by Sir Donald Cameron of alienating land where it was available. His policy was basically one of protection of native land rights and interests, but he felt the higher economic efficiency of the European would be an object lesson to the African. "If land is available and European enterprise and capital desire to undertake those processes then, in my view, it is directly contrary to the interests of the country as a whole for the Government to refuse to admit that enterprise and capital and attempt to hold the land under a dead hand." Concerning the Meru, Cameron said: "The alienation of which I am most proud is the alienation of some 45,000 acres of land on the lower slopes of Meru and Kilimanjaro, land which was not being used by the natives and was denied to the non-natives, land which will I believe be used profitably by a large number

of enterprising persons for growing maize..." Nevertheless, officially there was never any question that African interests were paramount.

At the end of the Second World War, however, this policy had changed somewhat in emphasis. Although the new Trusteeship Agreement's Articles concerning land were similar to those of the Mandatory Agreement which it superseded, the positive economic development of the territory assumed even greater importance. Article 10 states the Administering Authority should promote "the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of Tanganyika". There nevertheless remained a strongly protective bias. In 1946 the Colonial Secretary informed the Governor that although further alienations would be acceptable, he should avoid racial discrimination in the actual allocation of land, and "I assume also that non-native settlement schemes would not involve the compulsory movement of the African population."

Thus there was a gradual change in policy from the paramountcy of native interests to the co-ordination of racial interests; multi-racialism became the order of the day. Thus economic development and prosperity, and the combined efforts of all communities appeared to be the accepted standards at the time Judge Wilson formulated his report. To anticipate a few years, this policy was voiced officially only in 1950 by a new Governor, Sir Edward Twining; "The emphasis has...changed from one of who shall have a particular piece of land to a decision in each case as to how that piece of land can best be developed in the common interest of all communities in the Territory." Later, he was to be supported in this pronouncement by the East Africa Royal Commission of 1953-5.

This gradual change in policy coincided with a greater interest in economic development throughout the world, but it created special problems in Tanganyika, especially in the Northern Province around Kilimanjaro and Mt. Meru. Here there was increased utilization or alienation of land for productive purposes, and since most of this land went to non-Africans, it aroused suspicions and engendered racial animosity. It also led to conflict between the British Government and the Trusteeship Council as to which obligation, native land protection or economic development, was more important.

At the time of Wilson's investigations, the land situation was as follows. Lying roughly between the Nduruma River (on the west) and the Usa River (on the east), Meru country can be said to fall into several separate zones. The upper slopes, immediately below the forest, are still largely non-Christian and still used mainly for annual subsistence crops, coffee and pyrethrum. A few of the old grass paddocks, where both the Meru and the Arusha kept their cattle with them on the mountain (probably to keep them out of the hands of the Masai), are still to be seen here, although they have almost completely disappeared from the central area below.

The central mountain zone lies athwart the old German horse track to Moshi. Representing the Meru heartland, it is densely populated with a chain of mainly Lutheran schools and several minor markets and shopping centers. The numerous rivers and streams rising on the mountain have created geographical divisions which have become clan divisions and spheres of influence which are reflected in the mitaa or parish names as well as by the pattern of churches. Then comes the ring of alienated land, with a few corridors through it, below which is expansion land on the south and east. This land is informally related to the various mitaas, so that on the quite different plains land the old divisions are maintained.

The pressures leading to the need for expansion land are several. Mainly, of course, is population growth. From various sources the following very approximate population figures emerge:

1887	1,000
1922	11,000
1948	25,000
1954	30,000
1962	40,000

The 1948 census proved their number to be a good deal larger than previously estimated and increasing at a rate higher than the Tanganyika average of 2% a year. Thus the Meru find increasingly less room for expansion on the mountain slopes.

Of considerable importance also, however, is the change in pattern of living caused by the introduction of cash crops, especially the introduction of coffee by the missionaries during the early years of the century. This proved to be the death knell of the position of cattle on the mountain, and as a result the first Meru coffee planters were bitterly opposed by their neighbors. As the area under coffee cultivation grew, the need also grew of moving the cattle off the mountain. Thus the creation of settlements to the east and south. In the south the grazing was near enough for the cattle to move down and back daily, although it encouraged the wasteful habit of daily trekking and delayed the inevitable process whereby coffee would displace the cattle completely (except for stall fed milk cows) and cattle would be run on the plains by permanent settlers. As the ring of alienated land tightened, however, penetration became more difficult and cattle corridors occupied a great deal of administrative time. But on the east the situation was different and more permanent herding camps were necessary.

