

# CONFRONTATION WITH THE POLICE: THE ISRAELITES OF ENOCH MGIJIMA AND THE BULHOEK MASSACRE OF 24 MAY 1921

## ORIGINS OF THE ISRAELITES MOVEMENT

The Israelites movement in South Africa dates back to 1918, but it was originally founded by an American negro William Saunders Crowdy in 1896 at Kansas.<sup>1</sup> Later in his life in a series of revelations he claimed to have discovered the "stone of truth" mentioned in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, which contained ancestral data concerning the origins of the negro race. Black men, he maintained were descended from the lost tribes of Israel and were Jews. Although the movement incorporated certain aspects of the New Testament theology, the Old Testament doctrine and rituals became central in the formulation of his dogma. For instance the church adopted a Jewish calendar. Furthermore it observed Jewish feast days, the Jewish sabbath, and the Jewish central religious festival namely the Passover. This event is celebrated by Jews as a reminder of how God brought them out of Egypt. An angel of death flew over Egypt, killing all the first born sons in each family. The families of the Jews (Israelites) were spared. They had previously been warned by God to mark the doors of their homes with blood to show who they were. At the time they were slaves in Egypt, and the killing of the first born sons was meant as a punishment for their captors, the Egyptians.

Crowdy called his movement The Church of God and Saints of Christ. He constructed the central pillars of his church on the following.

- (1) The Church of God and Saints of Christ was God's representative on earth (1 Cor: 1-2);

- (2) wine was forbidden in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper;
- (3) unleavened bread and water symbolized Christ's body and blood;
- (4) foot-washing was practised in receiving new members or members from other places (John 13: 1-23);
- (5) the Lord's Prayer and
- (6) the Ten Commandments were strictly adhered to;
- (7) and a holy kiss between members was a greeting and a symbol of acceptance of the Holy Spirit (Romans 16: 6 and John 20: 22).<sup>2</sup>

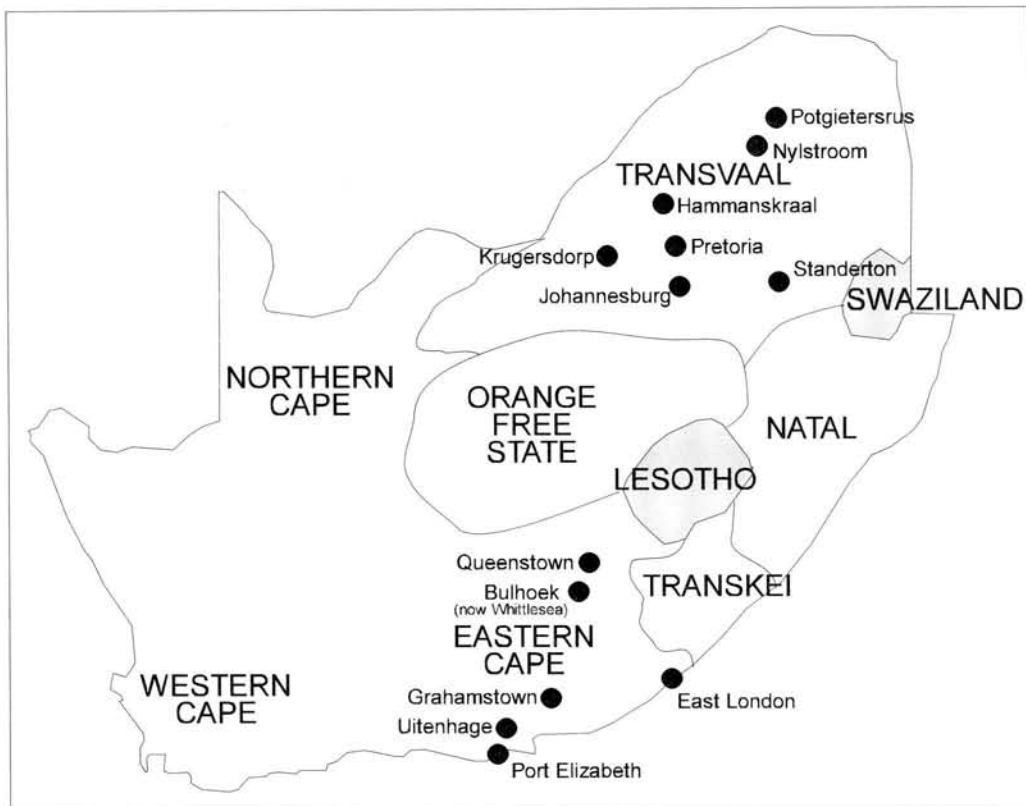
The church enjoyed a lot of support within the United States of America (USA) in Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Connecticut as the main centres for support. When he passed away in 1908, his church had 50 branches in the USA and had spread beyond the USA. Before he died, Crowdy targeted South Africa for his missionary work, but his hopes were dashed in 1902 when he was denied a permit to visit South Africa. He then decided to send Albert Christian, an Afro-American sailor to establish the church in South Africa. Christian on his arrival in South Africa managed to establish churches throughout the Eastern Cape as well as in the Transvaal (now Gauteng).<sup>3</sup> After Christian left South Africa around 1905, the church was left without a leader that could be credited with the title of a prophet, which was the highest rank within the church.

The vacuum for a prophet within the Church of God and Saints of Christ was later filled by John Msi-kinya, an African born circa 1867, in the Fort Beau-

<sup>1</sup> Central Archives Depot, State Archives, Pretoria (hereafter CAD): Archives of the Minister of Native Affairs (hereafter NA), NA, 420\13\387 Israelites, Rev P. Matshaka - Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 10 January 1921.

<sup>2</sup> R. Edgar, "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgiijima, The Israelites, and the background to the Bulhoek Massacre", *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15 (3), 1982, pp. 413-414.

<sup>3</sup> R. Edgar, "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgiijima, the Israelites and the background to the Bulhoek Massacre", *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15 (3), 1982, p.414.



*South Africa, showing key locations mentioned*

fort area. Originally Msikinya came from a Wesleyan Methodist background. After completing his schooling he and his brother Henry, joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church and went to the United States on church bursaries. John attended the Lincoln University and came under the influence of William Crowdy and became a member of the Church of God and Saints of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

On John's return to South Africa in 1908 he was appointed the first Bishop of the Church of God and Saints of Christ in South Africa. He preached in and around Uitenhage, Albany, Victoria East, Grahamstown, Peddie and Queenstown area. Msikinya encountered problems in spreading the Church of God and Saints of Christ. In August 1910, for example he and nine of his followers were sentenced to three months hard labour in Grahams-town for vagrancy. Nevertheless, with the assistance of Samuel and Peter Matshaka the church managed to grow.

After Msikinya preached in Queenstown, Joseph Tuso, a school master, invited Samuel Matshaka from Healdtown to Kamastone to discuss the church and its doctrines. The people of Kamastone were excited about knowing more about the church and before he left Kamastone, he baptized the first con-

verts in the area in 1912, namely Joseph Tuso, Victor Ndlangisa, John Ntlangweni and Enoch Mgijima.<sup>5</sup> The latter was a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church where he attracted a large personal following amongst Africans. Enoch Mgijima, was soon appointed Evangelist or Evangelist in Chief of the church in Kamastone. The decision to appoint him could have been influenced by his personal following. In April 1913, the first Passover was observed at Kamastone around Enoch's home, and it lasted seven days, with over 1 000 people attending.

### THE BIRTH OF THE ISRAELITE SECT

Following the death of Prophet John Msikinya in 1914, a struggle for leadership within the Church of God and Saints of Christ erupted between Enoch Mgijima and Peter Matshaka. Due to his personal following, Enoch was from the beginning at an advantage of winning the race for the leadership of the church. Although Peter Matshaka had been a member of the church since it was established in South Africa by Christian, he did not command any personal following. The church was then divided into two groups, with Enoch Mgijima as the leader of the church in the Queenstown district. The other group was led by Peter Matshaka and established its headquarters

<sup>4</sup> CAD: NA, 420\13\387, Memorandum Office of the Criminal Investigation Department Eastern Cape Division - The Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Grahamstown, Native Unrest at Kamastone, 17 December 1920.

