

George Bogese: "Just a Bloody Traitor"?

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Although World War II, especially the battle for Guadalcanal, brought the Solomon Islands to international prominence, few of the Islanders emerged from the war with significantly enhanced reputations. Of those who did, probably only three became well known outside the group. Of these, two, Jacob Vouza and Bill Bennett, have been honored as heroes for their service on the side of the victorious Allies: Vouza for an act of bravery in refusing to tell his Japanese captors about American defense positions and then providing useful information to the US Marines; Bennett for sustained bravery while serving behind Japanese lines with the coastwatcher and guerrilla leader Donald Kennedy.¹ Other Solomon Islanders who also served the Allies faithfully, though less dramatically, were left in obscurity.² But it is in the nature of things for honors to be acquired selectively and sparingly--and somewhat fortuitously. George Bogese, the third of the trio, discovered that those who do not find favor with the victors are distinctly vulnerable. Not all Solomon Islanders, especially in the areas that were longest under Japanese occupation, as in parts of Choiseul and Australian-ruled Bougainville, were immovably staunch supporters of the Allies. Indeed, some of them were subjected to summary punishment for "disloyalty." But only two individuals, John McDonald from the Shortland Islands and George Bogese from Santa Isabel, were subjected to the indignity of a trial and the ignominy of a conviction.³ And of these two it was the fate of Bogese, partly because of a close, if hostile, involvement with the well-publicized heroics of Kennedy and Bennett, to become the more notorious.

In Bill Bennett's crisply stated opinion, Bogese was "just a bloody traitor," and as such deserved nothing but reprobation and lasting ill repute. Bennett had some not unreasonable grounds for his view.⁴ Unlike Vouza, Bogese had chosen not to risk his life by resisting the Japanese after he, too, had been captured by them. Moreover he was involved in an incident in which Bennett received severe burns from exploding petrol. Besides, in 1946 a court found him guilty on a charge of assisting the enemy and sentenced him to four years

imprisonment. From a position more detached than Bennett's, however, and at a remove of almost half a century, during which Solomon Islanders have outgrown their subordination to foreign rule, Bogese's actions seem more understandable, and possibly less reprehensible, than they were to his contemporary critics.

Most of the Solomons group had been a British protectorate since the 1890s, but the government had brought few benefits to the Islanders, as many people from Bogese's home island of Isabel complained during the Chair and Rule movement of the 1930s, and as others from the southern islands were to complain during the Maasina Rule movement of the 1940s.⁵ Solomon Islanders, then, in their own estimation owed the colonial government little. As an institution it was remote yet threatening and was represented among them only by a few sparsely scattered officials with extensive powers whose primary tasks were to collect the annual head tax and to discourage breaches of the peace. If the Islanders in 1940 had feelings of gratitude and affection for Europeans, they were for missionaries rather than for the government. Even so they generally remained very loyal during the war, although this is easily explained. Whatever their grievances against their colonial "masters," the Islanders did not find in the Japanese an appealing alternative to the existing regime ("better the devil you know!"). And the Japanese, given that they were on the defensive during most of their occupation of the Solomons, had little chance to make themselves particularly agreeable. Besides, the missionaries backed the officials in urging the Islanders to support Britain and its Allies. In Bogese's case, however, there were additional and acutely personal strains on his loyalty: he was captured at a time when it seemed as if the British had abandoned the protectorate to the Japanese, and at a time when, although he was in government employment, there was ill-feeling between him and his superior, Donald Gilbert Kennedy. Vouza, in contrast, was captured after the American forces had arrived to challenge the Japanese and was, moreover, encouraged to resist by the memory that years before, as a policeman, he had once failed notably in his duty. In being captured he accepted a chance to make reparation for that embarrassing lapse.⁶ Bogese had no such spur to heroism.

