THE LAST EXILE OF APOLOSI NAWAI: A CASE STUDY OF INDIRECT RULE DURING THE TWILIGHT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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In June 1940, the British governor of Fiji exiled Apolosi Nawai, the charismatic leader of Fijian commoners, for the third and final time. To colonial officials, he was a "disaffected native"; to the indigenous chiefly hierarchy, he was a threat to their privileged status. From the perspective of the Colonial Office in London, Apolosi epitomized the contradiction between English concepts of order on one hand and justice on the other. Placing Apolosi's exile within the context of the Robinson and Gallagher thesis of imperialism, however, Apolosi was a "proto-nationalist" who had to be removed if the collaborative arrangement between the crown and the chiefly hierarchy of Fiji was to survive. In 1940, the British opted for the expediency of indirect rule at the expense of their traditions of fairness and legality. Partially as a result, Fiji entered the post-World War II era of decolonization with indirect rule firmly entrenched.

IN JUNE 1940, Sir Harry Luke, governor of Great Britain's South Pacific crown colony of Fiji, ordered Apolosi Nawai exiled to the remote island of Rotuma for a period of ten years. By the time of his death in 1946, Apolosi, one of the most fascinating personalities to emerge in Oceania during the twentieth century, had spent over twenty-four years in confinement, although only a sentence of eighteen months had resulted from a fair trial. An outsider and a commoner of lowly status who led the only serious Fijian challenge to British indirect rule during the twentieth-century colonial period, Apolosi had to be eliminated if a harmonious relationship between crown authorities and the indigenous oligarchy of chiefs was to continue to

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prosper. As a result, three colonial governors sentenced him to exile for a combined period of twenty-seven years.[1]

Because the study of colonial rule in the Pacific islands has not yet been fully integrated into general historical theories of imperialism, it is difficult to determine what islanders have in common with their African and Asian counterparts. An examination of Apolosi's last exile provides a useful case study for examining British indirect rule in Oceania during the twilight of the British Empire. It also affords the opportunity to place these events within the context of one of the most important historical paradigms of imperialism: the Robinson and Gallagher thesis.

In their seminal study of imperialism, *Africa and the Victorians* (1961), British historians Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher sought to provide an intellectual framework for understanding the complex phenomenon of imperialism and colonialism.[2] According to these two scholars, British officialdom never planned to amass a large empire. Instead, one evolved from a desire to keep as much of the world as possible open to free trade, hence British commercial domination. Britain did not seek to gain direct control of new territory unless it was absolutely necessary, preferring to rule indirectly through the precolonial indigenous elite, who would assist in keeping the colony aligned with Britain. According to Robinson, these "collaborators . . . were concerned to exploit the wealth, prestige, and influence to be derived from association with colonial government, to increase their traditional following or improve their modem opportunities."[3] Without the help of these "collaborators," Britain simply did not have the personnel or the military resources to administer its vast empire. In many instances, however, those indigenes outside this arrangement resented the privileges accorded the "collaborators." These resisters or "proto-nationalists" eventually emerged as the challengers to indirect rule.[4]

Indirect Rule: Administrators, Collaborators, and Resisters

Although Lord Frederick Lugard, high commissioner of Northern Nigeria from 1900 to 1906 and governor of Nigeria from 1912 to 1919, is often considered the father of British indirect rule, he derived many of his ideas from a Fijian precedent.[5] Largely the work of the colony's first residential governor, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon (1875-1880), and his colonial secretary, John Bates Thurston, indirect rule in Fiji placed administrative control of Fijians in the hands of the traditional chiefly elite. Sir Arthur found the chiefs willing to cooperate because they obtained what they wanted most--guaranteed status and protection from further loss of land to European settlers. As a result, after the islands became a British colony, approximately 83

percent of Fiji's land remained communally owned by Fijians under the control of the chiefly oligarchy. By using the chiefs to collect taxes in kind, Gordon balanced his budget and left what he judged traditional lines of authority intact. By 1940, five chiefs, nominated by the governor, sat on the advisory Legislative Council, and the triennial meeting of the Council of Chiefs exercised control of most issues affecting daily Fijian affairs. Under this arrangement, local political power depended on heredity in a stratified society.[6]

Those Fijians outside the limit of indirect rule, however, did not fare as well. Not only did lesser chiefs, commoners, and priests of the indigenous religion fail to accrue the political and economic benefits accorded to the chiefly collaborators, but they also found Fijian "custom" altered to conform with British concepts of "civilization."[7] In a series of incisive articles, anthropologist Martha Kaplan has persuasively argued that the British constructed Fijian custom to include their own notions of hierarchy, class, religion, and order. Those who conformed to the English model were making satisfactory progress toward "civilization," but those who openly resisted were "heathens," "terrorists," "subversives," "charlatans," and promoters of "disorder." According to Kaplan, "Even the most 'pragmatic' colonial administrators viewed Fiji and Fijians in terms of a system of cultural assumptions about the social evolutionary relations of the British and 'others' and the role of the British in creating order out of disorder."[8]

Whenever Fijians appeared to threaten "order," "custom," or indirect rule, they were apt to be dealt with harshly by the colonial establishment. For instance, in 1876, when the "heathen" chief Na Bisiki resisted the encroachments of British administration and missionaries in the interior of Viti Levu, Gordon labeled him "a most determined scoundrel" and worked vigorously to put down his "rebellion." Since Na Bisiki represented a direct threat to indirect rule, he could not be permitted to elude punishment, and after his subsequent capture he was killed before he could stand trial.[9]