<sup>5</sup> CAD: NA, 420\13\387 Israelites, Rev. P. Matshaka-Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 10 January 1921. For background information on Enoch Mgijima see: R. Edgar, "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgijima, The Israelites and the background to the Bulhoek Massacre", *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15 (3), 1982 and D. Anthony, "South African Peoples History", *Radical History Review* 46 (7), 1990, p.415.



Enoch Mgijima

SAP Archives

at Uitenhage. Enoch Mgijima assumed the title of Prophet amongst his followers.<sup>6</sup>

Since 1907, while still a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Enoch claimed to have had visions about the approaching end of the world. On 19 April 1907, while Enoch was hunting an angel appeared to him and explained to him that war was coming and when the final cataclysm came, Mgijima was told, nothing would be spared except those who followed the name of God.<sup>7</sup> After joining the Church of God and Saints of Christ, he still firmly believed in this vision.

After 1914, he continually brought two of his other revelations (visions) into his preaching. The first was of a stone rolling down the mountain and crushing the people at its foot, while the second was of two white goats fighting, with a baboon standing by and watching them, until it suddenly intervened and broke them both. In his interpretation of the second vision, the goats represented the two white groups of South Africa and the baboon the black people.<sup>8</sup>

Enoch's visions disturbed the parent church in the USA. The Church was alarmed by his visions of a

violent, disruptive end of the world which deviated from Crowdy's more pacific prophecies. In particular, the church was disturbed by his visions which appeared to be directed against whites. He was asked to renounce his visions by the mother church from the USA, but he refused and was excommunicated according to the church constitution "for preaching priverse doctrine" in 1918.<sup>9</sup>

After he was excommunicated from the church, his followers became to be popularly known as the "Israelites". The name Israelites can possibly have been derived from Crowdy's contention that black people were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. Robert Edgar argues that Enoch could have identified his Israelites with the biblical Israelites because he could draw many parallels between them and his own Hlubi ancestors. Like the Israelites, Hlubi had been forced into exile during the Mfecane and suffered many deprivations in their migrations before finding a home and both had similar ritual practices and social structures.<sup>10</sup>

The Passover which was the main religious festival of the Church of God and Saints of Christ continued to be the main religious festival of the Israelites. It was observed every year in April at Kamastone around the Prophet Enoch Mgijima's home. The Israelites further develop their own distinguished lifestyle amongst themselves. It was compulsory for all Israelite men to wear frock coats and collars every day and the clean shaving of their faces and heads was compulsory. It was also compulsory for women to wear bows of ribbon and other materials on their heads. The carrying of firearms was forbidden because it was held that the ancient Israelites did not carry them when journeying to the promised land. Despite this it was incumbent upon certain office bearers in the church to carry swords.<sup>11</sup>

## OBEYING THE LAW

It is necessary to give some background information about Kamastone in order to understand the laws and regulations that governed it. This will further help to place the squatting of the Israelites at Kamastone into proper perspective. Kamastone was established in 1854 by the Cape Government in the Queenstown district.<sup>12</sup> In 1874, due to complaints by other Africans to the Cape Government that Africans from elsewhere were squatting in the

<sup>6</sup> *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol.1, p.539.

<sup>7</sup> R. Edgar, "The prophet motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the background to the Bulhoek massacre", *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15 (3), 1982, p.409.

<sup>8</sup> W.K. Hancock, *Smuts: The fields of force*, vol.2, p.45.

<sup>9</sup> CAD: NA, 420\13\387 Israelites, P. Matshaka - Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 10 January 1921.

<sup>10</sup> R. Edgar, "The Prophet motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the background to the Bulhoek massacre", *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15 (3), 1982, p. 417.

<sup>11</sup> State Library, Pretoria: Newspaper Collection, *Cape Times*, 31 May 1921.

<sup>12</sup> Kamastone was named after chief Kama, a staunch Wesleyan Methodist and William Shepstone, a Wesleyan Missionary.

settlement, it was decided that those who had already settled there should be granted firm titles for the piece of land that they owned. The location was then divided into eight sub-locations, one of which was Bulhoek.<sup>13</sup> It was surveyed into arable lots, building lots and a commonage but it still remained Crown land. The Bulhoek commonage was subjected to the Native Location's Act, no 37 of 1884, which forbade squatting, building or damaging.<sup>14</sup>

Enoch Mgijima was one of the title holders at Bulhoek. Following the split within the church in 1914, his followers increased considerably. This could have been due to the fact that Enoch claimed that God revealed the approaching end of the world only to him and that those who followed his church would be saved. A building was erected by his followers on one of the privately owned lots at Bulhoek as a "tabernacle" for their religious observances. The building was seldom if ever used, the reason being that it was not large enough to accommodate their increased numbers, and instead a very large marquee was used for conducting their services.<sup>15</sup>

As his followers continued to increase, he realized that even the large marquee could not accommodate all who came to participate in the annual Passover. He decided to approach the local body of the Shiloh Mission Station to obtain permission to hold the Passover on the commonage of their station. The Shiloh Mission Station granted Enoch and his followers permission to hold the 1917 Passover at their station.<sup>16</sup>

During the Passover, one of Enoch's most ardent young followers, Christian Mdudu, ignored mission station regulations which stipulated that only evangelists, could lead church meetings. Enoch was asked to admonish Mdudu, but he refused arguing that he was acting through the spirit of God.<sup>17</sup> The actions of Mdudu and Enoch's refusal to admonish him led to the refusal of Enoch's application in 1918 to hold his Passover feast at their station.

Enoch was greatly disappointed. With his knowl-

edge of all regulations governing Kamastone, he then approached the Superintendent of Native Affairs at Kamastone G.E. Nightingale through his lawyer, F. Brinkman of Queenstown, for permission to hold his Passover services on the commonage of the Kamastone sub-location.<sup>18</sup> The Superintendent of Native Affairs, after consultation with the Senior Magistrate of Queenstown E.C.A. Welsh granted permission on condition that all churchgoers would immediately disperse after attending the services. Only temporary huts were constructed to accommodate visitors. The Passover was held and after three weeks all visitors duly dispersed.<sup>19</sup>

In 1919 a similar application was received from Enoch by the Superintendent of Native Affairs at Kamastone. He rejected the application on account of the objections of the lot-holders of the Kamastone sub-location. Enoch then made a second application, and enquired if there would be any objection to the Passover being held at Ntabelanga in the Bulhoek sub-location.<sup>20</sup> The lot-holders of Ntabelanga raised no objection, and permission was granted for the Passover to be held at Ntabelanga in April 1919 on the same conditions as the previous year.<sup>21</sup> After the Passover all visitors returned to their homes and all temporary houses were broken down.

### APPROACHING END OF THE WORLD PREDICTIONS VERSUS OPEN DEFIANCE OF THE LAW?

Towards the end of 1919, during a mid-day service Enoch Mgijima stood in front of his tabernacle and uttered the words: "*Judah, Efrayime, Joseph, nezalwane* (and others)". According to a translated version of the praise Judah meant the Hlubi people; Efrayime the Xhosa people and Joseph all other African groups.<sup>22</sup> To his followers these words signalled them throughout the country to come together at Ntabelanga to wait for the approaching end of the world, which according to Mgijima was going to take place in 1920. It was alleged that his

<sup>13</sup> The other sub-locations were Zangqokwe, Kamastone, Didimana, Romans Laagte, Mceula, Hukuwa and Upper Didima.