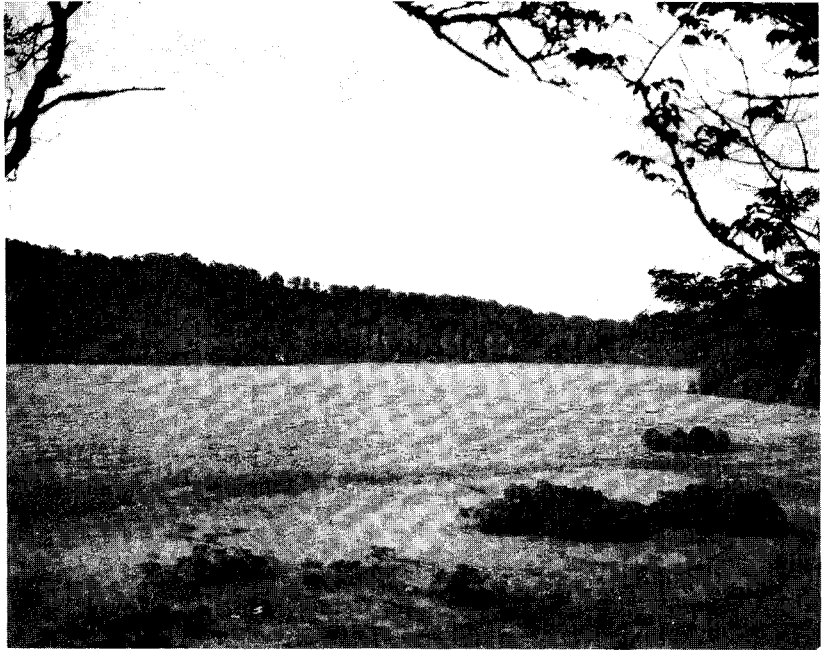
A third factor causing increased land pressure is the influx over the years of Africans alien to the tribal area who have been allowed to settle with little or no control by the Native Authority. This has taken place especially in the south but also in the east, and until recently the majority of the taxpayers in some of the southern parishes have been non-Meru.

Finally, and of most importance emotionally and politically, is the question of European settlement. Although the Meru were

## Ngurdoto Crater

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fortunate in having large alien estates on their borders to keep back the Masai and although they have never been short of expansion land, life would have been pleasanter and less challenging if they had had the whole of the mountain slopes down to Masailand available to them.



The Wilson Report was published in 1947. While recommending that no fundamental redistribution of either tribal or alienated land was feasible, it did consider certain modifications in the pattern of ownership to be desirable. As for the Meru, their immediate needs could best be met by the reversion to them of "a moderate number of ex-enemy farms". Since tribal needs were greater than the total area of alienated land, however, the real need was expansion into the lower areas away from the mountain, and it was therefore suggested a planned development project be set in motion to prepare the plains for settlement, namely at Ongadongishu and Chai, the former to be excised from Masailand and incorporated into Arusha District.

The solution for the Europeans was just what they had been pressing for all along. The Commission considered it would be economically unjustifiable to remove them completely because of their importance to the economy of the territory as a whole. Instead it suggested the Sanya Corridor become a homogeneous European ranching block in which African settlement and grazing would be excluded. The Veterinary Department supported this on the grounds it would then become an infection-free compulsory-dipping zone. The whole of the North Meru Reserve, largely populated by Meru and considered sub-marginal and therefore never taken over by settlers, would then be divided into thirteen large European estates. The Commission's underlying assumption was that Africans were incapable of maintaining European standards in cattle ranching.

The Meru were accordingly being asked to give up the two farms at Ngare Nanyuki (No. 31) and Leguruki (No. 328), the latter of which was considered to have limited agricultural possibilities. They would also have to abandon their previous practise of grazing their cattle on the rest of the North Meru

Reserve. It was felt the exclusion of the Meru would also eliminate a potential source of friction by removing an area where the expanding Meru and Chagga tribes were bound one day to meet. The land they were to be given in return was said to be better with considerably more room for expansion. They would also receive compensation in the form of cash and several European farms in the central tribal area which would help decrease congestion there. Nevertheless, the Report questioned the need for segregation ("Is it necessary or desirable to segregate races, each of which has something to contribute to the welfare of the other and to the common good?"), and yet it clearly stated that, "The only solution partaking of the nature of the finality to the problem of congestion in the mountain tribal areas is of course to encourage and persuade (and if needs be to compel) the overcrowded populations to come down from the mountains and settle permanently in the lower lands in sufficient numbers to relieve the present excessive pressure on the upper lands." By accepting the major recommendations of the Report, the Government showed a willingness to accept a policy designed to effect geographical segregation, in part at least, of the peoples of the territory on grounds of race and social difference.

The Wilson Report, although up to then the most thorough effort to solve the land problem, was out of touch with African opinion and therefore bound to fail. This is most evident in his misunderstanding of the idea that the entire North Meru Reserve belonged to them. From Wilson's point of view, the Reserve had been alienated by the Germans and later by the British, and so the Meru had no claim to it whatsoever. This led him to believe his solution would be acceptable to them. For if one leaves out the North Meru Reserve and analyzes what the Meru would get and lose, they stood to gain both in acreage and quality of land. The real losers were the Masai, for the revision of their boundary with the Meru meant the latter gained an enormous amount of land, albeit land not suitable for cropping without irrigation.

On the recommendation of the Northern Province Land Utilization Committee, a body including both European and African members, a number of modifications and adjustments were made between 1949 and 1951. According to Government sources, the modified scheme meant this to the Meru: about 330 families representing 1,000 persons or 5% of the tribe would have to move from Farms Nos. 31 and 328 (an adjustment had been made whereby 150 families would be allowed to remain on a small and fertile area in the southern part of Farm No. 328), an area of 5,800 acres. In return they would receive 11,000 acres of alienated land acquired from Europeans in central Meru, the Ongadongishu-Chai area to the south, and an area known as Kingori comprising about 18,000 acres. In addition the use of important salt pans (including those on Farm No. 328) and the necessary means of access to them, were reserved for the tribe.