Not long afterward, in 1877, the British encountered what they perceived to be an even greater threat to colonial order in the person of the oracle priest Navosavakadua. Prophesying the primacy and return of Fijian gods, working miracles, and promising his followers immortality *(Tuka)*, he claimed that "all existing affairs would be reversed; the whites would serve the natives, the chiefs would become the common people and the latter would take their places." Because Navosavakadua directly challenged the very social and religious tenets on which indirect rule depended, colonial officials and the chiefly elite considered him more dangerous than Na Bisiki. As a result, colonial administrators had the colorful priest arrested, tried for disturbing the peace, and deported to a remote island. Although

Navosavakadua was permitted to return to Viti Levu in 1885, two years later he was exiled by executive order to Rotuma, where he spent the remainder of his life.[10]

But Gordon faced one major problem. In addition to protecting the Fijians from exploitation by white settlers, he had to make Fiji, a colony that Britain had annexed very reluctantly, economically viable. In attempting to do so, he made a decision that was to have profound consequences in the history of Fiji. To entice the Australian-based Colonial Sugar Company to invest in the colony, the governor began the introduction of indentured workers from India as a source of cheap and reliable labor in the cane fields. Although the indenture system officially ended in 1920, many Indians chose to remain in Fiji. In 1921 they comprised 38 percent of the population and were increasing at a more rapid rate than indigenous Fijians. Largely left out of indirect rule but vital to Fiji's economy, the Fiji Indians began to demand equal political status with the colony's European population. Also in 1921, influenced by poor world economic conditions following World War I, cane workers staged a six-month strike for higher wages that was marred by violence. Although the strike failed, the Fiji Indians continued to agitate. During the 1930s, they were pressing for a common electoral roll rather than the existing communal system of franchise in which Europeans, Indians, and Fijians voted separately to select a designated number of representatives to the Legislative Council.[11]

Meanwhile, the Fijian commoners, constrained by the traditions of their rural, village-oriented society, began to slip behind the Indians both politically and economically. Consequently, not all of Gordon's successors as governor were as enthusiastic about his system of indirect rule. Several of these colonial officers, most notably Governor Everard im Thurn (1904-1908), believed that strict adherence to the Fijian communal system would lead to a permanently stratified society in which a tiny elite ruling class would enjoy most of the political and economic benefits. During his term as governor, im Thurn attempted to enact a series of reforms designed to permit Fijian commoners to relax communal restrictions. Much to his chagrin, however, im Thurn was unable to overcome the determined opposition of Gordon, now a member of the House of Lords, and the chiefly elite.[12]

Similarly, in 1922 Acting Governor T. E. Fell, recognizing the dilemma of reconciling tradition and modernization, suggested that the colonial administration initiate a policy of encouraging "individualism" among Fijians. Fell hoped that providing the Fijians with a better education while gradually relaxing communal obligations would enable commoners to develop the skills they needed to survive in the twentieth century. During the 1920s and 1930s, several colonial governors followed policies designed to promote individualism, but these initiatives never achieved their goals. Realizing that

the relaxation of traditional bonds would weaken their authority, the chiefs vigorously opposed this new trend on the grounds that it was a "socially disruptive" Western concept that was alien to the Fijian way of life. By the time Sir Harry Luke arrived in Fiji in 1938, the chiefs were winning, and the colonial administration, worried by the demands of the Indians, was opting for the preservation of the status quo.[13]

In an attempt to ascertain conditions in Fiji on the eve of the Pacific War, United States Army Intelligence assigned Captain John W. Coulter to reconnoiter Viti Levu. Although Coulter lacked a deep understanding of the complex social and political relationships in Fiji, he immediately observed that "the Fijians could not by themselves hold their own in economic and political competition with the Indians." Coulter further reported that Britain governed Fiji

> in part by indirect rule of the native[s] as the native chiefs, supported by the British Colonial Government, exercise some of their traditional native power. It is in line with the most recent developments in native administration. The administrative body uses in part the native political structure to carry out the routine of Government. It takes natives with high titles and gives them governmental responsibility and salary. It recognizes village and district native gatherings for discussion, the traditional way of Fijian native Government.[14]

Consequently, as Europe entered World War II, life in Fiji revolved around relations among and within four major entities--Fijians, Indians, European residents, and the colonial officials. Gordon's system of indirect rule was largely intact, and Fijians retained a village-oriented, communal society based on loyalty to hereditary chiefs. The chiefly oligarchy controlled local Fijian affairs, served as provincial and district officials, and was generally well disposed to the British crown.[15] For the most part, the chiefs and the Europeans cooperated with the colonial government because of their fear of the Indians, whose demands were becoming increasingly strident. The only Fijian to challenge this relatively smooth-functioning collaborative system between 1913 and 1940 was Apolosi Nawai.