<sup>14</sup> *Interim and Final Reports of the Native Affairs Commission and Telegram from Commissioner, South African Police relative to "Israelites" at Bulhoek and occurrences in May 1921*. Cape Town, June 1921. p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Documentation Service Directorate, South African National Defence Force Archives, Pretoria (hereafter SANDF Archives): Archives of the Secretary of Defence (hereafter DC), DC, Box 451, File 1\52002 Recalcitrant Israelite: Natives illegal squatting on Bulhoek location, Memorandum of the Superintendent of Natives, Kamastone - Resident Magistrate Queenstown, 23 August 1920.

<sup>16</sup> *Interim and Final Reports*. p.2.

<sup>17</sup> R. Edgar, "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelite and the background to the Bulhoek Massacre", *International Journal of African Historical studies* 15 (3), 1982, p.410.

<sup>18</sup> East London Museum, East London, (hereafter ELM): The Bulhoek tragedy illustrated, the full story of the Israelite settlement at Ntabelanga near Queenstown, *Daily Dispatch* nd, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> SANDF Archives, DC, Box 451, File 1\52002, Recalcitrant Israelite, Memorandum Office of the Superintendent of Queenstown - Resident Magistrate, Queenstown, 23 August 1920.

<sup>20</sup> The sub-location Ntabelanga got its name from the mountain Ntabelanga (the mountain of the Rising Sun) located next to the sub-location.

<sup>21</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, file 1\52002, Magistrate E.C. Welsh, Queenstown - Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria. Israelites at Ntabelanga Kei and Bulhoek sub Location, 27 August 1920.

<sup>22</sup> CAD: NA, file 29\52002, Natives Miscellaneous, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 18 September 1920.

followers throughout the country heard and understood his message and began to move to Ntabelanga.<sup>23</sup>

Many of his followers who responded to his call, came from as far as the Transvaal, from areas such as Pretoria, Standerton, Hammanskraal, Potgietersrust, Krugersdorp, Johannesburg and Nylstroom.<sup>24</sup> The majority of those from the Transvaal were Northern Sothos from the Waterburg area in the Nylstroom district where they were commonly known as "Ba halaleli ba Israele".<sup>25</sup> On their arrival at Ntabelanga, Enoch's followers started to erect permanent houses on the commonage without authorization from the Superintendent of Native Affairs at Kamastone.

Early in 1920, while inspecting the locations, Nightingale the Superintendent for Natives at Kamastone, found that Enoch Mgijima's followers were squatting on the commonage at Ntabelanga. Nightingale approached Enoch Mgijima for an explanation. He stated that the squatters on the commonage were people who were unable to attend the Passover services in 1919, and that they had come for a special service.<sup>26</sup> Enoch gave the Superintendent an assurance that as soon as the special service was over, they would disperse. He added: "I, Enoch, know perfectly well that I have no other land except that registered in my name, and that I have no right to give any people permission to live on land which does not belong to me"<sup>27</sup>

Enoch further requested the Superintendent to allow the strangers squatting at Ntabelanga to remain until after the Passover, as their homes were very far away. The request was granted on condition that all strangers would leave Ntabelanga after the Passover.

Enoch Mgijima now faced a dilemma. He had called all his followers to Bulhoek to await the approaching end of the world and they occupied Crown land without authorization. He did not inform Nightingale that they were waiting for the approaching end of the world vision he had had. Instead he told him that they would disperse after the Passover. He did not want to lose the trust and respect of his followers by calling them to Ntabelanga and then sending them back when questioned by Nightin-

gale. He was also living a luxurious life as his followers were treating him like a king. Mgijima decided to adopt delaying tactics. The Passover of 1920 was held in April as usual but extended until May 1920. At the end of May, however, dispersal did not take place as agreed with the Superintendent of Natives at Kamastone.

At the beginning of June 1920, Nightingale received reports that Enoch's followers had not yet left Ntabelanga. He decided to visit Ntabelanga on 8 June 1920, to ask Enoch why his followers were still at Bulhoek. Enoch's reply to Nightingale was that although many of his followers had left some had remained for various reasons such as sickness or shortage of money to pay their railway fares back home. Others had also come in since the Passover for a special service.<sup>28</sup>

He further stated that the special Passover would be held on 18 June 1920, and gave the assurance that after the service every single person who had no right to be at Bulhoek, would leave. In July the headman of Kamastone complained to Nightingale that the followers of Enoch continue to erect new houses on the commonage while newcomers were still pouring into Bulhoek. Nightingale then visited Bulhoek to investigate the matter. Enoch's followers informed him that he had ordered them to construct dwellings to house the newcomers. Enoch Mgijima avoided meeting the Superintendent until he was arrested on 24 May 1921.<sup>29</sup> Nightingale could see that Enoch was deceiving him, and consequently, lost faith in him.

Realizing this the Superintendent decided to adopt other ways of pressurizing the strangers to leave Ntabelanga. He handed a list of the names of the strangers to the Magistrate of Queenstown who requested the public prosecutor to take the necessary proceedings against them under the provisions of Act 37 of 1884, for squatting on Crown Land and others under Government Notice no 1494, dated 5 December 1906, for erecting buildings on the commonage without permission.<sup>30</sup> Twenty summonses in all were issued and handed to the South African Police (SAP) to be serviced. However, on arrival at Ntabelanga the SAP met with a great deal of resistance from the Israelites there and succeeded in serving only eight out of 20 summonses.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup> ELM: A. Trench, "Israelite gathering aims to right historical distortions", *Daily Dispatch*, 13 December 1991.

<sup>24</sup> South African Police Archives, Pretoria, (hereafter SAP Archives): Box 4202, File 6\850\21, Israelites at Bulhoek. Particulars of a rough registration of Israelites women and children held at Bulhoek. 25 May 1921.

<sup>25</sup> CAD: NA, 420\13\387 Israelites Queenstown: Native Affairs Commissioner, Nylstroom - Minister of Native Affairs, Pretoria, Natives of Church of God and Saints of Christ Exodus from Waterberg to Cape Province, 11 November 1920.

<sup>26</sup> ELM: The Bulhoek tragedy, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> ELM: The Bulhoek tragedy p.5.

<sup>28</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 1\52002, Magistrate E.C. Welsh, Queenstown - Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria: Israelites at Ntabelanga Kei and Bulhoek sub-location, 27 August 1920.

<sup>29</sup> ELM: The Bulhoek tragedy, p.6.

<sup>30</sup> SANDF Archives: DC: Box 451, Memorandum from the office of the Superintendent of Natives - Resident Magistrate, Queenstown, 23 August 1920.

<sup>31</sup> SANDF Archives: DC: Box 451, File 4\52002, Telegram from Compol, Pretoria - Decompol, Grahamstown, 6 September 1920.

Life became very difficult for the Israelite squatters at Ntabelanga. They were without means of support as Mgijima had instructed them to dispose of all their movable and immovable property as the Angel Gabriel was about to descend and destroy the world. Stealing stock from neighbouring farmers and Africans became the only way of survival for them.<sup>32</sup>

The Department of Justice decided that every effort should be made to enforce the law at Bulhoek. Nightingale was instructed to frame a list of all people in the Bulhoek location. On the 20 October 1920, Nightingale, accompanied by two constables of the SAP, visited Ntabelanga, where he met the representatives of the Israelites outside their village. After explaining the instructions from the Native Affairs Department in regard to the register, he was told by Charles Mgijima, a brother of Enoch that they could not allow their names to be taken by him as their names were written in God's book and as God was greater than man, they were powerless to give him their names.<sup>33</sup>

The Department of Justice decided to act forcefully to obtain a list of all strangers at Ntabelanga so that summonses could be issued. The Senior Magistrate of Queenstown, E.C.A. Welsh, was instructed to obtain the list. On 8 December 1920 he visited Ntabelanga accompanied by a force of 100 Policemen under the command of Major Hutchons of Grahamstown. A deputation of the Israelites came forward to meet them. After the magistrate informed them about the purpose of their registration, they asked for two hours to hold a consultation amongst themselves. They returned with the message that their prayers to God had not been answered, and that they could not leave the area which they referred to as Holy Ground. It was pointed out to them that they occupied Crown Lands, and that the Government demanded them to move. The Israelite deputation stated that they could not acknowledge the Government's authority in the matter, and that they were God's people.