Furthermore the Government, which steadfastly maintained that Kingori was better land than the two farms which the Meru



then held, proceeded to develop it as a resettlement area. A pipeline was laid to fifteen domestic and two cattle watering points, two cattle dips were installed, and a veterinary station with an African veterinary assistant in charge was set up (to deal with any sickness arising from the presence of a few tsetse flies). The Meru to be moved were to be paid compensation assessed at £ 14,000, provided with free transport, temporary huts in the resettlement area, supplies of food for the settling-in period, and they were to be exempt from taxation for one year. At the same time a development plan of £ 46,000 for the entire Meru area was drawn up. Altogether the Government was prepared to commit about £ 75,000 on the scheme. Again, leaving out the North Meru Reserve, the scheme was not ungenerous.

The Meru approached the issue differently, however, and opposition to it was overwhelming. They claimed the land was theirs traditionally in spite of the Masai origin of its name, Ngare Nanyuki. Ten years later Kirilo Japhet, the Meru leader who represented them at the United Nations, spoke of the Meru attitude:

This land was especially beloved by the Meru people, because it was here that their first pioneers had come several hundred years before, and from Ngare Nanyuki they had spread south-westwards around the mountain. That area, especially (farm 31), had been a place of contention more than once. At an early date in the tribe's history the Masai had come and driven off the WaMeru who were living there, and at a later date the WaMeru had returned and chased away the Masai. When in the 1870s the WaArusha had conquered the western side of the Meru Chiefdom, some of the WaMeru had fled to live in Ngare Nanyuki with relatives there. With the arrival of the Germans much of this land was alienated, but not all of it was settled by Europeans. On much of it, called the "North Meru Reserve", the WaMeru continued to graze their flocks. This historical connection was also one of the reasons why the WaMeru opposed the recommendations of the Wilson Report.

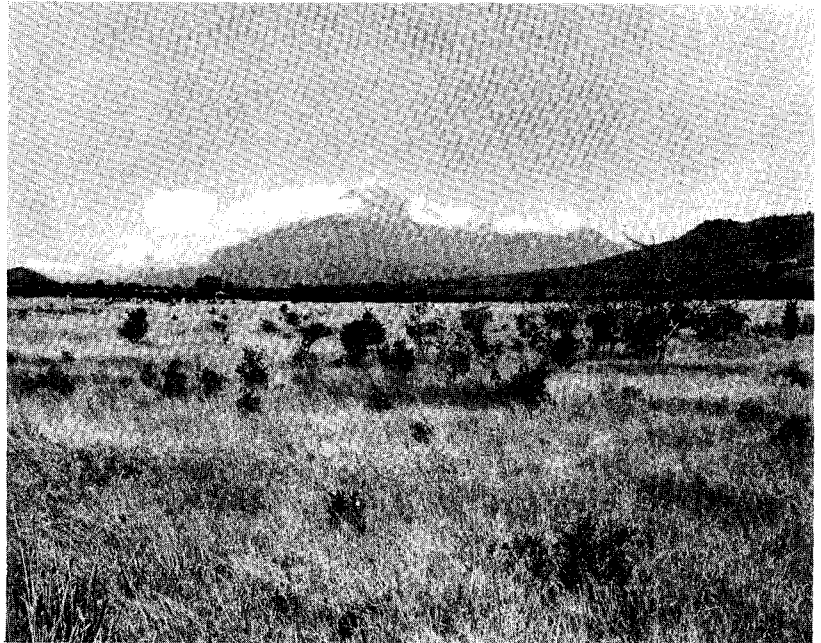
Opposition to the plan grew by leaps and bounds. Already deeply mistrusting Europeans, their suspicions seemed to be confirmed when they learned they were to be evicted to make room for thirteen European estates. When assured the new land was better than that which they farmed, their immediate response was: "If that were true our fathers would long ago have moved there. If you really think it is better, why don't you give it to the settlers and just leave us alone on our inferior land?" They were convinced the Wilson Report merely served as an apology for carrying out the settler-conceived Sanya Corridor ranching scheme

Mt. Meru from Sanya  
Chini

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Local politics also became inextricably intertwined with these more obvious feelings against the move. The then chief, Mangi Sante, was not of the traditional chiefly clan; rather he had been elected from two candidates at a public meeting. He was not particularly popular, and since the thirties there had been a campaign to replace him by Kishili of the chiefly clan.

Although Kishili was once successful for a short period, Sante was reinstated as sole Native Authority early in 1945. The source of this continuous agitation was a traditional rivalry between the eastern and western (home of the chiefly clan) parts of Meru, and as such was not likely to die out with the temporary ascendance of one faction over the other. Opposition to Sante continued as before, and in an effort to undermine the Native Authority a section of the tribe opposed a proposal for a coffee cess, while at the same time alleging corruption and initiating a land dispute with the Chief. As his position was bolstered by the Government, this often took the form of non-cooperation with the Government itself.



In 1948 an attempt was made to revise the Native Authority constitution on more democratic lines with the assistance of the Government Sociologist, Henry Fosbrooke, who sought advice from about fifty Meru, including those in opposition to Mangi Sante. Unfortunately the new constitution was hurriedly devised, and although it was apparently accepted by the Chief, the Jumbes (headmen), and the 500 age-grade leaders of the Meru, it does not seem to have been put to the people themselves. In essence this new constitution enlarged the Native Authority to the Chief and his tribal council, but it never really worked because the sector in opposition to Sante, while favoring the constitution, refused to cooperate in making it work until Sante was removed from office. The Government could hardly accede to such a demand since the charges against him had not been substantiated. As a result of continuing opposition, twelve of the leaders of this group were deported to other parts of the territory following judicial proceedings. Local government in Meru Chiefdom was ineffective, and little more than an uneasy peace prevailed between the two factions.