Apolosi Nawai: The Man from Ra

Apolosi--or the "Man from Ra," as he liked to refer to himself--was, according to his biographer, Timothy J. Macnaught, Fiji's "underworld hero." A man of ordinary Fijian appearance, he was able to threaten the dominance of the chiefly oligarchy by powerful oratory and sheer force of

personality. "Once he opened his mouth," recalled a Fijian villager, "your mind was no longer your own." Apolosi received an elementary education, thorough familiarity with the Bible, and practical training as a carpenter at a mission school; but he never became wholly Westernized, and he retained a deep understanding of ancient Fijian myths, traditions, and gods. He was a man with feet in both the traditional Fijian and Western worlds who was able to touch the hearts of commoners in ways that the chiefs could not. Like Marcus Garvey, the African-American leader of the 1920s, he appealed to ethnic pride and told his countrymen that they did not have to accept the crumbs allotted them by the colonial government, the European settlers, and their hereditary chiefs. As Macnaught has written, Apolosi "permanently injected the rhetoric of Fijian politics with a demand for *toro cake,* that is, progress, improvement, and a better return for their labor and resources."[16]

While working as a carpenter building a Methodist church in 1912, Apolosi devised a plan for establishing the Viti Company, a Fijian-owned enterprise designed to rival European domination of the banana trade. By eliminating European and Chinese middlemen, asserted Apolosi, Fijian commoners could keep their rightful share of the profit. Why should Fijians be content with a trifling pittance of the returns that whites reaped from the exploitation of the colony's land and labor? According to Macnaught, "these were powerful themes that spoke to a people's pride, challenged their submissiveness to the whole framework of their lives, and compounded their anxiety about the future of the race."[17]

The initial success of the Viti Company and the enthusiastic support it received from commoners evoked deep concern among those involved in collaborative indirect rule. As Apolosi's popularity increased, he began to act, speak, and receive honors in a manner customarily accorded to the chiefly elite. By 1915, Apolosi and the Viti Company were being accused of plotting a "heathen" rebellion that would inevitably degenerate into a racial war. A lack of historical evidence makes it impossible to determine Apolosi's exact intentions, but in May 1915 he was tried and sentenced to eighteen months at hard labor for resisting arrest on a charge of embezzling Viti Company funds.[18]

Much to the dismay of the colonial establishment, imprisonment only increased Apolosi's self-confidence and enhanced his standing as a popular hero among Fijian commoners. After his release, he continued to promote the Viti Company, but his vision far exceeded his business acumen. With hopeless record keeping and mounting debts, the company approached bankruptcy in 1917. At the same time, Apolosi's high-living style of life, which included expensive clothes, a bevy of adoring female attendants, a

large entourage including personal bodyguards, and frequent drinking bouts, was grist for the mill of his enemies. Hence, in November 1917, Governor Ernest B. S. Escott, on executive authority, exiled the Fijian entrepreneur to Rotuma for a term of seven years on the basis of charges that his biographer considers almost certainly invented by his opponents and the government. Escott acted on the authority granted to the governor of Fiji by the Disaffected Natives Act of 1887, which empowered him to confine any "native" he deemed "disaffected to the Queen [i.e., the crown] or otherwise dangerous to the peace or good order of the colony" for a period up to ten years.[19]

During the years immediately following his release in December 1924, Apolosi lived in relative obscurity, the Viti Company now defunct. In 1929, however, he announced the founding of a new religious sect, the Church of the New Era, which was a syncretism of Christianity and traditional Fijian mythology. The millennial belief of the new faith included the tenets that Apolosi's brother, Josevata, was the "Vicar of Jesus Christ" on earth and that Apolosi himself would one day rule the universe as "King of the World." Meanwhile, the Man from Ra's behavior became, by British standards, ever more eccentric as he took a twelfth wife, frequently offered prophecies based on his dreams, and ostentatiously affected the demeanor of a chief. As his popularity increased among commoners, Apolosi once again posed a threat to the status quo and to indirect rule. As a result, in January 1930 Governor A. G. Murchison Fletcher ordered him confined to Rotuma for an additional ten years. From this remote northern island, Apolosi did his best to keep his new movement alive, and the colonial establishment continued to view him as a serious threat to the tranquility of the islands.[20]

Apolosi versus Governor Sir Harry Luke

The prospect of Apolosi's release in 1940 troubled the reigning British governor in Fiji, Sir Harry Luke. With the Fiji Indians becoming more assertive in their demands for a common roll and higher wages from the Colonial Sugar Company and the Europeans, anxious to maintain their privileged status, complaining that Luke had "no grip on the native population," the last thing that he needed was problems with a Fijian proto-nationalist.[21] To make matters worse, the leader of the chiefly oligarchy, Oxford-educated Ratu Lala Sukuna, was openly critical of the government's recent policy of subordinating local Fijian leaders to British district commissioners and hinted that Fijians might form an alliance with Indian political leaders.[22] Meanwhile, with the outbreak of war in Europe, Sir Harry, who was fluent

in French, became increasingly involved in the struggle to align France's Pacific possessions with General Charles de Gaulle's Free French movement rather than the Vichy government.[23] As a result, Europeans now accused Luke of neglecting his duties in Fiji.

When Sir Harry Luke had arrived in Fiji in 1938 at the age of fifty-three, he epitomized the best and worst features of the British colonial service. A graduate of Eton and Trinity College, Oxford, he was a cultured, literary, and cosmopolitan civil servant who had written widely of his experiences in the colonies. During his career he had served in Africa, Palestine, Cyprus, and, for eight years before his assignment in Fiji, as lieutenant-governor of Malta. Sir Harry was well known for his generosity and lavish entertainment, and his refusal to suffer fools lightly. He was particularly unimpressed by the European residents of Fiji, whom he considered "unpolished and uncultured Antipodeans," and was almost openly contemptuous of them. Without the slightest doubt about the superiority of British culture and the righteousness of British imperial policy, he enjoyed the role of governor and gloried in the uniforms, pomp, and ceremony of his office. A contemporary journalist writing in *Pacific Islands Monthly* during 1942 alleged that the Colonial Office had sent Luke to Fiji because he was "tired after many long years of service in the restless Mediterranean area."[24] Given his somewhat pompous personality and the conditions in Fiji in 1939, Luke had little sympathy for "rabble-rousers" such as Apolosi Nawai.

