C148/70 W. Stephens
Mch 5. 1883

Banato's Chambers
Kimberley
5th March/83.

Dear Sir/-

I am in receipt of your letter of the 1st Feby last.

I am unable to get any one to communicate with you who would not object to having his name appear. This may seem strange, but on examination you will see that there is good reason for this.

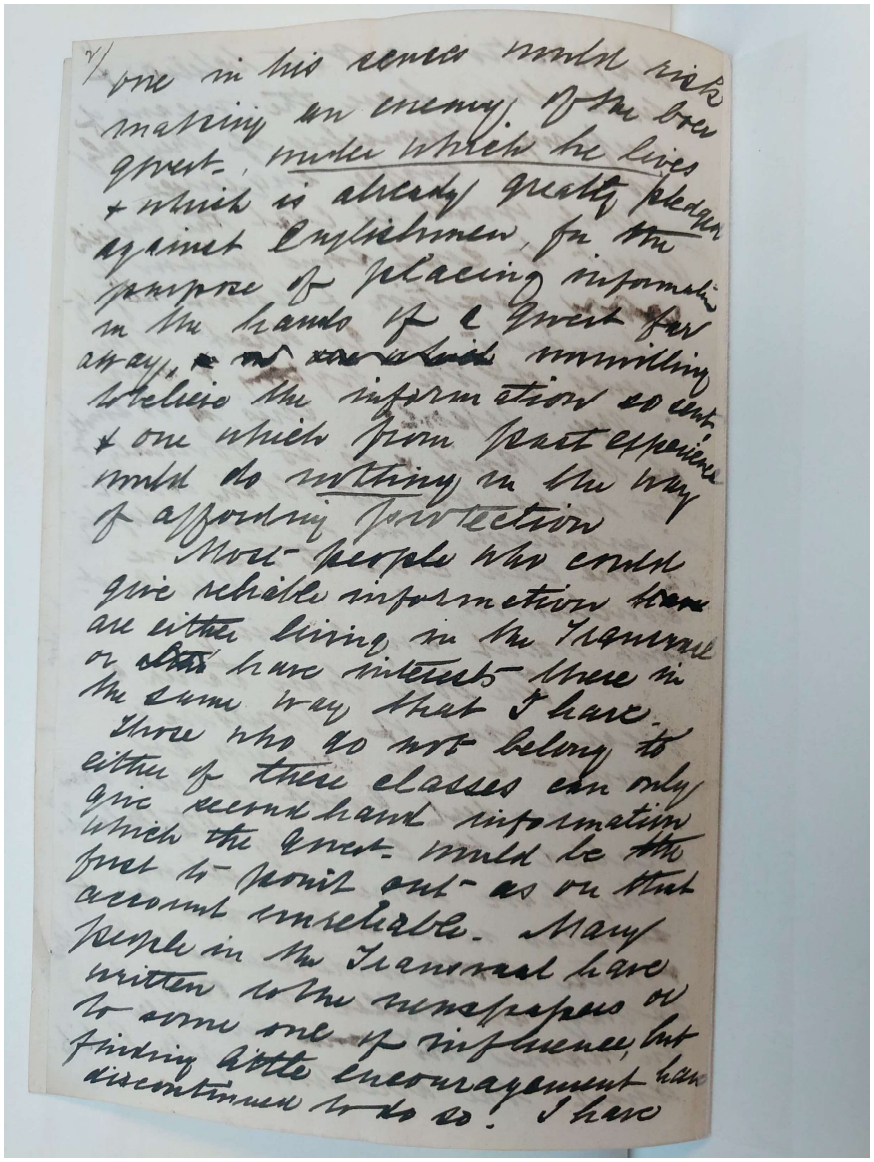
In the first place the English Govert. by its past action in discrediting any statements made by loyal people and by leaving them to shift for themselves as best they could, has so shaken the confidence of people generally that no

myself written with "Standard"
three or four times only one
letter of which they have
published. The English Govt
have now been made aware of the
atrocities against the "Bechuanas"
for the last two years &
during the greater part of this
time their efforts have
been employed to endeavouring
to "hush up" the matter & when
this was no longer possible
they have contented themselves
with mild remonstrances which
to people out here have the appearance
of timidity. Such being the case
can it be expected that people
here should oppose themselves to
the certainty of enmity of the Govt
which would in many cases
mean their ruin, for the very
difficult purpose of trying to
convince the English Govt
of what which they have upto
the present time shown every

disposition not to believe, & which they have the means of verifying themselves if they only choose to make enquiries.

