

Boers are doing their work so quickly, I pray Great Chief, that you will send me your agent to take over my country as soon as possible.

"I ought to get all my country according to Keat's Line. I have been in ^{many} my troubles and ^{am} waiting to get my right from you - the English. I shall be glad if you leave me to rule my people. My people obey my commands. The Boers tried to get my country and I appealed to the Queen at that time. I called all the chiefs together at Bloemhof to speak about the country."

"I do hereby and most humbly again request Her Majesty the Queen to take me, my people and my lands under her sway, and my desire is that the waters named Vleyfontein, Polfontein and Bulfontein, and the ground on the Molopo adjoining Vleyfontein may be allotted to me and my people together with arable and grazing lands etc., which have been most unrighteously claimed and taken from us, and that land and water be allowed to my people for our flocks and herds and purposes of agriculture at the other places wherever the people ^{may be located, and further that my people} shall enjoy the rights, as now existing, to the hunting ground belonging to us in the Kgalagare, and I respectfully request that justice be done us by Matlaba, Hans Coetzee and others for their unlawful seizure of cattle and appropriation of our lands and corn etc."

Warren was strongly of the opinion that if left to themselves the Batswana tribes would soon be disposed of their lands by the Boers. He therefore made a strong recommendation to the High Commissioner - Sir Bartle Frere that all those lands within the limits of the Molopo from the Kgalagare Desert on the west to Lichtenburg on the east, including the district of Bloemhof as delimited by Lieutenant Governor Keate in 1871 should be proclaimed British territory and be annexed to Griqualand West. Warren detailed his proposals to the High Commissioner, and in due course a proclamation embodying them was actually drafted, and the whole scheme was forwarded to the Secretary of State for consideration. But the matter went no further because, firstly, the Secretary of State was unwillingly to place any more responsibilities upon the Imperial Government, secondly because of the paralysis brought about by the disaster to British arms at Isandhlwara (22nd July 1897), thirdly because Warren soon (October 1879) left his post as Administrator owing to ill health, and finally because Sir Bartle Frere was recalled (1st August 1880). This rapid and sinister succession of unfavourable events pushed Montshiwa's complaints and protests as well as the whole question of Bechuana-land more and more into the background, and the outbreak of the Transvaal War of Independence in 1880 seemed thoroughly to consign Montshiwa and his Barolong to the limbo of forgotten things.

About...../

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About this time (1878 and 1879) Chief Montshiwa made the acquaintance of an active and capable young Englishman of good birth and education - Christopher Bethell by name, who was a relation of ^{Charles} Warren himself and a Lieutenant of the Intelligence Department of ~~Charles~~ Warren's Field Force, and was stationed at Montshiwa's village of Sehuba in that capacity. After the demobilisation of Warren's Field Force, Bethell remained in Montshiwa's country to hunt and trade. By his ability and courtesy he soon won Montshiwa's esteem and confidence and became the chief's principal adviser and confidential secretary. Montshiwa had at the same time another English gentleman Henry Frazer as his agent and general secretary. In 1882 Bethell married a Barolong spinster - Tepo Boabile by name, according to Christian rites, and now completely identified himself with the Tshidi Barolong at this dangerous time of inter-racial conflict.

Bethell's position was made even more dangerous by his being directed by Warren on the 1st of July 1879 "to try and make such arrangements as would enable Montshiwa to sow his corn in the lands in dispute", which meant trying to displace the Boer farmers from the lands they were deliberately digging themselves into at Vleyfontein, Rooigrond and Polfontein.

The Annexation of the South African Republic by the British Government was deeply resented by the burghers of that state, and after protesting against it by discussions, declarations, demonstrations, mass meetings, deputations, memorials, supplications, petitions, passive resistances; by boycotts, refusal to pay taxes, non-cooperations and more deputations to the Colonial Office in London, ^{after many months of heart-burn and bitterness} they declared their independence in December 1880, threw down the gauntlet, took up arms and besieged the English garrisons at Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Rustenburg, Marabastad, Lydenburg, Marthinus-Wesselstroom and Standerton.

When this war broke out, British subjects in the Western Transvaal took refuge in Montshiwa's country and were welcomed by the Chief - always partial to the British.