In July 1939, in anticipation of Apolosi's impending release, Luke interviewed the Fijian leader for the first time during a brief visit to Rotuma. In their conversation, Apolosi, who estimated his own age to be "about sixty-one," told Sir Harry: "I realize that I have done wrong. I am sorry for the past and in the future I wish to make reparation and to obey the laws of the Government until the time of my death." Luke replied that he was pleased to learn of Apolosi's resolution and advised him to make this statement publicly on his return from exile and to disavow leadership of the New Era movement. At the conclusion of the interview, Luke informed the Man from Ra: "I am glad to have had this talk with you. You must understand definitely that unless you keep your word to abstain from all your previous activities, it will not be possible for you to remain in Fiji." Apolosi responded, "I am old now and I see with different eyes; and I have no wish to be as of yore."

On his return to the colonial capital in Suva, Sir Harry sought to prepare the way for Apolosi's return by publishing his version of the interview in the official government newspaper, *Na Mata.*[25] Later, in his memoirs, Luke recalled that Apolosi had impressed him as "a quick witted rogue with a sense of humor, possibly capable at times of self-deception but patently untrustworthy."[26]

Before consulting with London, Luke directed all colonial service district commissioners in Fiji to take measures to prevent any public meeting of Fijians to welcome the return of Apolosi. Writing for the governor on 11 November 1939, the colonial secretary informed his subordinates that "it is his Excellency's wish that this [New Era] movement . . . be suppressed."[27] Six weeks later, on 23 December, Sir Harry cabled the secretary of state for colonies in London, Malcolm MacDonald, apprising him of Apolosi's impending release and requesting permission to control the charismatic Fijian's movements under the auspices of existing wartime regulations. Specifically, Apolosi would be required to (1) remain within two miles of his residence in Suva, (2) report to a designated police station daily between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., (3) refrain from addressing any assembly of over ten persons, and (4) not receive more than five visitors per day.[28] Such steps were necessary, explained Luke, "to avoid probable agitation among Fijians which would be most undesirable at the present time."[29]

Luke versus the Colonial Office

In London, however, the Colonial Office was beset with problems of its own. Although by 1914 Britain was already finding it increasingly difficult to administer its extensive empire, World War I provided what John Gallagher has termed "a vast bargain basement for empire builders."[30] As a result, the British acquired new colonial responsibilities in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. So onerous were these added burdens that, by the late 1930s, Malcolm MacDonald was devoting approximately half of his time to Palestine alone. At the same time, the Great Depression had brought economic hardship to many of the colonies, and between 1935 and 1938 a series of strikes erupted in Britain's sugar-producing islands in the West Indies. These disturbances and a series of reports highly critical of health and economic conditions in the colonies revealed that many parts of the empire were not making satisfactory progress toward "civilization."[31] By the late 1930s, Britain's stated policy of preparing its charges for home rule seemed threatened throughout the empire by local discontent.

In 1940, Parliament passed the Development and Welfare Act, which provided several million pounds for developing the social, economic, and education resources of the colonies. This measure departed from the old tradition of requiring the colonies to be self-sufficient and committed Great Britain to the development of its empire. Nevertheless, within the colonial service the conflict between supporters of tradition and of reform that had marked the confrontation between Gordon and im Thurn still existed. Often, colonial governors in the field felt that they possessed a better under-

standing of "native affairs" than did bureaucrats in London. Conversely, whereas in the past the Colonial Office had largely allowed the governors to rule as they saw fit with little interference from home, now officials in London became determined to exercise a greater degree of direct supervision over internal affairs. The Colonial Office was particularly concerned about the effect that a policy promulgated in one colony might have on opinion within other colonies.[32]

The outbreak of World War II in Europe exacerbated the difficulties of the Colonial Office. By 1940, Britain had been at war for four months, but Hitler had not yet launched the blitzkrieg. Already stretched to the limit, the British government knew that it could not adequately defend Singapore, much less Fiji, a colony they considered of marginal strategic and economic importance.[33] At the same time, career civil servants in the Colonial Office realized that the beleaguered government of Neville Chamberlain might not last much longer and changes at the highest levels of the bureaucracy were in the offing. Similarly, senior officials in the Colonial Office were aware that the war would have a profound effect on the empire, but no one was quite sure what those changes would entail.

The first response of the Colonial Office to Luke's dispatch of 23 December, requesting permission to invoke wartime regulations to restrict Apolosi, was to misplace the file on the subject until 17 January 1940. This delay was unfortunate because Apolosi's official release date was 13 January, and Luke had to proceed without having received any response from his superiors to his original telegram. When bureaucrats in London finally located the file, the head of the Pacific department of the Colonial Office, A. B. Acheson, argued vigorously that Apolosi's case had nothing to do with wartime regulations, which could be applied only when there was "evidence of association with the enemy." Since there was no question of any involvement between Apolosi and Germans or Italians, argued Acheson, Apolosi "falls clearly within the category of agitators who may be obnoxious to Colonial Governments, but against whom there is no evidence of enemy association and whose actions can be quite well dealt with under existing legislation [i.e., the Disaffected Natives Act of 1877]."[34] Agreeing with Acheson, Malcolm MacDonald cabled Luke on 19 January, instructing him not to take any action on Apolosi under wartime emergency regulations.[35]