Bogese's problems began in May 1942 on the island of Savo. He was there, on Kennedy's orders, in his capacity as native medical practitioner conducting a medical survey. On 5 May he encountered two Japanese survivors from the destroyer *Kitsutsuki* that had been sunk the day before, during the Japanese occupation of the protectorate headquarters at Tulagi. They were suffering from wounds and burns. After getting approval from Leif Schroeder, a former trader working as an Allied coastwatcher who sent some food down from his bush hideaway for the Japanese, Bogese dressed their

wounds. Three days later a Catholic missionary, Desmond Scanlon from Visale on Guadalcanal, visited Savo and gave food and clothing to the pair. He also advised Bogese and others to look after them properly, "otherwise there will be a row with the Japanese authorities," and before leaving wrote his name and address on a piece of paper, which he gave to the Japanese. For his part Bogese--as he later recounted in an affidavit--attempted to conceal his occupation and identity from the Japanese, but the deception was soon revealed. On 9 May two barges carrying fifty soldiers and guided by a man named Tolia arrived at Savo, near Panuel village where Bogese was living, to collect their compatriots. When they had landed one of the soldiers addressed the watching villagers in English: "The rule of Great Britain is finished. You are now under the Japanese military rule. Anybody who disobeys Japanese orders must be shot. We now proclaim martial law. All natives must cooperate with the Japanese." The party then proceeded to the village where Tolia identified Bogese: "This is Dr George we talk along you before." The Japanese who had spoken on the beach then said to Bogese: "My name is Sima. I was in Fiji for nine years. I know the names of all the Native Medical Practitioners who were trained in Suva. You must be one of them. You must tell me the truth, and you must cooperate with the Japanese, or you will be shot You must come with us to Tulagi. . . . All Native Medical Practitioners must work for the Japanese government."

"I was," admitted Bogese, "frightened to disobey," and he proceeded to work for a new "master" as an interpreter. On 11 May, Sima (who was probably the man more commonly known as Ishimoto) had him write a notice in the Nggela language urging the people of that island to return to their homes and not to hide in the bush.⁷ On 12 May, Bogese went with Sima to the village of Voloa on Nggela to recruit men to help unload a ship at Tulagi. On 13 May, he and one of those men, Kuini Gee, were directed by Sima to translate from English to Nggela another notice "To all the Island People," informing them: "The Japanese Army came to protect the Natives. You must return to your villages and do your work in peace and remain calm. You must give information to the Japanese Military Authorities."⁸

On 15 May he had to translate a similar message into the Bugotu language of southern Isabel for distribution among his own people: "Will you return to your respective villages and perform your ordinary occupations and be safe. The Japanese army respect all people in these islands, they didn't come to [do] you any harm or to burn your houses and destroy your property, they came to protect all your people in these islands."⁹ The Bugotu version, however, as Bennett later pointed out, contained an instruction not included in the English original: "If any natives know of any Europeans hidden around

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the Islands, who possess rifles, ammunition, etc, they are to report them immediately to the Japanese authorities in Tulagi."¹⁰

Meanwhile Bogese had also been told that he was to go to Rabaul, where the chief medical officer of the Japanese wished to ask him about tropical diseases. Before leaving he was taken with two barge loads of Japanese, about fifty soldiers, to Kolare on Isabel to visit his wife and children, whom he had not seen since 27 February, when he was sent to Savo.¹¹