On June 7, 1949 at a baraza (tribal meeting) the Government

definitely announced its intention of moving those Meru involved to Kingori. Although it had formally obtained the consent of Mangi Sante for the move (earlier, when he was sole Native Authority), it had been given unwillingly and under duress, and his present council was strongly opposed to it, as were the vast majority of his people. Since Sante was already under fire by an increasingly powerful segment of the tribe, his acquiescence only brought the tribe closer together in common opposition not only to himself but also to the Native Authority and the Government. He was blamed for the loss of the land and accused of having sold it to the Government for his own profit.

Further opposition came from those who stood to lose most by the evictions, the mainly Christian wealthy cattle-owners of East Meru who were using Ngare Nanyuki for grazing their excess cattle, and especially those forward looking ones who had cut up most of their grazing on the mountain and planted coffee instead. For them the offer of exchange at Kingori would have meant an impossibly long food supply line. Those who stood to gain were those who could use the proffered arable land. Indeed later it was people from West Meru who first defied the ban on taking up land in the new settlement areas. In effect they double-crossed the East and carved out huge estates for themselves.

There was also suspicion of the age-grade leaders who play an important role in the traditional Meru political system. Although they said they opposed the resettlement scheme, most Meru felt they had done little to oppose it. In general it can be said that although the proposed move had aroused the deepest feelings of resentment and bitterness among the tribe, the traditional leaders had not risen to the occasion and fought as hard as their people had expected them to do.

Into this vacuum stepped the Meru Citizens' Union, Umoja wa Raia. Formed in 1948 when the possibility of the loss of the land loomed large, it was encouraged and assisted by the Chagga's Kilimanjaro Union (Nsilo Swai, the present Minister for Development Planning, was its adviser) which was working among the Meru with the object of affiliating them to it. By proclaiming the convictions of the common people whose traditional rulers had failed them, the Meru Citizens' Union quickly became the strongest force in Meru. Under the leadership of Kirilo Japhet, son of a Lutheran treasurer and namesake of a famous African doctor and himself a Native Authority dresser, Christian leader, and Secretary of the Union, it advised the people not to oppose the eviction violently but to refuse to accept the compensation offered by the Government. Instead it planned to take its case to the Colonial Secretary and, if need be, to the U.N. itself. Its strength at that time is shown by the total support it received in carrying out its program.

To the great surprise of most people, the Meru did just this. They sent appeals to the Governor, to the Colonial Secretary, and to the United Nations. They brought their case before the

1951 U.N. Visiting Mission, which did not have time to investigate it fully but expressed the opinion that the removal of any land from actual occupation by Africans was open to question and warranted the serious attention of the Trusteeship Council. Before its report was issued, however, the Meru had been forcibly evicted.

Two years of intensive effort had obviously failed to convince them that the plan was for their ultimate benefit. Thus, on October 31, 1951 the new Governor, Sir Edward Twining, introduced special legislation to facilitate the implementation of the Wilson Report. There was virtually no opposition to this ordinance and only two Members of the Legislative Council commented on it at all. One, a staunch Afrikaner settler from Arusha, argued it was time to ignore the Fabian Society and the United Nations. The other, Chief Kidaha, was one of two African nominated Members, and he incurred the everlasting wrath of the Meru and nationalists in general by castigating certain elements of the Meru tribe for deliberately trying to go against an honorable agreement which bound them. His political influence among Africans rapidly declined, and recently he was exiled to Sumbawanga in south-western Tanganyika (where the monkeys have no tails, they were bitten off by whales---in the old bar-room song).

Outside Legislative Council, however, there was a moderate amount of criticism. Early in 1951 Mr. E.R. Danielson, Superintendent of the Lutheran Church of Northern Tanganyika, wrote to the Government expressing his belief that if the scheme were carried out a smouldering resentment would be started among the Africans, who believed that the European settlers were forcing the issue on the Government, and that this resentment might cause increasing trouble for many years to come. Certain members of the District administration also advised strongly against the move, and the District Commissioner himself asked to be reassigned rather than carry out his orders.

Nevertheless the ordinance came into effect on November 3 and the first evictions took place two weeks later. It is difficult to ascertain exactly what happened between November 17 and December 12, by which time the evictions were completed. The official Government position is stated clearly in a White Paper published later as a result of widespread interest and criticism in Tanganyika, the United Nations, and elsewhere. According to this document (The Meru Land Problem. Government Printer, Dar es Salaam---1952), the Meru were informed at a baraza that those who vacated their lands voluntarily before November 17 would receive free transport for themselves, their personal effects and foodstuffs; that they would have the opportunity of choosing the best land in the resettlement area and would receive exemption from income tax for 1953. They were also warned that if they declined to leave, their possessions would be removed to Kingori and their huts would be demolished behind them. In spite of this the Meru refused to move, and subsequent events showed a high degree of organization among them undoubtedly sponsored by the Meru Citizens' Union.

The Meru were determined, and when police and trucks came to move them off Farm No. 31, they abandoned their houses and from a distance watched their belongings taken away and their huts destroyed. Three persons harranguing the crowd were arrested and later convicted of trespass. As the demolition of their houses appeared to have little effect, 400 cattle and 1,200 sheep were impounded and, after being dipped, were removed to Kingori where they were quickly claimed by their owners. The rest of the cattle and sheep on Farm No. 31 were immediately removed after this. Two cattle died of East Coast Fever, unattributable to the move, but there were no other losses.