Sir Theophilus Shepstone had been called to London by the Secretary of State and was succeeded on the 4th of March 1879 by Colonel Owen Lanyon as Administrator of the Transvaal. Shepstone had not been more loved, but Lanyon was much less loved by the burghers of the Transvaal. ^{because he was dark of complexion they called him a coolie.}

As soon as the war broke out, Montshiwa wrote to Colonel Charles Moysey at Kimberley to ask for a permit to purchase firearms and ammunition "as not only my safety but that of the English subjects who live with me and who have fled to me depends on my getting some ammunition. I shall also be glad to hear from you what I am to do. I am ready to help the Government if they wish it, but must at least help myself."

At...../

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At the same, he wrote to the Civil Commissioner, Kimberley - " I write to ask you to help me. The Boers in the Transvaal are fighting against the English, and have also invaded my country and commanded from my people. They have been to ask me to give up an Englishman who lives with me, and as I will not, they are going to fight me also. Further, all the loyal people have come to me for protection which they need against the Boers, and I have helped them. I have many people and do not fear the Boers at all, but now I have no ammunition, so I am writing to you to ask you to sign the permit when I shall either be able to help the Government or defend my country. The rebels have taken Lichtenburg and Zeerust here and are only waiting for some more men to attack me. I have written to Colonel Moysey, who, if he is in Kimberley, will be able to assure you of my loyalty.

200 lbs Gunpowder; 100,000 large and 500,000 Small P.caps
10,000 W.R. Paper and 8,000 Winchester
2,000 Snider and 1,000 M.H. 1,000

"Monchua: Take notice that as soon as you, or any of your people are found armed fighting against the burghers of the South African Republic, which Government is again restored, and whereof Paul Kruger, Marthinus Pretorius and Piet Joubert form the government; or lend assistance to our enemies - the English Government, whom we have nearly worked out everywhere, we will consider you and your people as our enemies and treat you as such. We have always considered you and your people as friends of the Boers, and we are willing to treat you as our friends, that is if you remain peaceable, because we alone are able to work out the English. But you can send your people to help us work our corn and our farms, and for which we will pay your people well." (B.V.26 Briewe afgestuur deur General P.A. Cronje, 30 Des. 1880 - April 1881.)

To this letter Montshiwa replied rather curtly on the 4th January 1881.

"My Dear Friend: I have received your letter of the 29th December 1880. I want to inform you that I found some of the burghers of the South African Republic going about in my country armed, and I was astonished about that because I am not fighting with anyone. But about the work I may say that I cannot force anyone to go and get employment. I do not know who are your enemies, but I consider all the people as your friends. Tell your people not to come to my country with arms."

About the same time, Montshiwa had frequent differences with Commandants Snyman, Botha and Jan Viljoen of Marico, and Hendrik Greeff of Lichtenburg, not to mention the almost daily squabbles between his people and the residents of Vleyfontein and Rooigrond, the ground which Montshiwa continued to claim as his own, both by inheritance and by virtue of the Keate Award.

On the 17th of January 1881, he wrote to Commandant Hendrik Greeff of Lichtenburg, "Sir, I hear from very good authority that you are making ready to begin war with me, this after J. Viljoen repeatedly visiting my station to inform me that the Boers mean peace, and are only making war with the English. I should wish to know what I have done and if this news is true."

On the 21st of January General Cronje wrote again:

"Aan Monchua: Kapitein der Barolongs, Sehuba: My Friend, I have your letter of the 4th January, and Commandant Viljoen has reported to me that you have made peace with our people of the South African Republic, and that you sent a boy as a token of security. I am sending you our Government Gazette and a copy of a Proclamation to keep you informed. Write again and let us know if the English refugees have gone back to their homes."

Montshiwa answered on the 21st January:

P.A. Cronje: General, Potchefstroom: Sir, Your letter of the

18th...../

18th duly to hand. With regard to peace repeatedly made by J. Viljoen I do not understand, for at the same time Hendrik Greeff and Hans Coetzee are collecting a large armed force this side of Lichtenburg, and on good authority I learn that it was to make war with me. It got so bad that the white people were coming in from all quarters for protection, and last Sunday the Boers living in the district had written orders to trek to the camps in Marico at once, all to be there not later than Monday night. This finished it for now we have not a single white man living between here and Marico, or here and Lichtenburg. This is the peace Carl Weyers and M. Joubert are to keep. For the papers I thank you. The affair of the little kaffir: I never gave one. It was J. Viljoen's doings. He pointed one and said - "That child must grow up and have children before we should fight against each other." The child is still here. At this time, Montshiwa was still carrying on correspondence with Colonel Moysey who supplied him with hopeful news of approaching or expected British victory under Sir Pomeroy Colley, and adjured him again and again not to take up arms against the Boers. Thus wrote Moysey: "On the 7th February 1881 - "At the beginning the Boers killed and captured a good many of our soldiers. They were taken by surprise and were not ready. Now we know what the rebels are doing, and our soldiers are safe in their forts. Sir George Colley tried on the 28th January to take more troops up the Berg out of Natal to help the Transvaal, but he only got 900, and the Boers on the hill were too strong, and our troops could not get up. Both sides fought well and we lost many men, and the Boers also. The General will now wait till the other troops which have come from England and India arrive near the Transvaal border.

