

THE PETITION ON BEHALF OF THE  
MANDEBELE TRIBES.

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P.O. Box 5,  
COALVILLE, Tvl.  
1952.

The Secretary,  
The S.A. Institute of Race Relations,  
P.O. Box 97,  
JOHANNESBURG.

My Lord,

1. I who am a Mopedi or Mosotho of the Transvaal am respectfully hereby attracting the attention of the Institute to the position into which the South African Republic put some tribes of the Transvaal Natives called Mandebele since the year 1883 in which they are still to-day.
2. The Mandebele in the province are found mostly in the Middelburg, Tvl. and in Pretoria Districts, and in the other districts are found scarcely or never.
3. These people are spoken of as the offsprings of the Zulu clans, and what proves the truth of that is that the most of their tongue or language is Zulu.
4. The Mandebele's Native land is called Nomshehela or Roossenekal, the place in the Northern part of the district of Middelburg, Tvl. and that is where they enjoyed their life, and at that place their paramount chief was named Mapoho whose sone was Nyabela by a name; when the tribes were put into the position of which we shall hear later in the succeeding paragraphs, the chief had already given his son Nyabela authority or power to act in his place as he was too old for the tribal business.
5. The position into which these classes of Natives were put by the South African Republic, and in which they are still to-day, is a life of bondages, and it is the worst of all in the whole province of the Transvaal.
6. The cause of the life of this description to the Mandebele is that in those days there still lived two Bapedi (Basotho of the Transvaal) tribal chiefs namely Mampuru II and Sekukune I who were brothers, and who disputed or contested for superiority or chieftainship.
7. The two disputers were not at the same locality either: the former's kraal was at Brakfontein, the place in the Northern part of the district of Middelburg Tvl., and in the South West of Roossenekal or Nomshehela, a distance from the local town; the latter's kraal was situated at Manche, the place in the North-western part of the district of Lydenburg, and in a good distance from the local town.
8. The two Bapedi tribal chief's reciprocal hatred was so much that it even brought Mampuru II into temptation of putting his brother Sekukune I to death in the year 1882. That man left Brakfontein for Manche where the victim's kraal was, where he on his arrival, looked for a hiding place, and found it and occupied it.

9. In evenings/.... 2.

9. In evenings Mampuru II kept on walking quietly towards his victim's premises till he one evening detected him walking from outside into his yard by an outlet; the murderer, then, rapidly followed him, and found him sitting at a fire-place, and stabbed him dead with a spear or an assegai.
10. Chief Mampuru II while he was busy with committing the murder, was seen by one of Chief Sekukune I's servants who promptly alarmed for general information, and the murderer at once walked out by the outlet back to his locality at Brakfontein.
11. During those days Abel Erasmus the Native Commissioner whose home was in the Northern part of the district of Lydenburg at the place called Kruger's Post, was at Mahale's Kraal, a Native situation standing at the foot of the mountain called Phring in the North-western part of the district of Middelburg, Tvl. collecting Native hut-taxes.
12. Kuluko I, Chief Sekukune's brother sent to him a messenger to inform him of both the death and the killer.
13. The Commissioner also on hearing the sad news, promptly communicated or sent his messenger to Pretoria to tell General Piet Joubert.
14. The General, upon receipt of the message, sent his forerunner to Brakfontein to tell Chief Mampuru II that he wanted him to appear in Pretoria; the General's messenger went to the place, and found the man, and advised him to do as the commander ordered, Chief Mampuru II internally perceiving what he was wanted in Pretoria for, refused to go there, and even proved his refusal by answering: "You go back and tell the General to come to me himself."
15. The forerunner then left him, and went back, and while he was on his way back, the Chief left Brakfontein for the Mahale's Kraal where on his arrival stated his case to Moji the tribal headman: "I have killed Chief Sekukune I and am wanted by General Piet Joubert in Pretoria, and I refuse to go there; should he on hearing through the medium of his messenger whom he sent to me that I do not comply with his command, take arms and go to Brakfontein and on finding me absent, and inquiring from my people and hearing that I am here with you and then come here for the purpose of fighting, please let us fight."
16. Moji answered: "No, I do not agree with you in what you have done, and in what you intend to do."
17. The runaway then, got dissatisfied and walked to Marishane the tribal headman whose Kraal in those days was situated at the foot of a mountain range called Lechadibya standing in the East of the Mahale's Kraal and in the same district and there he opened his proposals to the superior man who agreed to them and even made him stay with him at the Kraal.
18. The messenger whom General Piet Joubert sent to Brakfontein to call Chief Mampuru II when he arrived at the Commander, he stated that Chief Mampuru refused to do as he was told and that he said that the Commander might go to him himself. General Piet Joubert on hearing the man's reply, took

arms at once and marched to Brakfontein where when he arrived, found Mampuru absent from the Kraal and asked his subjects where he was.