From that point events took a more dramatic turn, although the truth about Bogese's activities becomes more difficult to ascertain. On the afternoon of 17 May, with Bogese and his wife and family aboard, the Japanese set off in search of Kennedy's vessel, the *Wai-ai*, which was hidden with camouflage not far away at Sigana. According to Bogese he had not told the Japanese where the vessel was. Rather he claimed it had already been spotted by a Japanese aircraft. Nor, he said, had he told them where Kennedy was hiding. According to a Kolare man named Jasper Rutu, however, Bogese had asked him where the *Wai-ai* was hidden; and Rutu, for fear of the Japanese, had told him. Rutu also said that Bogese had instructed him to lead the Japanese to Kennedy's base at Mahaga, in an attack planned for 4 PM on 17 May; and had further advised him that a vessel, the *Joan*, hidden in the mangroves by a departed trader, should be found and handed over to the Japanese. According to another witness, Joseph Supa, Bogese's wife's cousin, who went with them on the barge and who had helped hide the *Wai-ai*, "from the time we left Kolare, Bogese stood with the Japanese on the stern, at the place where they steered." Bogese's father-in-law, Maaki Hathavu, meanwhile, on his own initiative had sent a message to Kennedy, warning him of the intended attack. The unfortunate Bennett, however, received no such warning.¹² According to him he was on the *Wai-ai* when he saw the barges approaching, "and I saw George Bogese talking to the Japanese and pointing to the *Wai-ai*." Then, to prevent the ship falling into Japanese hands, Bennett ordered his crew to pour petrol about, but the Japanese saved him the bother of igniting it: "After Bogese pointed out the *Wai-ai*, somebody on board the Barge shouted, but receiving no reply from the *Wai-ai*, the Barge immediately opened fire, the second shot hitting a store of benzine aboard and setting fire to the *Wai-ai*. I dived overboard when the vessel caught fire and managed to swim ashore, but was badly burned."¹³

In the light of these testimonies it is clear that Bogese was working closely with the Japanese on 17 May. In his defense, however, Bogese denied that he had been a willing participant and, while not denying the facts reported by prosecution witnesses, offered explanations calculated to minimize his responsibility. Thus, regarding the proposed attack on Kennedy's post, Bogese claimed that it was only after the Japanese told him they had already

detected it by radio direction finding and threatened to shoot him if he did not help them locate it that he told Rutu to lead them to Mahaga. Besides, he said, he did not think Kennedy was there at the time. As for the attack on the *Wai-ai*, he said that

an aircraft had already spotted the vessel. . . . The Japs told me that they had found a ship. I said I knew nothing of any ship. The Japs then said I should ask somebody to say exactly where the ship was, that the aeroplane had spotted one. I asked Rutu. I admit this. I asked Rutu and Rutu said at Sigana [On the way there] I was sitting on the stern of the ship. Supa and Gee were forward. As soon as we arrived at Sigana, I pointed out and we came to the harbour. We could not find the ship. I asked Supa where the ship was, and he said it was somewhere here. Then we heard a bang, saw the ship burning and the crew diving overboard.

With that the Japanese turned for Tulagi. The attack on Mahaga had been called off shortly before they left Kolare, in response to a message that there was a ship waiting at Tulagi to take Bogese and Kuini Gee to Rabaul. The pair left in it on 18 May, arrived in Rabaul two days later, and for the next two months worked in the native hospital there. In that time Bogese had one brief discussion with Japanese doctors, about tropical diseases.

Then on 1 August, after repeated requests, he and Kuini were returned to Tulagi. He was immediately given leave briefly to visit his family at Voloa on Nggela where they were staying. Although tempted to stay there with them he did not dare, he said, for fear "of Mr. Kennedy, from the Japanese having captured me at Savo and the burning of the ship *Wai-ai*. And the fear of the Japanese coming round and looking for me!" On 5 August, therefore, accompanied by his wife and children, he returned to Tulagi. He was there when the Americans invaded two days later. Although he told them what he knew about the Japanese forces on the island, he was shortly afterward sent to Australia for internment at the insistence of British officials. There he and his family remained, at Taturu in Victoria, until October 1945, when he was returned to the Solomons to face charges of having collaborated with the enemy.¹⁴

It was a sad prospect for a man who, in his educational attainments, in his high competence in the English language, and through widespread recognition of his professional abilities, was one of the outstanding Solomon Islanders of his generation--and probably the best known. He was forty-one years old at the time. He had known and enjoyed success. But he had also felt the hurt of rejection, commonly experienced by educated Islanders in colonial society, and that well before the events in which, as he put it "I lost my profession and my reputation . . . and everything that was important to me."¹⁵

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Although concern for his personal survival prompted the actions for which Bogese was to be tried, his behavior between May and August 1942--and his sense of injustice at what it cost him--cannot properly be understood in isolation from his prewar history.