↑ We do not want you to fight for us because we know we are strong enough, and we do not want the Barolong to have trouble, but we want the Barolong to be our friends.

↑ I am sorry this war will delay settling the land, but perhaps it will be easier settled afterwards.

↑ If Moshete and Matlaba believe what the Boers say, they will be sorry bye and bye. I do not think Moshete will do much harm, but Machavie (Matlaba) is so near the Boers, he is perhaps afraid of them. Do not believe all the stories you hear. The Boers spread untruths."

On the 27th of March Moysey wrote again to tell Montshiwa that peace was declared. Montshiwa had of course already heard the news with dismay.

The war had been a brief and sharp campaign of comparatively few engagements in each of which the British were clearly defeated and then finally overwhelmed by the Boers at the Majuba Hill on the 27th of February 1881, and their commanding officer, the

gallant Sir George Colley killed in action. *under phrase and words*
circumstances of Boer resistance, determined and determined
the side and British. Colley's death was a disaster
and peace on the other side The...../

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The settlement of the Peace terms was entrusted to a Royal Commission consisting of Sir Hercules Robinson the High Commissioner, Sir Henry de Villiers, Chief Justice of the Cape Colony, and Sir Henry Wood, the British Commander in Chief who succeeded Sir George Colley.

Among its terms of reference with which this story is concerned was the determination of a boundary line between the South African Republic and the Barolong in the Territory known as the Keat Aard.

The Commission sat first at New Castle from the 25th of April until the 31st of August when it produced a Treaty of Peace known as the Pretoria Convention, one of the strongest, most evasive, most self-contradictory documents in the history of peace treaties. On reading it one is left with the impression that the commissioners were not very serious, that they were in haste to get the matter finished even if it meant making vital concessions to their late enemies especially where African interests were concerned.

From the outset, the Convention was impotent to bring about peace or improve the relations between the blacks and the whites on the western border, and confusion and violence reigned within the territories in dispute even while the Commission was still sitting.

Montshiwa had never forgotten or forgiven the insolence of the Rapulana clan at the meeting he had called in December, and their insulting language had milled and grilled in his mind all these weeks and he was determined to chastise them. Early in February 1881, therefore, he gave notice to ^{Abram} Motuba, a ^{nephew} brother of Matlaba ^(deceased) and his representative at Lotlhakane (Rietfontein) six miles to the south-west of Montshiwa's village of Sehuba, to move with all his Rapulana people from that locality. Montshiwa averred that Lotlhakane was his and that they were intruders, or at any rate undesirable tenants who were contemptuously and seditiously undermining his authority by being in friendly alliance with his enemies, the South African Republic.

^{Regent of Poffaden} So far from quitting, ^{Abram} Motuba on the instructions from ^{Andrews Mahabon} Matlaba, brought more people from Bodibe (Polfontein) to Lotlhakane, and both ^{he} Matlaba at Bodibe, and Moshete at Khunwana made preparations for war, Moshete sending two regiments to Lotlhakane under Seleka.

On the 15th of April Montshiwa addressed a letter to Sir Evelyn Wood: "The Boers are still very bitter against me and are inciting Matlaba^x and Moshete to attack me, promising to send them help in men. Matlaba's people are all in arms. I have remained still for four months, waiting for the Government (to act), but now I am obliged to attack them. Matlaba is living in my country having been placed there by the Boers, and Moshete hates me because I hold to the English ~~people and loyal~~ Government and because I receive and protect many English people and loyal Boers

^{against...../}
 J.N. Matlaba had died in 1879 but his name had become a dynasty, his successors continued to be called Matlaba.

against insurgents. I trust that we shall not be forgotten in the settlement of the country and that the Keate Award will be handed back to its rightful owners - the Bechuanas".