The subjects' reply to the General's question was that as soon as the Commander's messenger left, the Chief walked to Moji the tribal headman at Mahale's Kraal and from there he went to see Marishane the tribal headman at Lechadibya, and that that time he was still there.

Piet Joubert, the General, being satisfied when the answer was given to him in that manner, sent at once a deputy to Bopedi at Manche to give Kuloko I a command to take arms and go to the Lechadibya and meet the commander in order that they might investigate in connection with Chief Mampuru II there.

The deputy left Brakfontein for Manche where on arrival gave Kuloko I the command from the General and the man promptly did in compliance with General Piet Joubert's order. He took arms and marched quietly to the place at Marishane's Kraal and came in contact with the Commander and they began to ask Marishane the tribal headman where Chief Mampuru II was, and the man's reply was "I don't know where he is." The General said to him: "You know where he is, and since you deny, we are now entering your premises and search for him."

19. Marishane: "No, you can't enter my premises." On that reply the general declared a battle which commenced and lasted for six days.
20. Marishane got defeated, and therefore, surrendered, and fetters were put on him and he was asked to give the fugitive to them, and he explained to them that while the General declared the war the man sneakingly went out of the premises by an outlet and walked back to Brakfontein.
21. The warriors notwithstanding Marishane's statement, entered his premises and searched and found the runaway absent and then began to trace him to Brakfontein where they on arrival found Chief Mampuru's Kraal vacant and General Piet Joubert began to inquire from the neighbouring villagers in connection with Chief Mampuru II with his people and he was told that he and his people were gone to Nomshehela or Roossenekal where they placed themselves under the Mandebele tribes.
22. The Commander, on hearing the reply, ordered some warriors to take Marishane the captive to Pretoria, and at the same time he led the army to Roossenekal where he on arrival asked Nyabela the tribal chief where the people traced were.
23. Chief Nyabela answered: "I have swallowed Mampuru and if you want him you had better take out a knife and cut my stomach open and then take him out."
24. On such a reply, the Commander declared a war which commenced at once, and went on till the year 1883 in which the Mandebele and Mampuru's people became too weak to carry on any further, and in consequence, Chief Nyabela said to Mampuru II: "I had better take you to General Piet Joubert."

25. Mampuru II accepted, and answered: "Yes Ndebele I do hear you, but let me not die with the rest of my people; let me take them to Bushbuckridge (the place in the district of Lydenburg), and come back alone here so that you may do as you think."
26. Nyabela replied: "Yeas, do it Mampuru." Mampuru then sneakingly led his people to Bushbuckridge, where he placed them and walked back to the battle field or Roossenekal where on his arrival Chief Nyabela took him to the opposing people and placed him in front of General Piet Joubert, and said: "My Lord, here is the man whom you want."
27. The Commander answered: "Yeas I see, but remember that when I asked you for him, you said that you had swallowed him and that if I wanted him I had better take out a knife and cut your stomach open and then take him out; just tell me, if a pregnant cow could be dealt with in the same way, as you said that I had better do you, would she still be alive?" Nyabela: "No, my Lord." "Do you expect to be alive still, whereas I have taken a knife and have cut your stomach open and have taken this man out; the knife that I have taken out, being the war that I have been carrying on with you?" asked the General. Nyabela: "'Excuse me my Lord."
28. The General answered: "No, you deserve a punishment, I am taking you with me to Pretoria and at present I am giving your subjects to these Whitemen to take them with them to their respective farms."
29. Further, the Commander ordered that fetters be put on Chief Nyabela and Chief Mampuru II and that all the Mandebele families be taken by the Whitemen or warriors each as many as they would be enough for his work on his farm.
30. To Kuluko the Bapedi leader he said: "Kuluko, the war is over you may go home, and there, tell the rest of your people what you see and hear to-day here."
31. The Commander at last said: "Bapedi and White Warriors, let us go separately," and he took the two captives Mampuru and Nyabela with him to Pretoria, and on his arrival he caused Marishane to be imprisoned for a period of 8 years; Nyabela for the rest of his age; Mampuru was beheaded.
32. A few days after the war the Native Commissioner in whose power the place Bushbuckridge by a name in those days was, transferred the Bapedi whom Chief Mampuru II hid there to another Native Commissioner named Stefanse Trigaard in the district of Middelburg, Tvl. who on their arrival placed them at the boundary of that district, and of Lydenburg where they are till to-day.
33. Their tribal chief to-day is called Sekoati II, the grand sone of Chief Mampuru II, and the name of the place where Stefanse Trigaard put them is Gogolegen, and they enjoy their life there whereas the poor Mandebel tribes' life was caused by them to be bitter since the year 1883.
34. Marishane's people to-day are at the place called Mooifontein in the West of Gogolegen, and the South of the Lechadibya (see page ). Their tribal Chief now-a-days is Tseke the grandson of Marishane the first person who refused /..... 5.

refused to show Chief Mampuru II to General Piet Joubert and Kuluko I when they asked him for him.