George Bogese was born at Vulavu in Isabel in 1904, the son of Margaret Semo and Philip U'U, and was baptized into the Church of England by the missionary doctor Henry Welchman. He attended a village school until the age of ten, then went to the Melanesian Mission School at Norfolk Island from 1914 to 1917. After that he returned to Isabel where he became a teacher. In 1922 he joined the government service. He worked first as a clerk, one of the first Solomon Islanders to do so, for five years. Then in 1928, on the recommendation of J. C. Barley, district officer at Gizo, he became the first Solomon Islander to be sent to study medicine at the Central Medical School in Fiji.

He completed the course in 1930, winning the Barker Gold Medal for attainment, and returned to the Solomons in 1931 as a native medical practitioner.¹⁶ In this capacity--visiting villages, inspecting laborers on plantations, holding clinics at government stations--"Dr George," as he was called, traveled widely throughout the Solomons, becoming well known to brown and white residents alike. Well known, but not always well liked, and persistently suspected of misbehavior.

Bogese's professional competence seems never to have been questioned. In 1934 his district officer said he was "keen and efficient, and takes a thorough interest in his work," an opinion endorsed by the senior medical officer.¹⁷ But objections against his character, especially rumors reported by missionaries of sexual misconduct with his female patients, flourished. They were not totally unfounded, although they were taken more seriously by the authorities than they would have been if he were a white man. Thus in 1934 he was found guilty on a charge of adultery and fined £4. On more serious charges, however, he was acquitted. In 1936, on Malaita, a preliminary investigation cleared him of a charge of rape, but did commit him for trial on a charge of incest with his daughter by Anna Kovaga, the first of his three wives. On that charge, too, he was acquitted (but only after the girl had been medically examined), as he also was acquitted on a lesser charge of indecent assault against the same girl.¹⁸ It was a decision that must surely have brought acute relief to a man who already had another daughter by his second wife, a Fijian named Anna Seini, and who was to have ten children by his third and current wife, Susanna Riko, daughter of Maaki Hathevu of Kolare.¹⁹

Regardless of alleged sexual delinquencies, Bogese was guilty of another "failing" which was even more reprehensible in colonial society. He did not regard himself as being inferior to Europeans. One official wrote that "Owing

to his unfortunate manner he is not liked by the white residents of the District, with whom he is in frequent contact through their labour." Another identified the "fault" succinctly, "he is very self-confident."²⁰ Evidence of this, although as a trait rather than a fault, was given in 1939 when Bogese complained to his superiors about what he saw as "the unfair treatment accorded to us, whether native officers or ordinary natives, by some European Officers on many matters," and had the temerity to ask "is this treatment due to the rules [being] set aside for the natives . . . or due to carelessness?"²¹ Many other Solomon Islanders were, in fact, concerned about the matter yet few of the European residents would have disagreed with Kennedy's opinion about the kind of person who would openly ask such a question, or how he ought to be treated:

Bogese is a person of a type well known to all who have had to deal with the educated native at loose, without adequate social control, in a primitive community. The type is characterised by limitless presumption combined with that kind of humility which has been aptly described as arrogant. In the course of some 24 years service in the Pacific Islands I have had more than a little experience of this sort of native. I strongly deprecate any suspicion of harshness or impatient treatment of unsophisticated natives in any environment, and have found that the less one raises one's voice the more co-operation one receives from them. But I have found, to the contrary, that abruptness and direct speech is the only method of achieving satisfactory official relations with those of the Bogese type.²²