The move from Farm No. 328 and other areas concerned went more smoothly, no doubt because many of those moved were non-Meru. A man who had volunteered to move, however, died before he boarded the truck, but a post mortem determined he was in an advanced state of tuberculosis and had been ailing for some time. The Citizens' Union later claimed a woman in childbirth had been forced from her home and her child had died as a result. "The facts are that the woman was visited by the District Commissioner who told her that she could remain until her condition improved. Nevertheless, she was removed by the tribesmen and on a later visit the District Commissioner found her gone. No information of any kind regarding her later condition or whereabouts was received and any responsibility regarding the alleged death of the child must rest on those who moved the child contrary to advice."

Altogether some 330 taxpayers representing about 1,000 persons were evicted, 492 homes and storehouses were destroyed, 400 cattle and 1,200 sheep were moved to Kingori, and twenty-five arrests were made with subsequent terms of imprisonment ranging from two weeks to the maximum penalty of three months.

The White Paper concluded: "It has always been Government's policy not to allocate land under Rights of Occupancy unless the Native Authority concerned has been fully consulted and, normally, its agreement obtained....Where, however, land is required in order to carry out a scheme of general benefit to the territory it may be necessary to acquire land compulsorily in the absence of consent, as in the present case."

The evictions aroused widespread indignation, as it appeared the interests of the European settlers had been considered over and above those of the African majority. During the evictions, on December 5, 1951, the following exchange took place in the House of Commons with Mr. Lennox-Boyd, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs:

Mr. John Paton: Would the Minister inform the House who are the beneficiaries of this newly formed ranch land, and whether it is the case that some of the new lands offered the tribesmen are tsetse infected?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All those questions were gone into by the native authorities, and they are fully satisfied with proposals of the late Government,

which this Government fully endorse.

Mr. Paton: Would the Minister please answer my question? Who are the beneficiaries in respect of the land?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I hope the beneficiaries are those people who will bring prosperity to the whole territory. (Hon. Members: Will they be Europeans?) Yes, no doubt they will be Europeans.

Most of those who had been evicted moved in with their relatives in the already congested central tribal area. Only twenty-one non-Meru families moved to Kingori, although as time went on a few Meru drifted there from other settled areas. One Meru alone claimed compensation, while eleven non-Meru accepted £310. The Government charged the Citizens' Union with using intimidation to prevent anyone accepting compensation.

Meru fortunes were at a low ebb. Bitter and hostile, they refused to cooperate with the Government or any of its officials, even agricultural and cooperative officers. The Native Authority ceased to function, as did the courts, and at no time had relations between the Administration and the tribe been worse. There were threats against Mangi Sante's life, and it appeared to some that in answer to the forced evictions the tribe was prepared also to resort to force if necessary. Another cause for apprehension was that only a few months previously Kirilo Japhet had personally conducted eight Meru schoolchildren to Jomo Kenyatta's Independent School at Githunguri in Kenya. The rapidly deteriorating situation there and this evidence of close contact between Meru and Kikuyu political leaders caused great concern in official circles.

The Government seriously wanted a rapprochement but the rift was wide. The Meru neglected everything and submerged themselves in the emotions generated by the evictions. An economic recession set in. Their mainstay, the coffee crop, dropped by half and its quality plummeted. Only the boom prices of 1952-53 kept reductions in income bearable, and morale hit bottom.

In January 1952 the Citizens' Union wrote the Colonial Secretary who replied three months later that the decision to set aside the land for a European ranching scheme was final. Since their appeal to the Trusteeship Council was due for consideration in July, the Union hastily collected funds by private subscription to send a tribal representative and lawyer to present their petition. The Meru Coffee Growers' Association lent over £2,000 for this purpose, and early in July, Kirilo Japhet, accompanied by Earle Seaton, a Bermudan advocate practicing in Moshi, left for New York.

The dispute, since known as the Meru Land Case, was thus taken to the United Nations where the Trusteeship Council first discussed the petition in July 1952. They heard Kirilo Japhet and Earle Seaton give quite a different account from that which

the Administering Authority had given. They claimed the move had caused great hardship and suffering among the Meru. As it had been effected solely for the benefit of thirteen European settlers, they considered it a clear example of racism. Mr. Seaton went on to state that 3,000 Meru were evicted; 724 homes, 489 storehouses, and 234 cattle pens were destroyed; 707 cows, 1,440 sheep, and 1,941 chickens were lost; one man died; and seven women suffered miscarriages. Here Seaton brought in the question of the 78,000 acre North Meru Reserve which has since been deleted from maps of the area. He claimed the Meru owned the entire Reserve and not only the two farms amounting to 5,800 acres.



Kirilo Japhet

Three weeks later Kirilo Japhet appeared before the Council and asked pointedly, "Who is in control of Tanganyika?" Later, in his final appearance, he said, "I must discourage my people against resorting to the means of force and anarchy now employed by some Africans in Kenya. But in doing this, I should like you to tell me what I should tell my people."

But the Trusteeship Council was confronted with a fait accompli about which it could do little. Although the Wilson Report had been published in 1947, the British Government had steadily maintained the Council could review a matter only after a decision had taken place, and this was not a case where reversal was possible. After hearing both sides, it passed a resolution on July 22 (8 to 1) regretting the Administering Authority should have found it necessary to move any of the people and to evict them forcibly but recognizing that the movement "forms part of a larger scheme...advantageous to the majority of the indigenous inhabitants of the Arusha-Moshi area". It further suggested that in future no further movements be made without "a clear expression of the collective consent". It otherwise urged the Government to take action on resettlement, compensation, and general development.