Three days later, Luke replied that, since he had received no reply to his telegram of 23 December, he had already used the wartime measures to restrict Apolosi's movements. Without disputing the Colonial Office's 'contention that Apolosi was not conspiring with any of Britain's enemies, Luke argued that action taken against him under the old Disaffected Natives Act would "undoubtedly lead to a considerable revival of feeling in his favor

especially among the younger element."[36] Luke's somewhat imperious response clearly irritated the more progressive element at the Colonial Office. Assistant Secretary of State J. A. Calder forcefully argued that since "advancing years had diminished the vitality and courage" that Apolosi had once demonstrated, he was "entitled to his freedom until there is some evidence he is abusing it."[37] MacDonald agreed with Calder and, on 30 January, informed Fiji's governor that wartime regulations "do not fit" and were not to be used for "political motives."[38]

Refusing to relinquish meekly what he deemed his prerogative as governor, Luke continued to press his case. Sir Harry now informed the Colonial Office that he and all his senior officers had little doubt that, unless Apolosi were closely supervised, there would be "acts of lawlessness and subversion." Luke also asserted that Apolosi might disrupt the colony's sugar and gold-mining industries, which he considered of "essential importance" to the defense of the empire. Under the Disaffected Natives Act, continued Luke, he could only exile Apolosi, who was still in Rotuma awaiting transportation to Suva, and he feared that an attempt to deport him as soon as he arrived would surely result in unrest and bloodshed. Worse yet, Apolosi's followers among the miners might "make common cause with the malcontent Indian [sugar] growers."[39] Since Apolosi was also accused of being an anti-Indian racist, Sir Harry's reasoning on this issue is difficult to follow, but his warning alerted the Colonial Office to the grave threat to indirect rule that an alliance between Fijian commoners and Indians would pose.

In London, the Apolosi case provoked a three-way difference of opinion within the Colonial Office. The old guard, led by Deputy Under Secretary of State Sir John Shuckburgh, a close associate of Winston Churchill, maintained that Apolosi was a dangerous "pseudo-prophet who is apt to arise from time to time among primitive people." Since Apolosi's behavior might become "prejudicial to local defense arrangements," Luke was more or less justified in limiting the freedom of this man who was "clearly three-quarters impostor."[40] A second line of reasoning, proposed by A. B. Acheson, basically agreed with Shuckburgh's assessment of Apolosi but was uncomfortable with violating the Fijian leader's civil rights without proper legal justification. Acheson considered Apolosi "not a normal human being at all . . . an unscrupulous adventurer who preys upon the superstition and ignorance of the Fijians." He concurred with Luke's proposal that Apolosi be restricted in movement and residence, but realizing that "we are dealing with a situation that cannot arise in this country," he believed that a legal justification had to be devised.[41] A third position, advocated by J. A. Calder, argued that it was unethical to condemn a man for what he might do. Apolosi had served his sentence and was therefore entitled to his freedom unless he violated an

existing law. To Acheson's quest for legal justification for restricting Apolosi, Calder responded that "it is a sorry commentary on our rule in Fiji if this elderly religious fanatic cannot be released without the terrible consequences imagined."[42]

But while Colonial Office bureaucrats disputed policy in Fiji, events in Europe overshadowed interest in the small Pacific colony. On 9 April, Hitler invaded Norway; on 10 May, the Germans crossed into the Netherlands; and by 26 May, the British army was trapped at Dunkirk. On 11 May, Neville Chamberlain resigned and was succeeded by Winston Churchill, whose desire to preserve the status quo in the empire was well known in the Colonial Office. Shortly thereafter, Churchill replaced Malcolm MacDonald with Lord Lloyd, and in all this turmoil the Colonial Office forgot about Fiji. As a result, Sir Harry Luke's restrictions on Apolosi remained in effect as a fait accompli.

Apolosi's Brief Release

Apolosi Nawai arrived in Suva on 14 March 1940, but his freedom was to last for only two months. Unable or unwilling to conform to the strict regimen of Luke's regulations, he failed to appear at police headquarters before the 4:00 P.M. deadline on ten occasions between 14 March and 27 April (although he did eventually appear for all but two of the appointments). Similarly, according to a report by Inspector W. J. G. Holland of the Fiji Criminal Investigation Department, Apolosi ventured outside the bounds of his restriction on eighteen separate occasions. Under the heading "misconduct," Holland listed several incidents in which Apolosi allegedly engaged in public drunkenness, had sexual intercourse with numerous women, and provided alcohol to "natives of various nationalities." Of all the charges in Holland's report, which Luke eventually forwarded to the Colonial Office, the only serious incident involved the allegation that Apolosi had attempted to molest his twelve-year-old niece.[43] Although Apolosi was never permitted to defend himself against any of the accusations against him and probably never knew of their existence, Luke was now determined to rid himself of the man he now labeled as "a Pacific Island Rasputin."[44]

Perhaps the most politically damning accusations against Apolosi were sworn statements by two Fijian informers who charged him with making seditious statements. According to these witnesses, Apolosi appeared at a clandestine meeting of approximately forty Fijians at about midnight during late May 1940 where he received twenty whale's teeth *(tabua),* an honor usually reserved for chiefs. As the leader of the New Era movement, Apolosi allegedly told the party: "It is very good of you to come. The Government is

unable to do anything to me at the present time. I have lit a fire which is burning throughout the world. The fire will continue until the month of March next year, when I will sit on my throne as King and rule everything and every one whether you are for me or against me."[45]