What would it cost the English Govt to send some person of ~~[illegible]~~ position & known integrity & humanity to go direct to the scenes of the fighting & send in their report. This, or something of the kind, & is so obviously & the right way to obtain correct information that in not adopting it one can come to only one conclusion - i.e. that the Govt. don't want any enquiry!

The boers have taken a great part of "Montsoia's" country & have set up an independent Govt of their own & called the country "Stellaland". They have done something similar in Mankoroane's country & these little independent Republics as they are called are only so in name, ~~[illegible]~~ in order to divert the attention of the English



2/ one in his senses would risk making an enemy of the Boer Govt., under which he lives & which is already greatly pledged against Englishmen, for the purpose of placing information in the hands of a Govt far away, ~~& in one which~~ unwilling to believe the information so sent, & one which from past experience would do nothing in the way of affording protection

Most people who could give reliable information ~~have~~ are either living in the Transvaal or ~~that~~ have interests there in the same way that I have.

Those who do not belong to either of these classes can only give second hand information which the Govt. would be the first to point out as on that account unreliable. Many people in the Transvaal have written to the newspapers or to some one of influence, but finding little encouragement have discontinued to do so. I have

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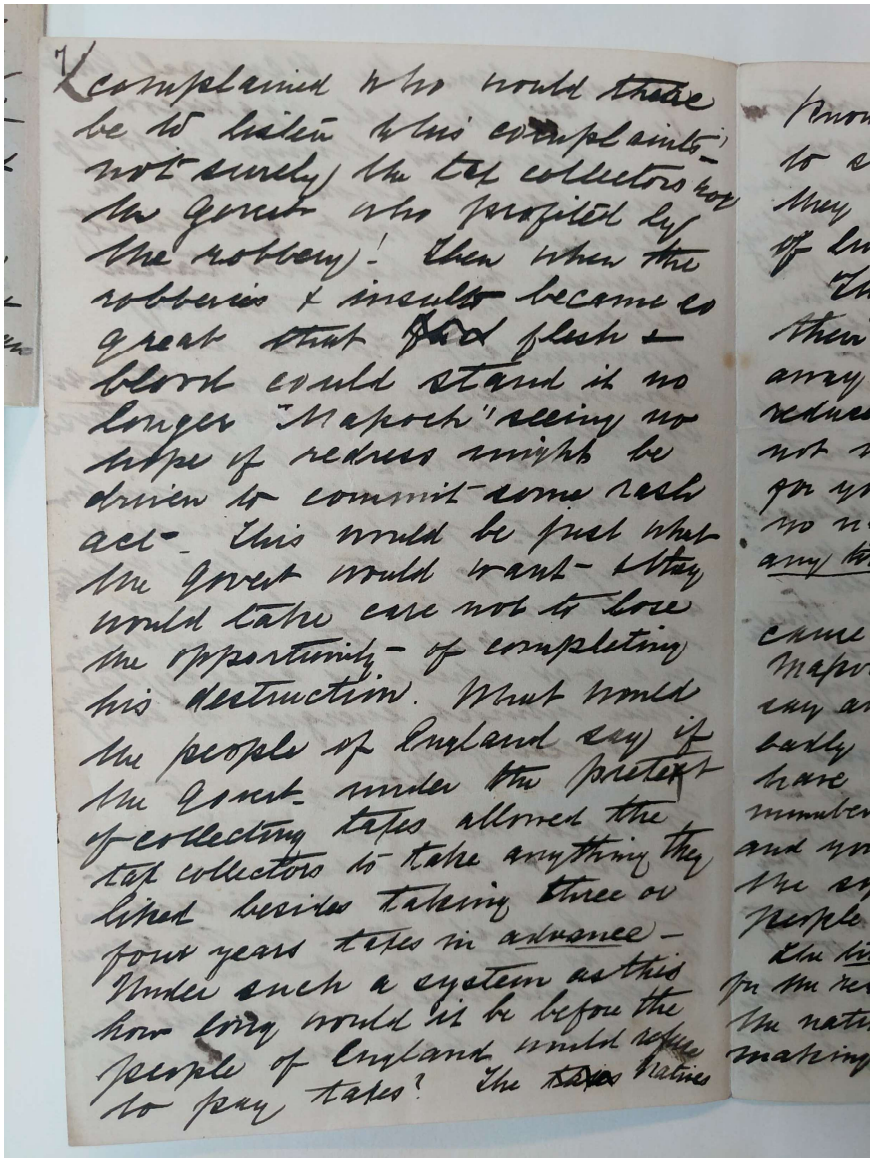
Govt. from the Admiral Govt which are the real aggressors.