The Tanganyika Government immediately replied with the White Paper, and the Governor told the Legislative Council that "There is nothing in the resolution which conflicts with the policy which Government is already pursuing, and Government is already taking action on the very lines urged by the resolution." The Meru, however, were dissatisfied with the outcome; so they brought their case before the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly a few months later. Here they received a more sympathetic

hearing. By 32 votes to 17 it adopted a resolution recommending the immediate restoration of the land in question to the Meru people. It also recommended that the Administering Authority educate and train the tribe in modern agriculture and ranching techniques.

This victory was received jubilantly by the Meru who refused to believe the General Assembly might not uphold the Fourth Committee's decision. But this is just what happened. A few days later in the General Assembly the voting was only 28 for to 20 against, thus failing to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority by a meagre but all-important four votes. The Meru were baffled over the question of a two-thirds majority, and they suspected they had won but that the British were not telling the truth. This could have led to violence had not a way been found out of the impasse.

Clearly bold and imaginative political action was called for. The Native Authority had been reorganized, because the Government could no longer afford to support an unpopular chief whose own government had collapsed. Accordingly, Mangi Sante was persuaded to resign. He announced his resignation at a baraza on December 17, 1952 when he made it clear that he had done so in the interests of his tribe and of his own free will. It was further announced that the entire Native Authority constitution would be revised and, in a calculated risk to prove its good intentions, the Government allowed the political detainees exiled in 1948 to return home.

This served to clear the air a bit and offered an opportunity to deal with the political and economic problems of the tribe. On December 29 at another baraza the Provincial Commissioner announced his intention of revising the constitution, and he asked the pro-Citizens' Union audience to cooperate in setting up a drafting committee. By this time the Union had become the only effective political body in Meru. The Chairman of the Meru tribal council had recently joined it, resulting in its increased stature and the virtual elimination, politically, of the tribal council. The Union's first reaction to the PC's offer was that their own management committee would make an ideal constitutional committee, but Government frowned upon this self-appointed body. After protracted negotiations, however, it allowed the Union to nominate all 16 African members of the Committee, which was known formally as the Committee to Examine the Administration of Local Government and Local Courts Amongst the WaMeru. Two official European members, Michael Davies and Henry Fosbrooke, District Commissioner of Arusha District and Senior Government Sociologist respectively, completed the Committee. Michael Davies was Chairman, and two Meru served as Vice-Chairman and Secretary. Three of the ex-deportees also sat on the Committee.

Although Meru political leaders had re-established contact with the Government and were beginning to move into power, the



mood of the people remained as before, hostile and antagonistic. In March 1953, the Government posted a Social Development Officer, Horace Mason, to live amongst them and concern himself with the political situation within the tribe and try to bring about a rapprochement between Administration and people. During 1953 and part of 1954, the only Government officials with whom the Meru had any contact at all were Michael Davies, Henry Fosbrooke, and Horace Mason. Clearly this type of personal administration was hardly a satisfactory state of affairs.

The Meru once more brought their case before the Trusteeship Council in 1953, but this time it deferred **any** decision until the 1954 U.N. Visiting Mission to Tanganyika could investigate the situation. It continued to keep close track of events by the normal means of report and questions, however.

The Meru Land Case continued to be a sore point, exacerbating relations between Government and tribe. Kirilo Japhet returned from America in July 1953 and in December headed a delegation to the District Commissioner to inform him that the Meru intended to reoccupy the Ngare Nanyuki farms in the new year. As a result of grave warnings by the DC and advice against it by the Superintendent of the Lutheran Mission, no such action was taken, but it nevertheless cast doubts upon Kirilo Japhet's leadership and led to a decline in his influence with the new leaders, particularly those from West Meru.

Gradually the situation began to improve. The Constitutional Committee agreed upon a new and more democratic constitution, albeit at a cost. United on the land issue, the Citizens' Union split wide open on the question of future political organization. The progressives wanted to give the people more power through democratic elections, and the conservatives were determined the traditional leaders should retain dominant authority. The resulting constitution was more advanced than the old, but it retained many of its traditional undemocratic features. In the subsequent voting for a new Council and a new Chief, the conservative candidate from the traditional chiefly clan, Sylvanus Kaaya, was returned by a narrow margin (in a 41% poll) over the more progressive east side candidate. The old cleavage of Meru society had reappeared, this time as a result of implementing a new democratic constitution.

Thus within a year and a half of the Ngare Nanyuki evictions a new constitution had been devised, promulgated, and put into operation. For the first time in many years Meru Chiefdom had a working government representing a higher proportion of the people than ever before, and relations had been re-established between Government and tribe.

Meanwhile, Government wanted to revise the Meru development plan which had been implemented without consulting the Meru and without their participation. Although only half the £46,000 originally earmarked for the plan was left, the previous invest-

The meeting at Ngare  
Nanyuki on Easter  
Sunday.

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ment hardly influenced life in Meru at all. Most of it had been used for the improvement of the resettlement area at Kingori where the vast majority of those evicted refused to settle. By widening the tribe's role in spending the rest, it was hoped to add a bit of local initiative in the development of the



Chiefdom. The money was accordingly set aside for use by the Council on community development, self-help schemes, roads, water supplies, and education.