Six days later, Luke ordered Apolosi to be returned to Rotuma for a period of ten years under the provisions of the Disaffected Natives Act of 1887. Luke explained to Lord Lloyd that he had taken action because "Apolosi has, since his return from Rotuma, consistently led a life of subversive intrigue and has acted in flagrant disregard of the terms of his release." Not surprisingly, the governor received the unanimous approval of the Fijian members of the Legislative Council, all of whom were chiefs. In his final word on the case, Luke opined that, during Apolosi's two months in Suva, he had demonstrated "his quasi-religious influence over his dupes, his utter lack of scruple, his abnormally developed and sustained sexual appetite and the ease with which he secures the victims of his lust, his eloquence and faith in himself, and his persistence in evil doing."[46] On 1 June, the only Fijian that the local establishment considered a threat to the collaborative arrangement between the crown and the chiefly hierarchy was sent into exile without trial on charges that would never have held up in a British court.

In the end, Apolosi's last exile proved to be a life sentence. After the outbreak of the war in the Pacific in December 1941, Luke, fearing that the Fijian "prophet" might become a Japanese fifth columnist, interned him in New Zealand until the end of the hostilities. Once the Japanese threat had passed in 1944, however, Apolosi was allowed to return to the remote Fijian island of Yacata. Shortly before Apolosi's arrival in the Fijian Islands, paramount chief Ratu Lala Sukuma, a statesman of enormous prestige, in part because of his services to the British crown during the two world wars, wrote to the colonial secretary in Suva stating that "Native Authorities" were "strongly opposed" to granting Apolosi any freedom whatsoever.[47] A year later, Sukuna also recommended that Apolosi be transferred to an even more isolated island where ships rarely visited.[48] But in 1946, before any action could be taken on Sukuna's request, Apolosi died in a hospital on the island of Taveuni after a brief illness.[49] At last, the "Man from Ra" would threaten indirect rule no more.

Conclusion

It is perhaps too early to place Apolosi Nawai in a definitive context within the broad history of Oceania or of imperialism. To Timothy Macnaught, Apolosi was "more corrupt entrepreneur than millenarian prophet." Never-

theless, argues Macnaught, "he was a great patriot tapping the roots of Fijian pride by urging the people and chiefs to cut across the parochial limitations of their existing institutions."[50] To anthropologist Anthony B. Van Fossen, Apolosi represented the opposition of the traditional Fijian priest class to the chiefly elite as well as to Europeans and Indians.[51] To Martha Kaplan and John D. Kelly, Apolosi represents a contestant for power in the continuing "dialogue about chiefship and custom, labor and profit, citizenship, and, above all, loyalty and disaffection." To colonial officials, write Kaplan and Kelly, he was "a product of their fear of disaffection and its challenges to basic assumptions of the colonizing project."[52]

In viewing Apolosi from the imperial perspective, however, it is clear that colonial officials were on the horns of a dilemma. On one hand, they still based their ideals of "progress" and "civilization" on their own cultural assumptions regarding order, religion, and hierarchy. Colonial bureaucrats in London and Fiji, regardless of any other opinions they might have had, regarded Apolosi variously as a "rogue," "pseudo-prophet," "impostor," "unscrupulous adventurer," "fanatic," "Rasputin," "not a normal human being," and a "rabble-rouser" who promoted "lawlessness" and "subversion." Those who followed him were "primitive people" or "dupes." On the other hand, British definitions of order also included basic ideals of fairness and the rule of law. When the issue of Apolosi's deportation arose in 1940, some officials were content to see the cause of progress served by simply removing a "disaffected native," but others resisted the tactic of using dubious or illegal means to do so. The latter officials, like Governors im Thurn and Fell, realized that Gordon's scheme of indirect rule was helping to insure that the Fijian commoners could not develop the skills they needed to be successful in the capitalist environment of the twentieth century.[53]

By issuing Apolosi's last sentence in 1940, Luke not only perpetuated indirect rule, but also helped insure that the lofty goals of British colonialism would not be achieved. Instead, the objective of Gordon's system had become simply maintaining "order" by perpetuating the power of established elites. Those who benefited most--chiefs, Europeans, and colonial administrators--united to fight the threat to the status quo that Apolosi had posed when he arrived from Rotuma in 1940. In short, none of those involved in the collaborative system wanted much to change. Left out of this arrangement were the Fijian commoners and the Indians, who were separated from each other by a vast gulf of ethnic mistrust. Consequently, as Britain entered the war that would eventually result in its withdrawal east of Suez, indirect rule remained entrenched in Fiji.

In placing Fiji within the context of empire, the last exile of Apolosi Nawai generally conforms with the Robinson and Gallagher analysis.

Although British expansion into the South Pacific had little to do with free trade, and Robinson and Gallagher perhaps underestimated the role of humanitarianism, Great Britain ruled Fiji indirectly though their "collaborators," the chiefly elite. In fact, indirect rule in Fiji can be regarded as one of the most successfully operated collaborative relationships in the history of the British Empire. Apolosi was a "proto-nationalist" not because he represented an appeal to Western concepts of nationalism (which he did not), but because he threatened to disrupt this collaborative system. To Luke, he seemed a dangerous obstacle to "order," and to the chiefs, he was a rival in the contest for power. From the perspective of the Colonial Office in London, however, he appeared to differ little from "proto-nationalists" and resisters elsewhere in the empire.

