

'Save Our Race,' Is

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LONDON — Representatives of a Pacific island race — the Banabans — Rotan Tito and his son, the Rev. Tehuke Rotan, have finally arrived in London.

It took them 40 years to get here.

Natives of Ocean Island, a British dependency in the Pacific, the Banabans have been saving the fare and expenses, now about \$8,500, to

send a special mission to London to try to keep their tiny group of people together.

As only one Banaban has ever been to England before, it was all a bit bewildering. Armed with the money that their 2,000 tribesmen had saved for them, Tito, 67, and his son started five weeks ago on their 14,000-mile journey. When they got to Fiji they swapped their native shorts for western suits shirts and ties.

The Banabans have had one asset that has been greatly in demand — phosphate. In 1913 they received about 6 cents a ton in royalties. In 1927 a visitor to their island said they should be getting far more and they decided to make a personal appeal in London.

In 1947, on the advice of the British government, the Banabans moved to the tiny Fijian island of Rabi, measuring seven miles by five. Royalties from phosphate went up a little over the years and when the Banabans's share reached nearly 88 cents a ton last year, their savings reached the required \$8,500. In 12 years the phosphate deposits, and so the almost sole means of the islanders' livelihood, will be exhausted.

That is why Tito, who

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Banabans' Plea

speaks only Banabanese, and his son are to tell Herbert Bowden, commonwealth secretary, tomorrow:

"Only you can save our race. If you don't help, we shall have to scatter to different islands to seek work." They will point out that phosphate is fetching about \$5.90 a ton, of which the Gilbert and Ellice Islands are receiving about \$4.90 in royalties.

They will plead with Bowden to let them have a minimum of half the available benefits, about \$3 a ton. If

the British — who they insist are "wonderful, especially your Buckingham Palace" — help them, they will build more roads, more houses, more schools — schooling now ends at 13 — breed more cattle and cut more copra.

Everyone is so excited in Rabi that work will practically stop until the return of Tito, who has been chairman of the people's council for 20 years, and Rotan, who in addition to being a Methodist minister is manager of the council.