The Magistrate together with the SAP tried to force their way into the location and register the inhabitants. The Israelites became more hostile and commenced shouting that they occupied God's (Jehovah's) land, and they defied the Government to remove them. The women and children were

equally aggressive as the men, and kept up an attitude of defiance in front of the force of 100 Police. The Magistrate and Major Hutchons saw how impossible it was to enforce registration, and decided to withdraw a short distance, where the Police camp was pitched for the night. The Magistrate and Major Hutchons returned to Queenstown, leaving Captain Whitaker in charge of the Police force, pending further instructions from headquarters in Pretoria.<sup>34</sup>

During the night the Israelites pitched their camp 25 yards away from the Police camp. Armed with assegais, knobkerries and miscellaneous home made weapons, they commenced shouting at the Police, practically begging for a fight. The situation became so critical that Captain Whitaker saw that he either had to fight or withdraw his force. The leaders of the Israelites then demanded his withdrawal. He hurriedly withdrew his force to the adjoining farm called Welkom leaving all their supplies behind.<sup>35</sup>

The news of the Police incident caused panic amongst both white farmers and surrounding Africans. Meanwhile Captain Whitaker had requested reinforcements from Queenstown. The Queenstown members of the Defence Rifle Association, Comrades of the Great War and the Automobile Club responded to the call for reinforcements to the farm Welkom. On their arrival at Welkom, Major Hutchons informed them that the Police would maintain a defensive position, pending reinforcements from Pretoria. He further stated that the situation was very difficult because they were dealing with people who were religious fanatics, and that they became irrational when addressed by representatives of the Government.<sup>36</sup> He also visited all chiefs, headmen and farmers around Bulhoek and guaranteed them safety, as farmers had earlier threatened to take the law into their own hands.<sup>37</sup>

In the meantime, headquarters had declined to meet the request for reinforcements and intimated that the people involved were religious fanatics and that bloodshed should be avoided. The volunteers consequently withdrew to Queenstown. The Police remained in the vicinity to patrol the area.<sup>38</sup>

The situation at Ntabelanga was worsened by an incident involving John Mattushek, of Thornhill farm

<sup>32</sup> CAD: NA, 420\13\387 Israelites Queenstown, Memorandum Office of the criminal Investigation Department, Eastern Cape Division, Grahamstown - The Deputy Commissioner, South African Police, Grahamstown, 5 November 1921.

<sup>33</sup> ELM: The Bulhoek tragedy, p.6.

<sup>34</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 4\52002 Recalcitrant Israelites, Telegram from Decompol, Grahamstown - Compol, Pretoria, 9 December 1920.

<sup>35</sup> State Library, Pretoria: Newspaper Collection, "Government Defied", *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 December 1920.

<sup>36</sup> CAD: NA, file 29\52002, Natives Miscellaneous; *Daily Dispatch*, 10 December 1920.

<sup>37</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 16\52002 Recalcitrant Israelites, Telegram from Decompol, Grahamstown - Compol, Pretoria, 13 December 1920.

<sup>38</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 18\52002 Recalcitrant Israelites, Telegram Decompol Pretoria - Compol Queenstown, 12 December 1920.



Mr Klopper, Mattushek's servant

SAP Archives

next to Ntabelanga, his servant Klopper and three Israelites namely John Kelenjane, Charles Dondolo and Philip Mhlanane. The three Israelites attempted to kill Mattushek on 14 December 1920 while sent to his farm by Charles Mjijima to buy forage. Mattushek managed to kill Charles Dondolo with his revolver while his servant Klopper wounded John Kelenjane. Philip Mhlanane escaped. Following the incident most farmers around Ntabelanga moved their families into Queenstown for fear of retaliation by the Israelites. Mattushek and his servant were arrested and charged with assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm and with culpable homicide. It was stated that the farmer killed Dondolo with his revolver, while the latter used a shot gun with fatal effects upon Kelenjane. A preliminary hearing was taken in Queenstown, and it was decided that the trial of Mattushek and Klopper would take place at the last session of Circuit Court in East London in April 1920.<sup>39</sup>

When the case was called on, it was found that the principal Israelite witnesses had failed to appear. On the application of the prosecuting counsel (Mr F.B. van der Riet), Judge Gane granted a postponement of the case until the following Circuit, and subsequently a warrant was issued for the arrest of the defaulting witnesses. In connection with this case certain correspondence took place between the authorities and Enoch Mjijima in regard to sub-

poenas. In a letter dated 16 April 1920, Lance-Sergeant Marais, SAP, wrote to the Public Prosecutor, Queenstown to subpoena C. Mjijima and others: "I beg to inform you that I have handed letter and subpoenas to Charles Mjijima personally, as the other three cannot be found anywhere. He promised he would hand same to them. He also informed me that he would not appear, as he does not see the necessity to do so, as the evidence already given is clear and sufficient to convict the accused. The one who escaped the day of the affray declares that since Mattushek caused blood to flow, they want Mattushek's blood".<sup>40</sup>

Enoch Mjijima wrote to the Magistrate of Queenstown on 30 March 1921 stating that: "I am informed by my brother, Charles Mjijima, that he received a letter from the Public Prosecutor, Queenstown,...I don't see why Charles Mjijima should be called to give evidence upon second firing, which killed Charles Dondolo and wounded John Kelenjane is quite clear, and also the evidence of Philip Mhlanane taken by you in the Court at Queenstown, who was the only man to escape, was satisfactory. Above all the statements of other witnesses were taken by the Police while the dead body of Saint Dondolo was still lying on the ground. Charles Mjijima was not there, neither does he know Mattushek and the two others..."<sup>41</sup>

The Israelite witnesses John Kelenjane, Ebenezer Hjesa, Solomon Madagala, and Charles Mjijima defied the law by refusing to attend the Circuit Court. Following the Circuit Court episode, the Government decided that steps should be taken to force the Israelites to obey the law. The following notice was issued:

*"To the native people upon the Bulhoek Location styling themselves Israelites, and to all other South African people whether black or white. The Government desires it to be known that, while it has treated the childish claims of the natives in the district of Queenstown, calling themselves Israelites with patience and indulgence in the hope that commonsense and intelligence may prevail over folly and superstition, yet it will not tolerate any defiance in the course of law. The courts are the resorts of all men, both white and black, against all oppressions, or alleged oppression, by the government or by individuals. The courts of law must be and shall be respected by all. The Government, therefore, has noted with regret that certain individuals have disregarded the order of the Circuit Court at East London to appear as witnesses in a case of which Europeans are charged with having*

<sup>39</sup> CAD: NA, File 50\896, Natives Miscellaneous :Disturbances at Queenstown in connection with a Native sect known as Israelites, Rand Daily Mail, 15 December 1920.

<sup>40</sup> ELM: The Bulhoek Tragedy, p.11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

shot a native. The Judge has been compelled to issue a warrant, for the arrest of these witnesses, whose failure to appear made it necessary for the court to postpone the trial, at great inconvenience to the persons concerned, and the Government desires it to be known that those persons who have disregard or may disregard the order of the Courts must not look for any indulgence, and that steps will be taken to carry out the law."<sup>42</sup>

Native Affairs Department was still convinced that a peaceful solution could be found for the illegal squatting of the Israelites at Ntabelanga and their continued defiance of the law. It decided to intervene from national level. A delegation consisting of General J.L. van Deventer (Union Defence Force), Colonel T.C. Truter (Commissioner of the South African Police), and E. Barrett (Secretary for Native Affairs) met with the leaders of the Israelites in Queenstown to persuade them to leave Ntabelanga peacefully. Mr Barrett invited influential Africans namely J. Tengo Jabavu (Editor of *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the leading African newspaper in the Eastern Cape); Rev F. Xabanisa of Idutywa, Chief Veldtman of Butterworth and M. Pelem of Queenstown to accompany the Government's delegation to a meeting with the Israelites.