Soon, however, a rift began to develop between the new Council and the Citizens' Union. As the Council increased its power, the latter began to decline. A number of prominent Union members were appointed to responsible positions in the Native Authority, and they gradually began to transfer their loyalties to the new organization. A further conflict appeared when those wishing to keep Mangi Sylvanus Kaaya in office showed their disinclination to follow the Union's leadership by accepting the compensation offered by the Government and moving to Kingori against its ban.

In September 1954 the U.N. Visiting Mission (generally considered pro-Meru) investigated the situation thoroughly and found that in 1952, after the land was cleared of Africans, it was indeed alienated to thirteen European settlers in blocks of from 2,000 to 20,000 acres. Four of these were on the verge of failure, and the modern dairying industry envisaged in the Wilson Report was not even in sight. The Meru, as stubbornly as ever, demanded the return of their farms and still refused to accept compensation. Their case was discussed and their position supported throughout the territory by the more educated Africans and by the newly-formed Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). To Africans the problem was still very much alive.

The Mission also noted that the amount of land in Arusha District alienated to a few hundred people was larger than that available for settlement by Africans who then numbered about 120,000. The Administering Authority disputed this, although its figures show the amount of African land only slightly in excess of alienated land.

In discussions with the Government, the Mission heard them maintain the move had been in the interests of the area as a whole. The Government was also carrying out the planned development program, and rapport with the tribe was being re-established. Officials said, however, that dissension was growing within the tribe, and that "the position of those most strongly urging it not to move from its position on the case had weakened." It was suggested also that there was some dissatisfaction with the accounting of funds raised by the Meru Citizens' Union to send Mr. Kirilo Japhet to the United Nations in 1952 and for other purposes, including legal expenses. Finally, officials of the Government described Mr. Japhet to the Mission as a 'dangerous agitator', although it heard no hints of criticism on these matters from any of the Meru people with whom it came into contact.

The Mission also talked with the Meru Citizens' Union, the Meru Council, and the Northern Province branch of TANU, all of which espoused similar views. The Citizens' Union still pressed for the return of the two farms, but they criticized the Government on a wide range of topics from land policy to education and medical services. They were particularly upset about the piped water supply at Kingori which, they said, was unfit for human consumption and had even dried up a few months before. They brought the Mission two bottles of clean water from their old supply and one of brownish water from the pipeline. The Mission later visited the two supplies and noted the piped water was indeed brown, although the Meru women drank it freely (there was no alternative). The Administering Authority claimed that although water from the Ngare Nanyuki River appeared clear, it had an excess of flourine and was perhaps even dangerous.

When the Mission talked with the Meru Council, the following exchange took place with one of the evicted farmers:

- Q. What do you people feel should be done now?
- A. I want only to return to Ngare Nanyuki.
- Q. Do you want the settlers to be moved away?
- A. Yes, because I was there---it is my place.
- Q. Would you be satisfied with some other land?
- A. No, because Ngare Nanyuki is very good for cattle, and because I want only to go back there.
- Q. Even if land just as good or better was offered to you?
- A. I don't want to go to any land except Ngare Nanyuki.

The Meru Citizens' Union and the Meru Council brought to the attention of the Mission a further land dispute involving the Focsaner farm at Singisi Poli (Farms Nos. 90 and 91) in the main area of European settlement separating the central tribal area from the plains. They claimed that irrespective of Mr. Focsaner's title the land had always been theirs and had been settled continuously even before the Germans alienated it. Meru families had remained on it, and there was no problem until Mr. Focsaner tried to sell part of the farm and found the Meru unwilling to move. This was further complicated when he fenced off and threatened to close a corridor which was traditionally used as a live-stock passage between the high villages and the plains below.

The church at Ngare Nanyuki. Above the door is engraved: Uhamisho (The Removal) 17-11-51, KuRudi (The Return) 22-4-62.

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The administration supported Mr. Foc-scaner and considered the Meru squatters.

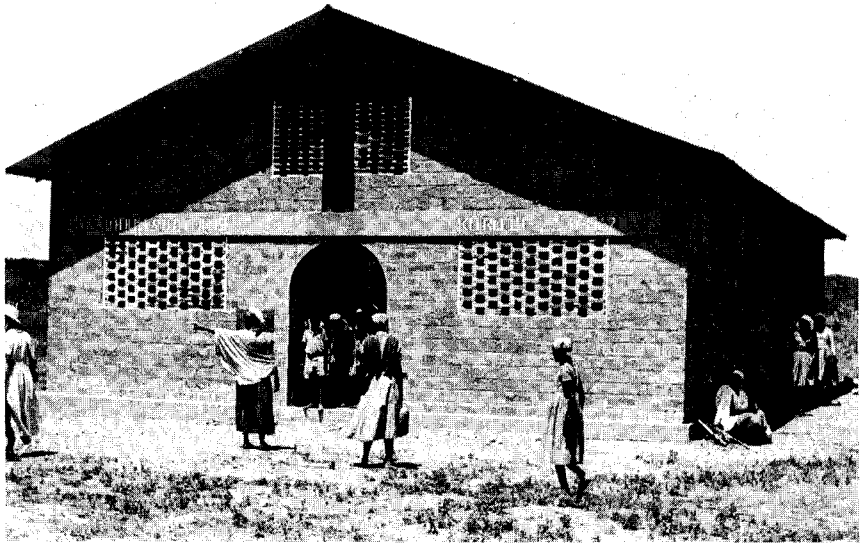
The Meru took the case to court, but in view of the recent Ngare Nanyuki evictions the Government felt it could not risk a judge-

ment unfavorable to the tribe. But by purchasing the land and thereby prejudging the issue, it ran the risk of having its motives misunderstood. It was decided to take the risk, however, and the 240 acres in dispute were bought by Government for the Meru. The remaining 760 acres were acquired later at an inflated price.