Numerous things crop up every day to show that the Admiral Govt. are directly concerned in what has taken place. Only the other day Commandant-Fourie in Commandeering men for the war against "Mapoch" exempted those who had served as volunteers against "Montsioa" showing how the Govt. openly encourage & sympathize with the Boer volunteers, as otherwise they would never have exempted them from serving in a war which is already taxing their utmost energies to carry on successfully.

With regard to "Mapoch" he is in the Transvaal proper & so his case does not allow room for the intervention of the English Govt. in the same way as the case of the other chiefs mentioned. Mapoch's homes is a very hard one like he



7 complained who would there be to listen to his complaints — not surely the tax collectors nor the Govert who profited by the robbery! Then when the robberies & insults became so great that ~~[illegible]~~ flesh & blood could stand it no longer "Mapoch" seeing no hope of redress might be driven to commit some rash act. This would be just what the Govert would want & they would take care not to lose the opportunity of completing his destruction. What would the people of England say if the Govert under the pretext of collecting taxes allowed the tax collectors to take anything they liked besides taking three or four years taxes in advance — Under such a system as this how long would it be before the people of England would refuse to pay taxes? The ~~taxes~~ natives

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know that if they once submit to such demands as these that they must give up all ideas of living except on sufferance.

Their homes are broken up their country & property taken away from them & they themselves reduced to a dependant position not much better than slavery for you must bear in mind that no natives under the boers are allowed any titles to hold land.

Added to the unjust cause of the war, the fact that Mapoch's is a small tribe with say about 1,200 fighting men badly armed, and that the boers have ~~[illegible]~~ four or five times this number well armed with breechloaders, and you have sufficient to enlist the sympathies of all impartial people on the side of the natives.

The true facts however seldom appear, for the reason as I before stated, that the natives have no means of making their case known nor

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has no newspapers or methods of making his case known, while his enemies the boers have every opportunity - of giving publicity to their statements, true or false, without fear of contradiction, I may as well say a few words of what I do know.

The boers say that they are making war on "Maporchi" to force him to pay them taxes, & this as it sounds to the uninitiated, seems very plausible.

In reality - however - "Maporchi" knows that under the plea of collecting taxes the boers threaten his very existence. "Maporchi" would have here made any objection to pay taxes to the English Government - once submit the boer demands & the end would not be far off.

When boers collect taxes they send 2 or 3 men without any character who, as long as they collect enough & under the colour of taxes rob the natives sufficiently, are never asked any questions. Of course if "Maporchi"

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of refuting the false statements of those interested in bringing about their ruin. One of the most fruitful causes of these wars by the boers on the natives has been the ease ~~at~~ with which the boers have learnt to defeat them. Once let it be known that your neighbour is too weak to make a successful resistance & you have (among such people as the boers) a very powerful inducement for spoliation. If the natives had anything like the same weapons as the boers they would be quite; if not more than, a match for ~~the boers~~ them, & native wars would be less frequent in consequence. As it is at present however, in spite of the bravery of the natives they stand no chance against their enemies, except in a hand to hand encounter which the boers are too cowardly to engage in. The natives being killed by the boers at long rifle range ~~what~~ while the latter are in comparative safety.

The boers ~~[illegible]~~ said that they would subdue "Mapoch" in a month or so but the war has

11/ If matters do not right themselves, prevent hostilities & enforce "the Convention" which would have a good effect on both Boers & natives!

The Government have ample power under the Convention for the protection of the natives, but these powers I regret to say they have never yet exercised.