On 17 December 1920, the Government's delegation together with the invited Africans met the Israelites' delegation on the farm Mc Comb's Drift near Bulhoek. The Israelites were led by Charles Mgijima and Rev Josiah Kekana, the head of the Church at Nylstroom.<sup>43</sup> The representatives of the Israelites however refused to discuss the issue of their illegal squatting at Bulhoek, maintaining that they could only discuss the issue with the Prime Minister, General J.C. Smuts.<sup>44</sup>

General Smuts was however not available as he was involved in a hotly contested by election, and he sent his newly appointed Native Affairs Commission consisting of A.W. Roberts, Dr C.T. Loram and General A.S. Lemmer. Negotiations with the Israelites was their major task.<sup>45</sup>

The Magistrate of Queenstown informed the Israelites that the Commission would visit Ntabelanga on 6 April 1921. After receiving the message that the Commission had been sent by General Smuts to represent him, arrangements were made to meet

the Commission in a tent in the location. Enoch Mgijima however did not attend the meeting with the Commission. The Israelites were represented by Charles Mgijima, Edward Mpateni and Barrington Mgijima (nephew of the Prophet). During the meeting the members of the Commission pointed out that the present state of affairs whereby the law was being undermined by members of the Israelite sect could not be allowed to continue at Ntabelanga. They requested the Israelites to discuss such matters as the boundaries of their settlement at Bulhoek, the number of houses required for worship and the length of time of their residence there.<sup>46</sup> The Israelite delegation stood firm in the conviction that "they wished to obey the law of the land, but Jehovah was more powerful than the law and they feared to offend him by disregarding his wishes and obeying the laws of men."<sup>47</sup>

Since the Government was severely criticized by non-Israelites and European farmers living in the vicinity of Bulhoek for allowing the Israelites to settle at Ntabelanga, the Commission also visited the non-Israelites and European farmers and assured them that the law would be enforced at Ntabelanga.<sup>48</sup> The Commission arranged another meeting with the Israelites on 11 May 1921. The Israelite delegation stated during the meeting that if the Government could not grant their request to be allowed to remain in peace at Ntabelanga, the matter was simply an issue between God and the Government and that they preferred to follow God.<sup>49</sup>

Further discussions was declared useless by the leaders of the Israelites and the Commission. It became clear to the latter that the Israelites wanted nothing more than a confrontation with the Police. The members of the Commission agreed unanimously to send a telegram to the Department of Justice recommending that a Police force should be sent to Ntabelanga to remove the illegal squatters. The commission further stated that such a force should be sufficiently strong to intimidate the Israelites and to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.<sup>50</sup>

Following the failure of the members of the Commission to persuade the Israelites to leave Ntabelanga, the attitude of the Israelites came under heavy attack from different quarters. On 17 May 1921, *Imvo Zabantsundu* newspaper took a firm stand against the Israelites. It urged the Govern-

<sup>42</sup> ELM: The Bulhoek Tragedy, p.11.

<sup>43</sup> CAD: NA, File 29\331 Natives: Miscellaneous, Disturbances at Queenstown in connection with a Native sect known as Israelite, Rough notes of a meeting held at Mc Comb's Drift near Bulhoek Location, Queenstown, 17 December 1920.

<sup>44</sup> CAD: NA, File 29\332, Natives Miscellaneous, *Queenstown Daily Representative*, 18 December 1920.

<sup>45</sup> W. K. Hancock, *Smuts*, p.93.

<sup>46</sup> *Interim and final reports*, p.5.

<sup>47</sup> *Interim and final reports*, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> CAD: NA, File 29\52002, Natives Miscellaneous, *Queenstown Daily Representative*, 9 April 1921.

<sup>49</sup> *Final reports of Native Affairs Commission*, p.8.

<sup>50</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 40\52002, Recalcitrant Israelites, Telegram from Indaba, Queenstown - Native Affairs Department, Cape Town, 12 May 1921.



ment to ensure that the law was enforced at Bulhoek.<sup>51</sup> On the same date the General Council of the Transkeian Territories passed a resolution criticizing the Israelites and calling on the Government to enforce the law, without bloodshed if possible.<sup>52</sup> *The (Johannesburg) Star*, argued that force should be used to uphold the law at Ntabelanga.<sup>53</sup> The South African Native National Congress (which later became the African National Congress) urged the Israelites to return to their places of origin and avoid unnecessary bloodshed with the Police.

Recognizing that the Government was now preparing to use force against the defiant Israelites, a small self-appointed deputation visited Bulhoek on 14 May 1921, endeavouring to move Enoch to respect the law of the land. They were Rev K.S. Solilo of the Queenstown Anglican Church; J.D. Ngojo organiser of the South African Native Congress; C.M. Dantu, and S.B. Matshikiza both well known local men. They requested Enoch to let his followers leave Ntabelanga. In reply Enoch stated:

*"... Before replying to you for the purpose for which you came, and informing us of the consequences that will follow unless law is obeyed, and to prevent unnecessary trouble and perhaps bloodshed, I would like to ask you, is this the first time you have learned of this trouble? If so what steps have you taken. Why did you not come before to give us your friendly advice. Why on the last minute when we are all aware of the presence of the military, fully armed against us, waiting behind you at Queenstown. I would just like to give you a bit of history of myself, from the commencement. I was a sinner and a drunkard, and I do not say today I am a perfect man, but I am continually praying God to forgive me all my sins and to keep me holy. God revealed himself unto me in a vision, asking me if I hear a thundering sound. I heard the sound, but I did not see. God informed me that the thundering sound was a big war on earth, which will cause the destruction of all sinners, and he will only save those who obey his Commandments. The past Great War was only the commencement of the realization of the vision.... That is why I, a sinner, am continually praying with those who are my followers. I am not here to fight anybody or to cause any bloodshed, but if the finger of God has pointed that this must be the place, no earthly forces can prevent it. I did*

*not call this gathering here, every follower of mine came of his own free will. It may be the fulfilment of the scriptures that say 'All my people will gather together for that journey to the promised land,' and if this is the place, Bulhoek, no earthly power can interfere...".*<sup>54</sup>

This in actual fact was untrue since he had called on them to await the end of the world at Ntabelanga.

## MOBILIZING THE POLICE AT BULHOEK

After the Department of Justice received the telegram from the Commission, preparations were made by the South African Police and by the Union Defence Force to assemble a strong force to enforce the law at Bulhoek. The Union Defence Force suggested the use of two aeroplanes to intimidate the Israelites.<sup>55</sup> The Director of Air Services (now the South African Air Force), Colonel P. van Ryneveld, suggested that the aircraft should circle over the Israelites and then drop the bombs widely and safely round them to intimidate them.<sup>56</sup>

The idea of using aircraft and the dropping of bombs was later abandoned as it was felt that a mere spectacular display would only strengthen the Israelites in their determination to resist authority. It was further felt that the use of bombs would endanger the lives of men, women and children.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile Police from the Northern Cape (79 men); Orange Free State (179); Transvaal (267); Transkei (40); Natal (168); Eastern Cape (170) and Western Cape (90) were mobilized.<sup>58</sup> They assembled at the Queenstown show grounds which had been transformed into a huge military camp. The force assembled consisted of 35 officers and 993 policemen. Colonel T.C. Truter, CMG, from Pretoria was in charge while General P. van Deventer of the Union Defence Force was sent to advise Colonel Truter. Lieutenant Gordon Grey, from the South African Mounted Rifles was in charge of artillery, while Surgeon Major Welsh from the South Africa Medical Services was in charge of medical personnel.<sup>59</sup>

The Israelites, aware of the force assembling at

<sup>51</sup> CAD: NA, File 29\52002, Natives Miscellaneous; *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 17 May 1921.