Urged on, rather than deterred by these military preparations ^{of the Rapulana (Matlaba's) people}, Montshiwa also mobilised, but first he made a cryptic pronouncement. He called a large assembly of his people and said in his gruffest voice:- "I am pregnant; I am full; I am heavy with child, and that child is Mohumapele Dingoko" (this was his cousin and intimate friend) "I am full time and must be delivered." That was his way of announcing his decision to attack his enemy. He sought and obtained help from Chief Ikalafeng of the Bahurutshe at Linokana, and from Chief Gaseitsiwe of the Bangwaketse at Kanye. The latter sent two regiments of about 200 men under Sekgatlhanye Bome and Keemenao Sebege. Early on the morning of the 2nd of May he attacked Lotlhakane and utterly routed the Rapulana clan, killed 73 men including Thupaamore a son and also Mongala and Legotlwana, two brothers of the Chief Matlaba.

The story as embellished among the Barolong is that Mogotsi, who had so grievously insulted Montshiwa was at Potchefstroom at this time, that Montshiwa ordered the court physician and magician Matlhare Nkgwang to call him to Lotlhakane by magic so that he would be present at the assault to pay by his life blood the penalty of his rudeness. It is said that willy nilly Mogotsi came. It is known that he was slain together with 73 others mentioned above.

Montshiwa then sacked and committed Lotlhakane to the flames. His own casualties were eleven men killed and 27 wounded. His purpose was to force Matlaba's people from Lotlhakane because he said that was his country and they were disloyal. He succeeded for a time in driving them to their town of Bodibe, which by the way he had also previously claimed.

Matlaba at once reported this matter to Commandant Hendrik Greef of Lichtenburg, who in turn brought it to the notice of the higher authorities of the South African Republic who held Matlaba in high esteem. General Cronje no sooner received the report of the incident than he left Potchefstroom with a commando of 300 men to help Matlaba and punish Montshiwa, but when he reached the Molopo, hostilities between the tribes had ceased temporarily.

Sensational stories were subsequently circulated that Montshiwa's people had committed atrocious brutalities and revolting barbarities such as thrashing the corpse of the provocative Mogotsi Moilwa, mutilating and burning the wounded and flaying the slain. Careful inquiries afterwards, however, proved all this to be unfounded.

A report of these disturbances reached the Royal Commission at New Castle, and Commandant General Piet Joubert and Colonel E. Buller were sent to inquire into the sources of the dispute and...../

and to restore order.

General P. Joubert could not possibly have entered into this mission without prejudice and his coming immediately filled Montshiwa with doubts and a feeling that he would not receive justice.

They interviewed Montshiwa about the 21st of May and directed him to allow all Matlaba's people to return to Lotlhakane, and all the farmers to re-occupy the farm from which he had driven them on the border. Joubert pressed these directions and waved off all objections Montshiwa tried to offer.

Montshiwa was very indignant at this treatment and on the 28th of May he sent a protest to the Royal Commission that one member of the sub-commission had pressed upon him in a manner that showed prejudice, "and I now send this Protest against any such orders before the final settlement of my line. Further I must bring to the notice of the Royal Commission that Mr. C. Bethell whom I brought to the meeting on purpose to watch my interests was not allowed to speak, explain or ask questions, while it was notorious that any Boer present, of whom there were many, was allowed to make what propositions and remarks he wished..... Although I am perfectly willing to submit my whole case to unprejudiced persons... I must and do hereby enter my protest against any Boer sitting on a commission that may hear the case respecting my line. The quarrel is between myself and my people on the one hand, and the Boer Government and people on the other hand, and I would submit that any commission that has to settle this case should be composed either to exclude both claimants or to include both."

The quarrel was of course due to the dispute about the boundary line, not so much between the chiefs or their tribes themselves, as between the chiefs of British sympathies and the Transvaal burghers. In other words the Transvaal burghers and Government in the name of their allies Moshete, Matlaba and Mosweu sought to recover all the land taken from them by the Keate line, while Montshiwa and Mankurwane, who still hanker^{ed} after the Keate line, resited the encroachment. The fight was not for supremacy or for status, because each chief was totally independent of the others irrespective of their hereditary position by descent.