The whole system of Boer Govt. is calculated to lead to troubles with the natives for years to come unless the Boers are checked in a firm and decided manner. I see by a telegram that the English Govt. propose to grant small pensions to "Montsioa" & "Moroka" & remove their tribes into British Territory. This however I think is a foolish measure as it will practically leave the Boers masters of the situation & encourage them to spoliate other tribes by & beyond these

chiefs & tribes have in the effect of destroying British influence by showing the natives & Boers that they are afraid to interfere & thus provide, & pave the way for a continuous army of Boer marauders. In the end the system proposed by the Government will be the most expensive of any & only increase the evil. If the Govt. would only do as I recommended in a former letter and a reliable man out to the spot, such as Col. Warren, they would be enabled to arrive at a satisfactory way of dealing with the question.

The latest news is that there is a combination of native chiefs being formed against the Boers & if so this combination with a very little assistance in the way of arms & ammunition would be able to hold their own, leaving the British Govt. nothing to do.

lasted very much longer than this, & there is reason to believe that in spite of rifles & dynamite - Mapoch would be able to hold his own, were it not - for the pangs of hunger which must sooner or later make itself felt among his people. I should be heartily glad if the English Govt. could by any means stop this war for should the boers take Mapochi country they will give no quarter to the unfortunate natives. Troubles with the Natives seem to be the order of the day with the boers, as it is now — rumoured that there is likely to be some difficulty - with the Swazies (a branch of the Zulus on the eastern frontier of the Transvaal.

It is to be hoped that the English Govt. will not allow the boers to interfere with them ~~Swazies~~ as in the "Convention" there were certain provisions entered into having the effect of preserving the country of the latter from the boers. Govt. by a little decided action might,

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the most exasperating thing in this disgraceful affair is that the British Govt. has ~~itself~~ been ~~the~~ one of the chiefs causes in bringing about the ruin of these chiefs and their tribes by refusing to allow them to buy arms and ammunition. ~~If the British Govt.~~ Even now little more is wanted than to allow them to obtain these, & if the natives can hold their own it would be far better & cheaper than the ~~system~~ ridiculous ~~sys~~ proposal made by the Govt. ~~which will~~

I see also that the Govt. have somewhere said that they have no right to interfere. This I think was said by Lord Derby or some influential member of the Government: & Derby shows a lamentable amount of ignorance. The "Convention" specially marks out the boundaries of the Transvaal which the boers are not to overstep

and gives the British Govt. power to move troops throughout the Transvaal & do a number of things pertaining to the Supremacy If some one would get a copy of the "Convention" they would be in a position to see what are the responsibilities entered into by the British Govt & the Boers.

The Boers are themselves creating a good deal of discomfort by their action against the natives & Even only we hope that the British Govt will not take any action that may help them out of their difficulties. "Maforch" by his gallant resistance has caused the Transvaal a great expense. The Govt begin to find that men refuse to be commandeered for the war & unless "Maforch" is subdued soon which is very unlikely there will be something like a collapse on the part of the

Transvaal Govt. & already it is very unpopular on account of the non success of the war against "Mapoch". money is scarce & if it goes on much longer will not unlikely bring about its own ruin. A consummation devoutly to be wished by all lovers of freedom and justice!

The Govt. set up in "Stellaland" part of Mankoroane's country, have been shooting some Englishmen & committing more atrocities according to latest reports. I will now conclude this already too long and rambling letter by urging the necessity of sending a reliable man to the spot to report, before any measures are taken. Govt. cannot decide everything out here in a satisfactory way from Downing Street. If you could get some of the newspaper extracts & articles you published in the paper newspapers & also anything else

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from my letter I think it would go far towards arousing public indignation which is the great lever by which govts are made to do their duty.

Thanking you for the interest you have taken in this matter hoping that a satisfactory settlement may be the result of your labours in the cause of humanity. I remain

Dear Sir
Faithfully Yours
H Stephens

I have no objection to your showing my name to any one who will treat it as confidential but I cannot for obvious reasons allow it to become public at present.

The sooner the Govt curtail the power of the boers the easier it will be, for whenever they are allowed to extend their territory there they bring innumerable troubles. I am almost afraid that the English Govt may take some action that will help the boers. I would rather they did nothing than this as the downfall of boers would mean peace!