<sup>52</sup> CAD: NA, File 29\52002, Natives Miscellaneous; *Daily Dispatch*, 18 May 1921.

<sup>53</sup> CAD: NA, File 29\52002; *The Star*, 19 May 1921.

<sup>54</sup> *The Nongqai* 12 (7), July 1921, p. 337. see also CAD: NA, File 29\52002; *Queenstown Daily Representative*, 16 May 1921.

<sup>55</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 17\52002 Recalcitrant Israelite, Telegram from Bourne, Defence Department, Cape Town - Defence Chief, Pretoria, 12 May 1921.

<sup>56</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 18\52002, Recalcitrant Israelites, Telegram from Secretary for Defence, Cape Town - Minister for Defence, Pretoria, 13 May 1921.

<sup>57</sup> CAD: NA, File 420\13\387, Israelites Queenstown, undated Memorandum, entitled dropping the suggestion to use aeroplane at Bulhoek.

<sup>58</sup> SAP Archives: Box 4202 File Q.2, Mobilization. See also files 6\850\21\A, 6\850\21\B, 6\850\21\C, 6\850\21\D, 6\850\21\E, 6\850\21\F and 6\850\21\G.

<sup>59</sup> ELM: The Bulhoek tragedy Illustrated, p.21.



General Van Deventer and the Commissioner of Police, Colonel Truter

SAP Archives

Queenstown, were preparing for a confrontation with the Police. The men drilled every afternoon, and when this was over, an ox was killed. A reporter of the Queenstown Representative observed that after the drilling, the Israelites crowded around the slaughtered ox and tipped the points of their assegais in the blood.<sup>60</sup> At night they left their village to take up strategic positions on the surrounding mountains.

On 20 May 1921 the Police force with above mentioned reinforcements from the Union Defence Force, was ready. Colonel Truter issued a final ultimatum to Enoch Mgijima and the Israelites that he had come to Queenstown upon instructions from the Government which included *inter alia*, the arrest of a number of men against whom warrants had been issued, to see that all unauthorised residents leave Ntabelanga, and to destroy all houses erected without authorization.<sup>61</sup>

On 22 May 1921, two Israelite messengers brought a reply from Enoch Mgijima to Colonel Truter. Samuel Matsoba one of Enoch messengers, asked if he could go to the camp at the show grounds to count the force and see what provisions they had. Permission was refused on the grounds that no strangers were admitted to the camp.<sup>62</sup> The request by Samuel clearly confirmed the reports by a Reporter of the Queenstown Representative that the Israelites were busy preparing for war with the Police. It seems they wanted to carry on with their preparations with a full knowledge of how many Policemen they were going to have to face and the type of weapon that the Police had at their disposal. In the reply Enoch Mgijima said to Colonel Truter: "I understand that you sir, intend to come to Ntabelanga with an adequate force. May it therefore be

*known by you and all that the armies and forces shall be ruled by God. As for myself, I am a messenger before the blood, and the whole world is going to sink in blood."*<sup>63</sup>

## A DARK DAY FOR FANATICS, 24 MAY 1921

On 23 May 1921, the Police force moved out of the show grounds camp in Queenstown to Bulhoek and camped at Potgieters kraal farm next to Bulhoek. The force consisted of 22 officers, 590 other ranks and mounted Police, a maxim gun troop consisting of one officer, 42 other ranks; three machine guns artillery, two officers, 55 other ranks and two field guns. The medical personnel from the Union Defence Force consisted of one officer and six other ranks with one motor ambulance.<sup>64</sup> The remaining Police were left in the camp as there were rumours that other Israelites intended attacking Queenstown while the Police were at Bulhoek. On the afternoon of the same day, Colonel Truter accompanied by General van Deventer and his staff officer Lieutenant Strydom, joined the force at Potgieters kraal where they remained for the night. In the morning of 24 May 1921, the Secretary for Native Affairs, the Magistrate of Queenstown and the Deputy Sheriff (Mr F.A. Visser), joined the Police force at Potgieters kraal farm. The Secretary for Native Affairs and the Magistrate went for the purpose of endeavouring to secure the peaceful surrender of the Prophet Enoch Mgijima and his followers, and the Deputy Sheriff to serve the warrants for the immediate arrest of the witnesses in the Mattushek's case.<sup>65</sup>

During the night of 23 May 1921, final preparations for the operations against the Israelites were made. Colonel Truter divided his force into two regiments. The first regiment was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Davie. The second regiment was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Woon. Plans of how the force would attack Bulhoek were made. In the early morning of Empire Day, 24 May 1921, the force moved out of Potgieters kraal farm to take up positions on the sloping hills south of Bulhoek. Colonel Truter, General van Deventer and Lieutenant Colonel Trew, assembled on a small hill which gave a magnificent view of the valley which sloped up gently towards Bulhoek. In the distance the Israelites were seen moving out of their settlement in military formations. They were in white uniforms, some wearing shorts and sandals carrying swords, assegai and knobkerries.<sup>66</sup> The main body

<sup>60</sup> CAD: NA, 29\52002, "Israelites Hungry for war," *Queenstown Daily Representative*, 18 May 1921.

<sup>61</sup> CAD: NA, 29\52002, Natives Miscellaneous, *Queenstown Daily Representative*, 22 May 1921.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> State Library, Pretoria: Newspaper Collection; "Prophet talks of blood", *Cape Times*, 24 May 1921.

<sup>64</sup> SAP Archives: Box 4202, File 6\850\21\J, Commissioners Report. Report from Colonel Truter Queenstown - Commissioner of Police, Pretoria, 25 May 1921.

<sup>65</sup> ELM: Bulhoek Tragedy illustrated..., p.21.

<sup>66</sup> SAP Archives: Box 4202, File 6\850\21\J, Bulhoek. Commissioners Report to Justice, Report of Commissioner of Police at Bulhoek, 26 May 1921.



Lieutenant Colonel Trew  
*The Nongqai 12(7), July 1921*



Lieutenant Colonel Davies  
*The Nongqai 12(7), July 1921*



Lieutenant Colonel Woon  
*The Nongqai 12(7), July 1921*

of Israelites were seen taking up their positions in front of their settlement. Others were seen moving along the Swart Kei river while others were seen in the bushes on the eastern side of their settlement.<sup>67</sup>

Before giving the final order for the advance to begin, Colonel Truter made his last attempt to prevent bloodshed. After demonstrating the power and the strength of the force on the slopes facing the Israelites settlement, he dispatched Sergeant Wicks and Constable Boucher, both competent Xhosa linguists to get in touch with the main body of Israelites stationed outside their settlement to ascertain their intentions, whether they would allow the force to enter their location and carry out their instructions, and why they were armed. As they neared the party, three of the Israelites came forward to meet them. The message was delivered, and they replied: "...from Jehovah, we will not allow you to scatter our people from Ntabelanga. We will not allow you to burn our huts, and we will not allow you to arrest the two men you wish to."<sup>68</sup> Sergeant Wicks asked them if they intend to fight and they replied: "that is your business, not ours".<sup>69</sup> They returned to Colonel Truter and reported the response of the Israelites.

After receiving the response of the Israelites, Colonel Truter gave the order for the advance to begin. At 08:00 he had despatched one troop of mounted men of the first regiment under Sergeant Johnstone to occupy a ridge north east and overlooking the Israelite village. The detachment was accompanied by a signaller and a heliograph. At 08:30 two troops of the same regiment were sent to hold the poort on each side leading to Bulhoek location. An advance Squadron was sent through the poort at 09:00 and the main body followed. The force took up position to the left of the poort on the South side of the Israelite village.<sup>70</sup> At 10:00 a helio message came through, reporting the presence of a large body of Israelites massed in the thorn bushes on the banks of the Swart Kei river near their settlement. Colonel Truter despatched a party, under Captain H. Halse of the first regiment to occupy a kopje on the right side of Sergeant Johnstone. This was afterwards known as Maxims Kopje. Subsequently this position was reinforced with 21 troops, with one machine gun, under Sergeant Sullivan.<sup>71</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Woon in charge of the second

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 39/52002, Telegram from Compol, Queenstown - Justice, Cape Town, 26 May 1921.

