

Time Travel on the Court Martial 20th March 1906 at Emjahweni in Mthwalume, Umzumbe

Scenario

People have gathered at Emjahweni in Mthwalume. The Natal Government have informed that a court martial will take place at this field at noon today, 20th March. 36 Zulu leaders/ Izindunas in the Alexander division will be tried because of refusal to pay the new poll tax. The rumour says that they will be accused of sedition, insurrection and threatening to kill Europeans inhabitants.

People are deeply worried. The poll tax act and the fightings have destroyed a lot in the Zulu traditional ways of life. Everybody refused to pay. And then the fighting started. Some days ago the soldiers came to fetch 38 Izindunas in the area. Nobody could stop the armed men. Now the chiefs will be tried. Will they really be accused of these serious crimes? Will they be sentenced to death or sent to prison for many years? Can the government be that cruel?

All the morning people are coming to the field in Mthwalume. There are men and women from all the villages where the imprisoned Izindunas come from. Some have travelled from very early in the morning, others are from the villages close by. People are frustrated, angry and curious. Some sit silent while waiting for the prisoners and the court to appear, but quite many talk and discuss. What will happen to our Izindunas? What will happen to us? Didn't we all refuse to pay? So many things have changed the last forty years, will our ways of life and traditions totally disappear? What can we do?

When people gather there is always someone that start to sing a song or even a small dance, while waiting for the court martial, the accused and the inevitable to happen.

Key Questions Justice?

- Is there any justice? From the court? From the government?
- Will we keep on refusing to pay the tax? Fight more or obey?
- What do we think of the changes in the area over the past few decades? We've lost our land, our stock and our traditional way of life. How do we reclaim our heritage?
- Is there any chance that we can find a way to live together in the future? How?

Roles

The participants are the people from the local communities in "Alexander division" gathering on the field of the court. They belong to the Izindunas Batimane Mlita, Ntelezi Msani, Tshezi Chiliza, Dlewukane Luthuli, Jazi Khwela, Umzilangwe Khawula, Makewu Msani, Bebeni Mpisane, Scabha Shinga and Mnathwa Zuma.

Members of the court martial - President: Lt Col Scott BMR, Lt Col McKay N.C,

Prosecutor: Capt L.J Allison N.C

Administrator Major Rodwell (Howard)

Clerk Lt Col McKay (Ebbe)

10 prisoners: Izindunas Batimane Mlita, Ntelezi Msani, Tshezi Chiliza, Dlewukane Luthuli, Jazi Khwela, Umzilangwe Khawula, Makewu Msani, Bebeni Mpisane, Scabha Shinga and Mnathwa Zuma

Interpreter?

Activities

- Security check
- Sit and talk
- Singing, praise singer, dancing
- Set up three chairs for the court
- Prepare some eating – bread, fruit, sour porridge

Historical costumes

Community members – zulu dresses

Prisoners – beige shirts

Officials – hats, jackets

Time Plan

- 09.30 Welcome (Umzumbe municipality), the history of the site (Howard), what is a Time Travel? (Ebbe)
- 10.00 Dress up, hand out characters
- 10.30 Initiation (dance)
Security check, Sit and wait for the trial. The clerk directs the audience. Discussions, singing, dancing, prepare snacks, sour porridge
- 11.00 The court martial. The court members and the prisoners are called in. The court session
- 11.30 Photo. The prisoners and the court members leave
Reactions from the community members, small eating/drinking
- 12.00 Time Travel ends
Evaluation, discussion
- 12.30 Lunch
- 13.15 Way forward
- 15.00 End

25 October 2010

Howard Msomi, Umzumbe

Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar County Museum, Sweden

Facts

Around the turn of the century 1900 the Africans were a large majority in Natal, the settlers less than 10 % of the population. Natal was a deeply racist society. And there was an increasing aggression towards the African population.

Many Africans became more and more dissatisfied with colonial rule in Natal. They had lost their land to white farmers and sugar cane fields through the English policy of relocation. Many forests were cut down. The traditional way of living in the villages, producing most essentials, was changed into working for wages in the emerging industries, on white farms or the mines at Witwatersrand. Rents, taxes (hut tax, marriage tax, dog tax etc) and prices increased, and the restrictive pass laws were despised. The changes broke up the family, the traditions and the homesteads. There was an erosion of African traditions and values, a racial discrimination and often a violent exercise of authority.

Many settlers were afraid that the African dissatisfaction would turn into a rebellion on a massive scale. They thought it was only a matter of time.

At the turn of the century and white employers in the Colony of Natal had difficulty recruiting black farm workers. One reason was the harsh conditions but also because of increased competition from the gold mines of the Witwaterstrand. The colonial authorities decided to introduce a new tax on every unmarried male, the so-called poll tax, in the Zulu language it was called the head tax, "Khandampondo". The governemnet needed to repair economic setbacks after the war. They wanted to force black men to enter the labour market, to work on the fields and in the industries in order to earn more money and pay the tax.

The Poll Tax Act was passed in the Natal government in August 1905 and announced in September and October the same year. The taxation of unmarried men also challenged the patriarchal authority in the family because previously only the fathers paid the taxes.