The news that the British were giving the Transvaal back to the Boers was received by Montshiwa with consternation. On the 18th of June he sent a letter to Henrique Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs in Pretoria, by the hand of his son Kebalepile "to tell the Royal Commission how much all the tribes on the western border (of the Transvaal) are grieved that the Government is going to give back the Transvaal to the Boers, and how it will involve all of them in troubles again. He is also going to inquire when the old case about my country is to be settled - the line which Governor Keate decided so long ago and which the Boers would not agree to. "

He...../

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He wrote in the same strain "To Sir Evelyn Wood and other members of the Royal Commission:

My Friends: I am sending my son Kebalepile to you. He will tell you that we are very much grieved that the English Government are going to give the Transvaal back to the Boers.... and troubles will soon begin again. For however much the present Boer leaders may desire to have peace and do right, we know from long experience that those who should obey them will try and break their orders You must not give the land back until the Boers can make a strong Government.

My son will also ask you when you will settle the case about my land..... I would have come to you now, myself, but as I do not know where I may find you, and as I am an old man, I send my son first but request that you send for me when my case is to be decided."

The African chiefs concerned followed the deliberations of the Royal Commission with keen interest, and some of them actually went in person to the places of its meeting with the hope of being asked to give evidence in matters at issue.

When the Commission completed its work at Pretoria on the 8th of August, these people were called together to hear how they had been disposed of. There were many chiefs and about 300 others present. Sir Hercules Robinson addressed them from the clouds, informed them through his interpreter ^{The Rev.} John Smith Moffat that the Transvaal had been annexed four years previously to the British dominions by mistake, and that the British Government "with that sense of justice which befits a great and powerful nation had given orders that the country should be given back to the Boers upon certain conditions in which the interest of the natives had not been overlooked. There was to be a British Resident, but if they required protection they were to look to the government of the country - that is the restored Republican government. There was to be no slavery just as provided by the Sand River Convention. There was to be peace, goodwill and harmony. Though they were handed back to the Transvaal, England would not forget them (Nixon J. The Complete Story of the Transvaal p. 72). What irony! what mockery!!

The Africans were speechless. They could not believe their ears. Robinson no sooner finished his speech than he hurriedly went away. Minor Government officials then came on the

scene...../

scene to explain the remarkable harangue and then some chiefs were allowed to speak. They said plainly that they had been deceived and sold by England. In quaintly picturesque language, they said they had been passed round from one person to another like a piece of tobacco.

After the Royal Commission had concluded its work and had the Pretoria Convention signed, African chiefs found to their dismay that little if any cognisance had been taken of them and their difficulties. Montshiwa in particular was disillusioned and embittered. He had openly defied the authorities of the Transvaal, and now where was he? The British had left him completely in the lurch. He was now at the mercy of his enemies. He had entrusted his case to the British. His faith in them had been unbounded. He had been demonstrative in his British sympathies. Justly could he exclaim - 'Perfidious Albion!'

Following the report of Colonel Buller and General Joubert, Colonel C. Moysey by direction of the Royal Commission came in August and September to mark off the western boundary of the Transvaal as amended by them, whereby a considerable part of the territory given to the Barolong by the Keate Award was taken and included in the Transvaal.

In marking the line from Ramatlabama to Buurmansdrift, thence to Rooigrond, thence to Lotlhakane, thence to Marsetsane and thence to Madibogo, Colonel C. Moysey was accompanied by Montshiwa's counsellors Silas Molema and Stephen Lefenya, who constantly brought to his notice the encroachment of the new Convention line into their territory. Beyond Madibogo, Moshete's men also went with Moysey and protested to the new line of beacons, their contention being that the line should be placed more westward. The same attitude was taken by Mos~~we~~^{we} when the boundary was laid down in his district at Mamusa. In the end ~~of~~ the line satisfied no one. It angered Montshiwa and Mankurwane against their British allies, and provoked Moshete, Matlaba and Mos~~son~~^{swen} against their Transvaal suzerains.

On the 13th October (1881) Montshiwa addressed a letter to Mr. George Hudson, British Resident at Pretoria complaining that the Transvaal Boers were inciting Matlaba and Moshete to attack him, while at the same time allowing these chiefs to use the Transvaal as a base of operations "I write to tell you that my neighbour Moshete has declared war against me. I do not complain against that; it is well but what I desire to represent to you is that the Boers have allowed him to take his oxen and cattle across the line into the Transvaal where I may not follow them, moreover Moshete himself and his commandos cross and recross the Transvaal line and come out from that State to attack me.

Should...../

Collection Number: A979

Silas T MOLEMA and Solomon T PLAATJE Papers

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

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