<sup>69</sup> SANDF Archives: Box 4202 File 39/52002, Telegram from Compol, Queenstown - Justice, Cape Town, 26 May 1921.

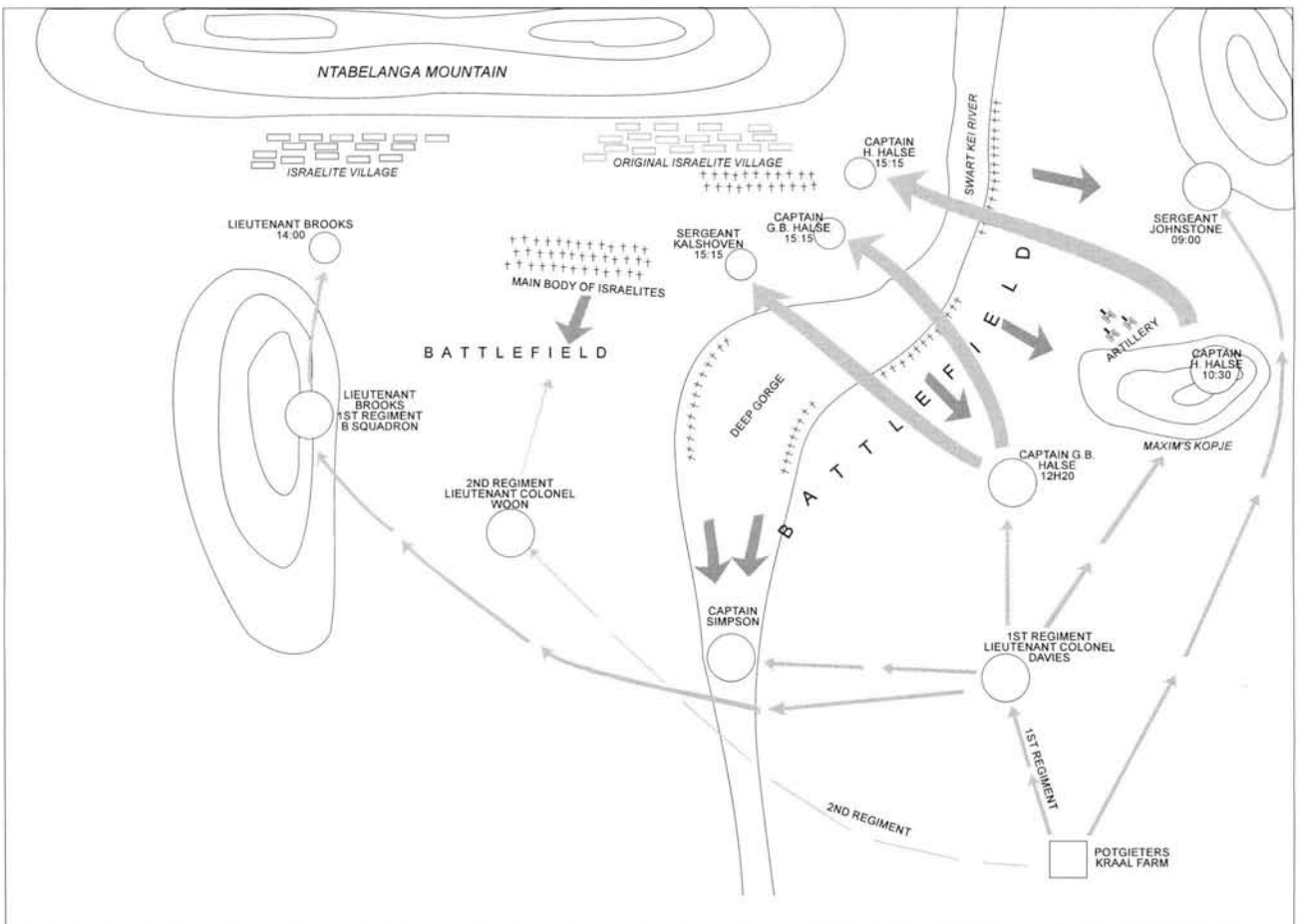
<sup>70</sup> SAP Archives: Box 4202, File 6/850/21/J Report Colonel S.T. Davie, Commander first Regiment, South African Police Mobile Force - Commissioner South African Police, Pretoria, 25 May 1921.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

regiment was ordered to cross the Swart Kei river and deploy some distance away from and in front of the main body of the Israelites. Some Israelites were seen on the left side of Lieutenant Colonel Woon. Lieutenant Brooker of B squadron first regiment with 29 men were despatched to protect Lieutenant Colonel Woon's left flank. Some Israelites were seen moving along the river with intentions of enveloping Lieutenant Colonel Woon's right flank. Captain Simson of the first regiment was ordered to occupy both banks of the river to protect Lieutenant Colonel Woon's right flank.<sup>72</sup>

Colonel Truter despatched Lieutenant Colonel Trew, his chief staff officer with a message to Lieutenant Colonel Woon to call on the Israelites to lay down their arms and surrender. After receiving the message, Lieutenant Colonel Woon started to advance towards the main body of the Israelites. Three men in Israelites uniform detached themselves from the

main body of Israelites and came towards Lieutenant Colonel Woon's force. They were carrying long spears, with swords hanging at their sides in scabbards, while one man had a service bayonet hanging from his belt. Lieutenant Colonel Woon with an interpreter, went forward to meet them. When the three Israelites were about 20 meters from him, he called on them to lay down their arms before coming any closer. Two of them handed their spears to the third man, who remained there while the other two came forward to meet them. Lieutenant Colonel Woon asked the spokesmen of the party what he wanted. The Israelite replied "we have not received a reply from Queenstown to our message about a week ago".<sup>73</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Woon said that he knew nothing about it. The spokesmen asked him what he was there for, and he replied that he was going to occupy the Israelite settlement. He added that "if that party in front there resists my advance, I shall use force".<sup>74</sup> The