The reaction towards the new tax was fierce. Most Africans resisted paying when the first tax collectors came to the villages in January 1906. It turned into a violent uprising in 1906. The Zulus took to arms with pockets of resistance throughout Natal, opposing the Poll Tax. Inkosi Bambatha kaMancinsa was one of the chiefs, homestead north of Greyton, who resisted and started guerrilla attacks. The uprising is often called the Bambatha rebellion. Many people chose rather to die than be forced into economic and political slavery. The mighty and organised British Armies were victorious, adding more suffering to the Zulus, quelling the Rebellion.

Rebellion leaders were arrested, tried and sentenced. A Kangaroo Court was conducted at Emjahweni, uMthwalume, Umzumbe on 20th March 1906. 36 Zulu leaders/Izindunas from the magistrate devision of Alexandra were tried starting from that day. They were charged with sedition, insurrection and threatening to kill European inhabitants. The 36 leaders were lined up at the field in uMthwalume in front of the members of the court martial and a big audience of people from the local communities. The Natal government wanted to showcase its ability to deal with people who defy the government and show the determination of the government to crush any kind of resistance to the new law. After the semi court on the field the prisoners were taken to the local custody. Later on the trial continued, probably also in Durban. All of the 36 accused was found guilty, some were sentenced to death, others was imprisoned from 1-15 years or for life with hard labour, quite many got 25-30 lashes, some were removed to northern Zululand. Some were deported to the island of St Helena in the Atlantic Ocean, like Ntelezi Msani, who died there in 1910.

As a result of crushing of the uprising the family fibre and social fabric of the Zulus, directly and indirectly, were destroyed and defragmented.

To note is that the turn of the century 1900 was also the time when the passive Resistance Movement for Indians started, led by Mahatma Gandhi, Satyagraha.

Notes from the court martial

Proceedings of a General Court Martial assembled at Mtwalumi, Natal on the 20th day of March 1906 by order of Lt Col McKenzie, C.B.C.M.G.V.D commanding McKenzie's Field Force, Natal for the purpose of trying the 36 prisoners as set out in the charge sheet.

President:

Lt Col Scott BMR

Members

Lt Col McKay N.C, Lt Col Shepstone N.C, Major Haring B.M.R, Major Townsend N.C, Prosecutor:
Capt L.J Allison N.C

Prosecutor (Capt L.J Allison N.C): The court martial calls case no: 3518 marked A as per the Natal government gazette dated 9th Feb 1906. The court martial duly appoints the McKenzie's Field Force to administer the martial law.

Major Rodwell Brigade: (Special order): Court Martial: Mtwalumi, Tuesday 20th March 1906. A court martial composed as follows;

Will sit on Wednesday the 21st day of March 1906 at 9:30 am or so soon thereafter as possible to try the prisoners;

1. Batimane Mlita
2. Ntelezi Msani
3. Tshezi Chiliza
4. Ubopeni
5. Ubube
6. Gugu
7. Gampokwe
8. Dlewukane Luthuli

Sub-Izinduna or Izinduna's Messengers

9. Jevuza
10. Palana
11. Sakhile
12. Sofanyana
13. Ntshebe
14. Maquqa
15. Debelwa
16. Jazi, alias Ndoda assumed to be Khwela surname
17. Wata Ka Masingahlali
18. Bagile
19. Veza
20. Meli
21. Umzilangwe Khawula
22. Edwana
23. Dumuquma
24. Magwaza
25. Mqezeza
26. Sizulwa

27. Makewu assumed to be Msani surname
28. Bebeni Mpisane
29. Siphundu
30. Gedleni
31. Maduna
32. Ungobozana
33. Mhleni
34. Mnyovu Kamndandaza
35. Umgeyi
36. Umzimbungane

All are present in the custody, charged with (1) Sedition (2) Insurrection (3) Threatening to kill or murder the Europeans inhabitants of the magistrate division of Alexandra, colony of Natal. The proceedings will be forwarded to the officer commanding for his information and confirmation before sentence is pronounced.

At 10:00 am the court having assembled pursuant to order proceeds to the trial of the prisoners. The Prosecutor puts in the Natal Government Gazette dated 9th Feb 1906. The appointment of Mckenzie's Field force to administer martial law and to appoint Court Martial. Special order by C.N.H Rodwel Brigade Major of Mckenzie's field force to the President and members of the court martial to try the prisoners.

The prisoners were asked individually whether they objected to any of the members of the court martial, the clerk of the court martial or the interpreter and they replied in the negative.

25 October 2010
Howard Msomi, Umzumbe
Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar County Museum, Sweden

Props and costumes

From PS 1905 Time Travel:

50 cups, 20 liter water containers, jugs, baskets, mats, 15 beige shirts, 15 zulu women dresses,
5 small knives, European men dresses

List of Zulu names

Stickers

A note book and a pen

Swedes buy: Bread, fruit

Swedes bring container with water

Howard brings a drum, two assegais, three old chairs, sour porridge, traditional Zulu clothing,
European hats/shirts (if possible)....

Participants bring traditional Zulu clothing (if they have)