35. These people also enjoy their life there whereas the poor Mandebele have a slavish life since 1883.

THE LIFE OF BONDAGE.

In order to understand what we mean by the life of bondage in connection with the Mandebele tribes, the following paragraphs should be read carefully, and taken into account:

- A. These people have since the year 1883 been deprived of their old national custom of building, or living in kraals under their chiefs or headmen as any other natives do, and they, therefore, seem to look to the Union the lost and useless creatures.
- B. These tribes are under Boers or farmers where they are ineligible to have any livestock and even if the master or mistress of one who dwells under him or her is such a person as allows such animals they must be periodically paid for, whereas the possessor of these things is never set or let off the farm labour in order to work for money to meet his or her liabilities.
- C. Boers or farmers do not allow ploughing or cultivating grounds to the Mandebele, and even if a farmer is such a person as allows such pieces of grounds for the purpose, in ploughing seasons, he or she keeps the poor natives on doing the farm labour or his or her master or mistress, ploughing work in order that the poor person may not get chance to do his or her own piece of ground.
- D. Many Boers or farmers do not liberate their natives from service, and in reply on application made to them for a dwelling place under them they never let the applicant know that they allow such a place subject to the conditions that a dweller under them is never set free from service.
- E. Some Boers or farmers whose natives have such property as oxen, horse, donkey, waggon etc. want to use it without asking the master or such a native as is the owner, and should the poor person prove the fact that he or she does not allow such an act, he or she is chased away from the farm without being given a removal passport; the real idea of such a farmer in doing so being that the native may be arrested for removing without a removal permit, and that he or she may not be allowed to get a dwelling place at any other place.
- F. Some Boers are in the habit of making false arrangements with natives for dividing farm crops equally between themselves and such a native as has some oxen and a plough whom they give a large piece of ground to plough, but when the crop is gathered they take the whole of it and begin to explain to the poor person the fact that it is to waste to give their farm crops to Kaffirs .

- G. The Mandebele children under Boers or farmers are unable to attend schools, because such a business is impossible at such places; either adults or children on farms cannot get christian knowledge, because a mission service for teachers or missionaries at such places is too impossible to do.
- H. A Mandebele taxpayer is a double prisoner, because when it is the time to collect a hut-tax while such a person is still giving his master or mistress a service, he is liable to be arrested by any Union officer or police if he is found to be in arrear with that duty.
- I. Many Boers or farmers when a dweller under them wants to leave them, make him or her give them a periodical notice of removal, say, of three months but when the notice falls due, or comes to maturity, the master or mistress denies the fact that the person has given a notice, the idea of such a master or mistress being that he may fail to go away from the farm, and therefore, keep on suffering from a bad treatment by him or her. So much for instance.

The aim and the decision of the Mandebele and the Bapedi Tribal Chiefs' cases.

1. The imprisoning of Marishane the tribal headman for a period of 8 years for refusing to show Chief Mampuru II to General Piet Joubert and Kuluko I, and the putting of Chief Mampuru II to death for having carried on the war in question, chiefly for having committed murder or killed Chief Sekukune I, was that the subjects both of the former and of the latter might not be punished or dealt with anyhow, and in order that they might be left living peacefully; so they are till to-day.
2. The decision with regards to Nyabela the Mandebele Paramount Chief's case was different; he was imprisoned for the rest of his life, and in addition, his subjects were given a bitter punishment as the above paragraphs tell.
3. These people if it is taken into account, were brought into temptation by Chief Mampuru II and his subjects who now enjoy their life. Nyabela the Mandebele supreme chief suffered from the imprisonment for his life on behalf of Bapedi but his people are still suffering from the life of bondage.
4. The Union should bear in the mind the fact that any class of natives in the whole of South Africa looks to it for assistance or redemption. The Mandebele should, therefore, now be helped to get out of the life of servitude; to do that, if it be accepted, would be easy work to do, because any Native Pass Office would arrange for approaching these people on any farm in the province or calling them to the said offices, and classify them by means of, or in accordance with their clans or tribal chiefs or headmen; at last, grant them a land divided into reserves for the purpose of building their kraals, or cultivating.

CONCLUSION:

Having tried my best to state the bitter position in which the Natives called Mandebele are, and being afraid of going beyond the limit of the space of necessity in inviting the attention of the S.A. Institute of Race Relations the official organ of the Union, I conclude with a hope that this is clear,

and that it will receive the attention of the Organisation.

Timothy M. Moloke,  
Your most respectful  
Associate Member.



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