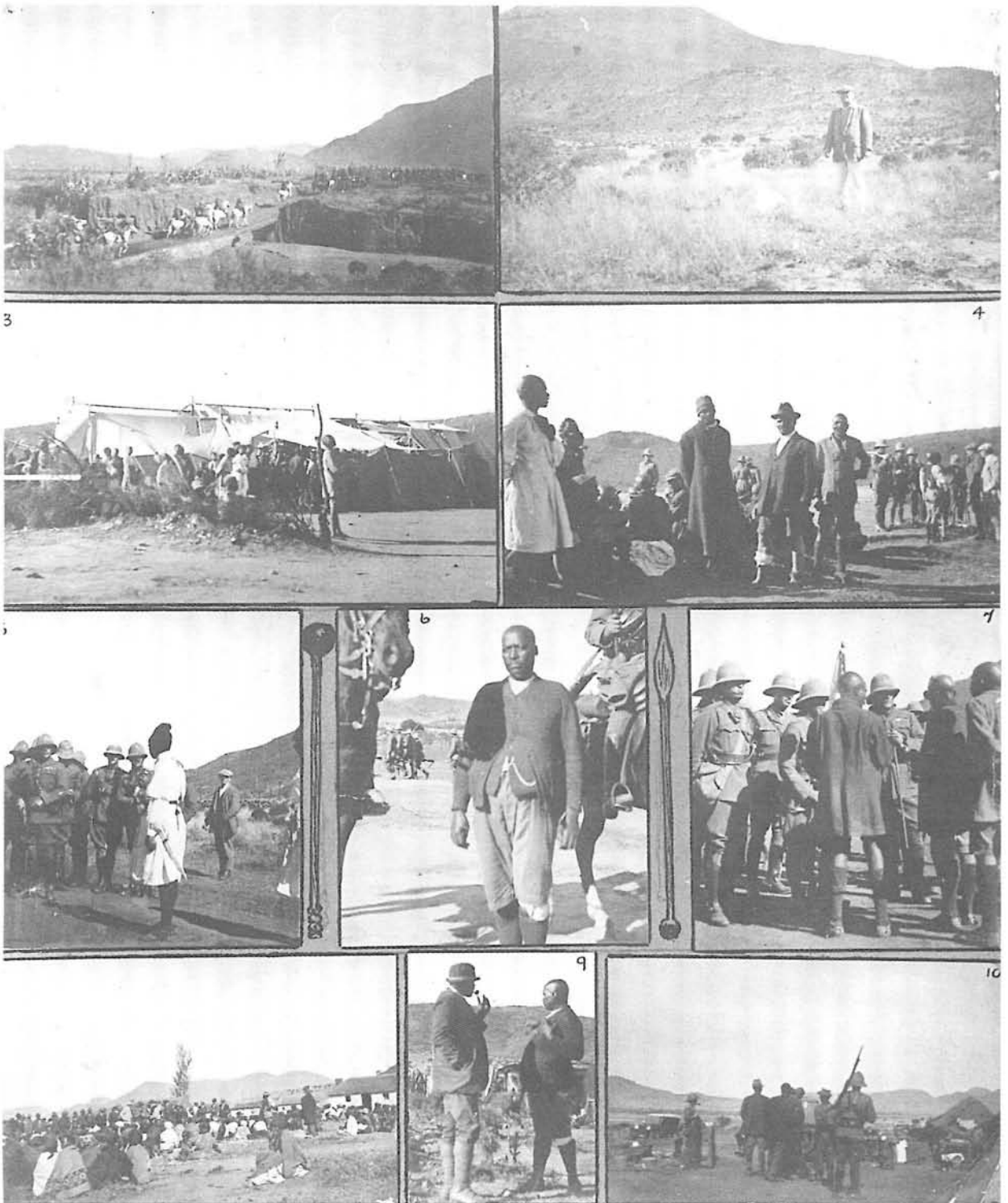
Sketch Map of the deployment and movement of Police and Israelites at Bulhoek, 24 May 1921

Sources: State Library, Pretoria, Newspaper Collection; Sketch Map of the Bulhoek affair drawn from an eye witness account, Cape Times, 31 May 1921; South African Police Museum Archives, Pretoria, Box 4202, File 6/8501/21/6, Queenstown, Plans & Photographs, Unnamed Map of Bulhoek massacre and R. Edgar, *Because they chose the plan of God, the story of the Bulhoek massacre*, pp. 30-31

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> SAP Archives: Box 4202, File 6\850\21\J, Commissioner Report to Justice, Report by Lieutenant Colonel Woon, Commander second regiment, 25 May 1921.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



1. Before the fight: SAP en route to Ntabelanga 2. After the fight: Dead Israelites 3. The Temple of the Israelites 4. Prisoners and Charles Mgijima with bandaged leg 5. Before the fight: Israelite envoy arrives 6. The Prophet Enoch Mgijima 7. Israelites requesting permission to tend their wounded 8. Israelite women and children after the fight 9. Enoch Mgijima 10. Police at the Israelite settlement .  
Africa Museum, Johannesburg

spokesmen of the Israelites said that if that was Lieutenant Woon's intention they would fight and Jehovah would fight with them.<sup>75</sup>

The three spokesmen then returned to the main body of the Israelites. As soon as they reached

the main body, they immediately began to advance towards Lieutenant Colonel Woon's force, shouting "Bulale" (kill) and waving their swords and assegais in the air. Lieutenant Colonel Woon then ordered no 2 troop of A squadron, consisting of about 25 rifles, to fire one volley in the air, hoping

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

to check the charge. The Israelites however were not deterred. They continued their advance. Lieutenant Colonel Woon then ordered his troops to open fire at the Israelites. A large number were hit and fell down. Nonetheless some of the wounded struggled to their feet and continued to move forward. The firing on lieutenant Colonel Woon's front had lasted about 10 minutes. In an interview with the *Daily Dispatch* on 27 May 1921, he described the attack by the Israelites as "*the most determined and fanatical I had ever experienced, and it was only by shooting them down that the attack could have stopped*".<sup>76</sup>

While this attack was in process Lieutenant Colonel Woon saw large clouds of smoke coming from the hills surrounding Ntabelanga. He thought that the smoke might be the signal to call for reinforcements, but after the firing on his front had stopped he realized that the smoke was a signal for a general attack on the Police by the Israelites. Israelites who were stationed on the eastern side of their settlement started to attack the force positioned next to them. Israelites who were in the river bed and the donga saw the smoke and came out, storming Captain Simons's forces. It was on this side that the Israelites managed to come the closest to the Police. During the fight that emerged, one of the Israelites stabbed Constable Dunn with a sword, while Constable Hendricks and Constable Soanlam were wounded in their arms. Constable Viviers' horse was stabbed so severely that it had to be destroyed. These were the only casualties suffered by the Police during the whole operation.<sup>77</sup>

While other groups of Israelites attacked Lieutenant Colonel Woon's regiment and Captain Simson's party, another party of Israelites numbering about 100, emerged from the river and the surrounding bushes on Captain Halse's immediate front, and charged towards him. Halse's forces opened fire killing and wounding many of the group. Charles Mgiijima was the first to fall when Captain H. Halse's squadron opened fire with the machine gun, wounding him in the leg.<sup>78</sup> It was on this flank that the heaviest fighting took place.

Immediately after the firing ceased, General van Deventer and Colonel Truter rushed to Maxim kopje, followed by the artillery which had not fired a single shot yet. On arrival they found several dead and wounded Israelites. Captain G.B. Halse, Captain H. Halse and Sergeant Johnstone were ordered to advance, swing the right flank and cross the river and advance towards the original Israelites settlement. Lieutenant Colonel Woon wanted to make

sure that no Israelite were hiding in the bushes next to the river. Some unwounded Israelites were taken prisoner during the advance.

On arrival at the outskirts of the Israelites location, Colonel Truter despatched Lieutenant Lloyd Lister with a small party together with an interpreter to ascertain from Enoch Mgiijima if they still intended to resist. Lieutenant Lloyd Lister found 30 old armed men in front of Enoch's house. He conveyed Colonel Truter's message and asked them to lay down their arms, and they offered no resistance. Sergeant Lloyd Lister returned and informed Colonel Truter that the Israelites intended to surrender. Colonel Truter instructed Mayor Harvey to proceed to the Israelite settlement to disarm the men and take them prisoner.<sup>79</sup> Enoch Mgiijima was found hiding in the back room of his house during the search of the village. A huge pile of swords, assegais and knobkerries were discovered. Women and children were found singing in the temple during the search of the settlement.

## CONCLUSION

Enoch Mgiijima mislead his innocent followers in believing that 1920 would be the end of the world. He called them to Bulhoek to wait for the fulfilment of the end of the world prophecy. On their arrival at Bulhoek they erected unauthorized houses on the commonage. Enoch continued to mislead his followers after the Police force was gathered at Bulhoek by telling them that the rifles of the Police would fire water instead of bullets. This convinced his followers to adopt a fanatical attitude on 24 May 1921 and charge the Police. Despite the fact that the incident involved a large loss of life, it was inevitable given the fanatical nature of the Israelites.

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<sup>77</sup> SANDF Archives: DC, Box 451, File 37\52002, Telegram from General van Deventer, Queenstown - Dechief, Pretoria, 25 May 1921.

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<sup>79</sup> SAP Archives: Box 4202, File 6\850\21\J, Commissioners Report. Report by Sergeant Lloyd Lister, 24 May 1921.