The Mission also visited Ngare Nanyuki and Kingori while on a drive around Mt. Meru. Although it was unable to judge the relative merits of the land, it noted diplomatically that while the the new land was greener, it lacked the scenic charm of the old.

It was only by chance the Mission heard the extent of the dissatisfaction of the settlers who had taken up the farms from which the Meru had been evicted. In Moshi, it was approached by a Mr. Barrington, one of the new farmers. Speaking for several settlers, Barrington claimed they had found the cost of clearing and development prohibitive, and their work showed no signs of ever becoming remunerative. In order to avoid friction, they were forced to allow Africans to graze cattle on their land. In spite of this they feared a crisis similar to that occurring in Kenya. Some destruction of signposts and boundary markers had already taken place, and their lives had been indirectly threatened. They felt they had never been fully informed of the extent of the Africans' resentment and hostility to the alienation of the land.

Furthermore, some of the land was unsuitable for the purposes (mixed farming) for which it was granted to them. They felt it was ideal for peasant cultivation because of its hundreds of pockets of rich arable land, whose broken nature on the other hand made European farming methods impracticable. In other words, they would be more than happy to sell as long as they received land in exchange (he mentioned Kingori as appropriate land) and compensation for the improvements they had made.



The Mission concluded that "the land and its use and tenure comprise, in the African mind, the outstanding political and economic issues of the day....If the Meru case is a by-word among politically conscious Africans throughout the Territory, it is not so much for the sake of the Meru people as because of the doubts which their case has raised as to the whole meaning and intention of non-African, and especially European, settlement in the Territory." It would be unwise, therefore, to delay the settlement of the question any longer in the face of the consistent Meru attitude and the failure of several of the European farms involved.

But by then Government was concerned only to forget the case. The satisfactory settlement of the Focsaner dispute as well as the purchase of two European farms to be devoted to the social, economic, and educational advancement of the tribe demonstrated as much as anything its goodwill. In October 1955 a large number of evictees came forward to claim compensation despite the ban by the Citizens' Union. By 1957 individual Meru had accepted £7,437 in compensation, and claims were still being received. The development of the Sanya Corridor as a large-scale ranching and dairying area had failed, and by 1960 some of the European settlers had sold their land back to the Meru. At that time the major obstacle remaining concerned the value of the land which had increased greatly beyond the amount of compensation set aside for it in 1951.

On April 22, 1962, Easter Sunday, the strings of the story came together. The occasion was the dedication of a church on Farm No. 31, built with funds received in compensation for another church destroyed during the evictions of 1951. The ceremony was widely hailed as the formal conclusion of the case, and many of those involved attended. Kirilo Japhet spoke of the history of the affair; others spoke of the future; choirs and bands entertained the small proportion of celebrants who managed to squeeze into the church; and several bees buzzed those seated near the altar. Later, an ox was roasted in a giant barbecue. It was crowded and festive. The warm sun beat down on the corrugated iron roof, and everyone rejoiced.

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The Meru affair was played out on two stages, and the characters and issues on each were quite different. On the world stage, at the United Nations, it formed a small episode in the growing pressure against Great Britain and its resistance to interference in colonial matters. Kirilo Japhet and Earle Seaton made the most of their case and stretched things a bit, but then so did the Administering Authority. There is little doubt the publicity and resulting moral pressures on Britain to justify her actions had a sobering effect, although this also deepened the rift between Government and people. In general the United Nations supported the idea of a large-scale ranching scheme, but it did not accept the need for forcible evictions. The political importance of the case lay in the creation of two racially homo-

geneous areas in a trust territory and an avowedly multi-racial society.

Locally the issues were different. The Government was certainly misguided in its efforts to force a solution on the Meru in the face of such overwhelming opposition. Indeed, in Dar es Salaam it was generally considered that a psychological and administrative blunder had occurred. Clearly the local administrative people should have been more in touch with Meru opinion. Their failure lay in only sounding out an unpopular chief who opposed the scheme (although no Meru believed this) but later allowed himself to be pressured into supporting it. What probably hit the Meru hardest was the realization that the entire North Meru Reserve did not belong to them. Had the administration realized the emotions behind their stand, they could not have made such a blunder in thinking that what was proposed would be acceptable to them. Nevertheless, the Meru reaction contrasts markedly with those of the Chagga and Masai who, although opposed to the sections of the Wilson Report concerning them, cooperated in the execution of the scheme.

It is often said that the then Governor, Sir Edward (now Lord) Twining, was misled by his advisers and would not have agreed to the proposals had he looked at them on the ground. Later he commented, "In the light of experience, it is clear that the Government made a psychological mistake in forcing the issue after the strong opposition of the Meru had been displayed, but at the time there was the conviction of the rightness of the case and that the ultimate benefit to be derived by all concerned made it necessary to evict the Meru compulsorily as had been done in the case of the European settlers."

In retrospect, it would have been sad had the scheme not been carried out, because in the long run the Meru benefitted enormously by this blunder. Lacking unity and developed leadership, the tribe came together over the question of land. Although this unity unfortunately lasted only a short time, it was sufficient to stimulate them to fairly spectacular progress.