In a perceptive essay originally appearing in 1972, Ronald Robinson argued that the main objective of British indirect rule between the two world wars was to prevent colonial alliances between "urban malcontents" and "populist movements."[54] In Fiji, the Indian community was organizing and threatening to disrupt the status quo. Among Fijians, Apolosi Nawai represented the populist factor in this equation and therefore had to be eliminated. Because of the collaborative arrangement in place and his unorthodox life-style, he could not be absorbed into the system. In 1930, on the eve of his second exile, Apolosi lamented with great intuition: "Had I been given a position in the Government there would have been no trouble. I am cleverer and more ingenious than any other Fijian. . . . I should have done a lot of good for the Fijians."[55] But indirect rule left no room for him within the colonial system.

NOTES

1. Apolosi died in exile after serving six years of his last ten-year sentence.

2. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961). See also Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of Economic Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in *The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy,* ed. W. Roger Louis (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), 53-151; and John Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival, and Full of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

3. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations," 143.

4. It is perhaps unfortunate that Robinson and Gallagher used the word "collaborator," a term that carries a somewhat negative connotation. During World War II, a collaborator was one who cooperated with the enemy, usually for personal gain. This is not necessarily

the meaning intended by Robinson and Gallagher. Their collaborators were indigenes who believed that cooperation with the imperial authorites was the best way of promoting economic progress while, at the same time, insuring their own privileged status. Robinson and Gallagher did not consider the British to be the enemy in the same sense that the Nazis were during World War II.

5. D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967), 298-299.

6 R. W. Robson, ed., *The Pacific Islands Yearbook,* wartime edition (Sydney: Pacific Publications, 1944), 180-181. On Sir Arthur Gordon, see J. K. Chapman, *The Career of Arthur Hamilton Cordon: First Lord Stanmore, 1829-1912* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964); Deryck Scarr, *Fragments of Empire: History of the Western Pacific High Commission* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968), 24-52; C. Hartley Grattan, *The Southwest Pacific to 1900* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 477-482, 487-488. For a general history of Fiji, see Deryck Scarr, *Fiji: A Short History* (Lā'ie, Hawai'i: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1984), and Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992).

7. This theory was first introduced by Peter France, in *The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969), and J. R. Clammer, in *Literacy and Social Change: A Case Study of Fiji* (Leiden: Brill, 1976). See also Tony Chapelle, "Customary Land Tenure in Fiji: Old Truths and Middle Aged Myths," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 78 (Spring 1978): 71-88.

8. Martha Kaplan, "The Dangerous and Disaffected Native in Fiji: British Colonial Constructions of the *Tuka* Movement," *Social Analysts* 26 (December 1989): 22-45; Kaplan, "*Luve Ni Wai* as the British Saw It: Constructions of Custom and Disorder in Colonial Fiji," *Ethnohistory* 36 (Fall 1989): 349-371; Kaplan, "Meaning, Agency, and Colonial History: Navosavakadua and the *Tuka* Movement in Fiji," *American Ethnologist* 17 (February 1990): 3-22; Kaplan, "Christianity, People of the Land, and Chiefs in Fiji," in *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives,* ed. John Barker (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990), 127-147; Kaplan and John D. Kelly, "Rethinking Resistance: Dialogics of Disaffection in Colonial Fiji," *American Ethnologist* 21 (February 1993): 123-151; and Anthony B. Van Fossen, "Priests, Aristocrats, and Millennialism in Fiji," *Mankind* 16 (December 1986): 158-166.

9. Kaplan, "Dangerous and Disaffected Native," 31-34. Na Bisiki died during an escape attempt. The exact circumstances surrounding his death are unclear.

10. Kaplan, "Meaning, Agency, and Colonial History," 9; Kaplan, "Dangerous and Disaffected Native," 34-38; Kaplan, "Meaning, Agency, and Colonial History," 3-22; Van Fossen, "Priests," 161-162.

11. According to the constitution of 1937, which was in effect when Apolosi was exiled in 1940, the Legislative Council, which legally had only advisory powers, consisted of thirty-one members--sixteen nominated by the governor and fifteen "unofficial" members. The unofficial members included five Europeans (three elected by Europeans and two nominated by the governor), five Fijians (all nominated by the governor from a list submitted

by the Council of Chiefs), and five Indians (three elected by Indians and two nominated by the governor). Robson, *Pacific Islands,* 180. On the Fiji Indians, see K. L. Gillion, *The Fiji Indians: Challenge to European Dominance, 1920-1946* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977); Robert Norton, *Race and Politics in Fiji* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977); and John D. Kelly, *The Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality, and Counter-colonial Discourse in Fiji* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

12. Lal, *Broken Waves,* 17-33; Kaplan and Kelly, "Rethinking Resistance," 137.

13. Lal, *Broken Waves,* 65-74.

14. "Economic Estimate, the Colony of Fiji, November-December 1940," 22 May 1941, Division of Far Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, RG 59, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

15. C. Hartley Grattan, *The Southwest Pacific since 1900* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 388-389; "Indians vs Fijians," *Pacific Islands Monthly* 11 (August 1939): 34-35.

16. Timothy J. Macnaught, *The Fijian Colonial Experience: A Study of the Neotraditional Order under British Rule prior to World War II* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982), 87, 75-92; and Macnaught, "Apolosi Nawai," in *More Pacific Islands Portraits,* ed. Deryck Scarr (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 173-192.

17. Macnaught, *Fijian Colonial Experience,* 78-79.

18. Ibid., 80-85; J. L. V. Sukuna to Secretary for Native Affairs, 12 March 1917, in Deryck Scarr, ed., *The Three-Legged Stool: Selected Writing of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 51-58.

19. Macnaught, "Apolosi Nawai," 182-186; Lal, *Broken Waves,* 48-54; "To Provide for the Confining of Disaffected and Dangerous Natives to Particular Localities in Fiji, 1887," 11 October 1887, Public Records Office, London (hereafter PRO), CO 84/2. This law was first used to deport Navosavakadua.

20. Macnaught, "Apolosi Nawai," 186-192; Kaplan and Kelly, "Rethinking Resistance," 136-138; Van Fossen, "Priests," 162-164.

21. Sir Philip Mitchell, Diary, 4 July 1942, Mitchell Mss, Rhodes House, Oxford; "Fiji Indians and the CSR Co.," *Pacific Islands Monthly* 11 (15 March 1940): 65; "Viti Cost," *Pacific Islands Monthly* 12 (September 1941): 8; "Sir Harry Luke Retires," *Pacific Islands Monthly* 12 (July 1942): 8-9. See also Gillion, *Fiji Indians,* 173-164; Robert Norton, "Colonial Fiji: Ethnic Divisions and Elite Conciliation," in *Politics in Fiji,* ed. Brij V. Lal (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 52-69; and Scarr, *Short History,* 123-144.

22. Statement in Legislative Council by J. L. V. Sukuna, 18 December 1940, in Scarr, *Three-Legged Stool,* 265-267; Sir Philip Mitchell to Secretary of State of the Colonies, 7 September 1942, PRO, CO 83/238/12.

23. "Luke Retires," 8-9.

24. Ibid.; Mitchell to Secretary of State of the Colonies, 7 August 1942, and Notes of Tafford Smith, 10 August 1942, PRO, CO 83/238/12; *Who's Who, 1968* (London: Adams and Charles Black Ltd., 1968), 1881-1882.

25. Luke to Malcolm MacDonald, 9 January 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

26. Sir Harry Luke, *From a South Seas Diary, 1939-1942* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1945), 122-123.

27. J. Craig to District Commissioners, 11 November 1939, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

28. Luke to MacDonald, 23 December 1939, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

29. Luke to MacDonald, 9 January 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

30. Gallagher, *Decline,* 87.

31. David J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980), xiv-xxix, 23-34.

32. Ibid. See also Brian Lapping, *End of Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 14-16.

33. Although in 1919 Admiral Viscount Jellicoe described Fiji as New Zealand's "immediate outpost" in his grand scheme for imperial defense in the Pacific, neither Britain nor its Pacific dominions had the resources to garrison the colony until the late 1940s. Grattan, *Pacific since 1900,* 512; and Ian Hamill, *Strategic Illusion: The Singapore Strategy and the Defence of Australia and New Zealand, 1919-1942* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), 19-21.

34. Notes on Luke to MacDonald, 23 December 1939, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

35. MacDonald to Luke, 19 January 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

36. Luke to MacDonald, 22 January 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

37. Notes on Luke to MacDonald, 22 January 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

38. MacDonald to Luke, 30 January 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

39. Luke to MacDonald, 6 February 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

40. Notes on Luke to MacDonald, 23 December 1939, by Sir John Shuckburgh, 19 January 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16. Shuckburgh conceded, however, that it was "very doubtful" if wartime regulations actually justified Luke's actions.

41. Note on Apolosi Case by A. B. Acheson, 9 February 1940, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

42. Notes on Luke to MacDonald, 22 January and 9 February 1940, by J. A. Calder, PRO, CO 83/230/16.

43. W. J. G. Holland to Police Commissioner, Suva, 9 May 1940, PRO, CO 83/233/9.

44. Luke to Lord Lloyd, 4 June 1940, PRO, CO 83/233/9.

45. Sworn Statements of Informants, 26 May 1940, PRO, CO 83/233/9.

46. Luke to Lloyd, 4 June 1940, PRO, CO 83/233/9.

47. Sukuna to Colonial Secretary, 22 June 1944, in Scarr, *Three-Legged Stool,* 327; Macnaught, "Apolosi Nawai," 191-192. On Sukuna, see Deryck Scarr, *Ratu Sukuna: Soldier, Statesman, Man of Two Worlds* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

48. Sukuna to Colonial Secretary, 12 September 1945, in Scarr, *Three-Legged Stool,* 379.

49. Macnaught, "Apolosi Nawai," 192. Ironically, the war also was Luke's undoing. After running afoul of the American naval high command over a silly jurisdictional dispute on Canton Island, he was forced to resign from the colonial service. Between 1943 and 1946, he served as the chief representative of the British Council in the Caribbean. He died in 1969. "Luke Retires," 8-9; Sir Philip Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts* (London: Hutchinson, 1954), 209-211; Negley Farson, *Last Chance in Africa* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1950), 49-51.

50. Macnaught, *Fijian Colonial Experience,* 91.

51. Van Fossen, "Priests," 158-166.

52. Kaplan and Kelly, "Rethinking Resistance," 123-150. For an interesting discussion of Fijian historiography, see Nicholas Thomas, "Taking Sides: Fijian Dissent and Conservative History Writing," *Australian Historical Studies* 24 (October 1990): 239-251.

53. Nicholas Thomas raises this issue, stating "an over generalized notion that all Europeans in the Pacific were racist invaders hardly enables one to determine the ramifications in specific island nations of the colonial experience for the present." "Partial Texts: Representation, Colonialism, and Agency in Pacific History," *Journal of Pacific History* 25 (December 1990): 147.

54. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations," 144.

55. Macnaught, "Apolosi Nawai," 189.