Given the clarity of Kennedy's views and the vigor with which he customarily acted, it is hardly surprising that in late 1941, amid the stress of encroaching war, when Bogese and Kennedy were both appointed to Isabel, the two should fall out badly. Unfortunately for the historian, their mutual hostility means that neither is to be fully relied on as a witness concerning the other. The trouble began in January over food stocks, when, contrary to Kennedy's orders, Bogese gave rice from government stores to patients at the local hospital. He said he did so because they needed it; Kennedy maintained that the patients were young women who were not ill but whom Bogese was merely encouraging to stay at the hospital. Another dispute occurred later that month, after Bogese supervised the carrying of supplies from the government post at Tataba inland to Mahaga. Kennedy accused him of stealing some of the supplies; Bogese claimed that far from stealing, he had given some of his own food to the carriers, and that Kennedy had rebuked him for this, saying "You think you are a big chief, to share the food. You are only trying to show off." Whatever the truth of these matters, one thing at least is clear. Kennedy distrusted Bogese. Moreover, he cites alleged

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difficulties in recruiting carriers for the shift from Tataba to Mahaga as leading him to suspect that Bogese was influencing the people of southern Isabel not to cooperate with the government.

To test this theory Kennedy sent Bogese on a tour of the island in February to do medical work and to advise the people to avoid the Japanese when they came, and then sent a patrol after him to check on the instructions he was issuing. Predictably Bogese claims to have done as he was told, but Kennedy remained unconvinced of his loyalty. After three weeks he recalled Bogese from his tour and, without offering any explanation, took him to Savo. There he left him in the charge of the headman Johnson Soro, with orders not to leave the island and with the warning "be very careful, or you will be shot, or whipped, the same as the others." It was the last time the two met.²³ Kennedy went on to become a hero, while just over two months later Bogese was in Japanese hands. By September 1942, through another sudden change of fate, if not of fortune, he was interned in Australia with his wife and three children.

It was not a fate he accepted easily. Over the next three years Bogese wrote a number of letters--consistently fluent, logically resourceful, and occasionally disingenuous--urging his innocence. He blamed Kennedy for his woes, stating that his appointment to Savo was due to "persecution and ill treatment" of him by Kennedy "for purely personal reasons," and arguing that had he not been sent there he would not have fallen in with the Japanese, and so could not have been forced to cooperate with them. He also compared his case with that of others and pleaded unfair treatment: there had been rumors about him, but there had also been rumors--and even complaints--about Kennedy in regard to brutality and improper dealings with women, and Kennedy had never been punished. Then there was the case of the Catholic missionaries of Visale: Father Scanlon had introduced himself to the Japanese, and Father Aloysius Brugmans had accompanied a Japanese patrol to Lungga for two days in July, yet they had not been treated as collaborators. And, he asked with plaintive rhetoric, though not unreasonably, how could he, "a poor defenseless native," be expected not to cooperate.²⁴ As he put it to John Curtin, the Australian prime minister:

It is well known all over the world how the Japanese committed atrocities in the Solomons, New Guinea, the Philippines, or Netherlands East Indies. Civilians were murdered in masses, captured soldier, both European or natives were ill treated, murdered or forced to do this and that, air pilots were executed as in the case of nine pilots at Rabaul. Filipino citizens were burned to death for disobeying them, etc. etc. How could I, being a

defenseless native, resist such a horde of Japanese who proclaimed martial law and death sentences in the Solomons?²⁵

Unbeknown to Bogese, he was not alone in pleading his case. In October 1945 the Anglican bishop, although admitting to a personal dislike of Bogese, wrote to the resident commissioner expounding excuses for his actions and asking that no charges be laid against him:

Bogese is a Solomon Islander who perhaps prematurely was "educated above his station." . . . But it is unreasonable to think that Bogese may well have thought that through a Japanese regime here, the Solomon Islander might get a better crack of the whip. After all there has been a British Administration in these islands for 50 years now . . . are you proud, or even satisfied with what has been done for the peoples here by the British Raj? Your two predecessors have told me that the great contribution of the British . . . has been . . . "security of tenure" and . . . the "Pax Britannica." Neither of these has been very apparent since December 1941. Is it treason for a native of these islands to think that the progress of his people is bound up with an Asiatic race rather than with the British regime of which after all, he is only a "protected" subject.

I have no doubt that Bogese will plead that he acted "under constraint." If he so pleaded and I were an Assessor on the Bench . . . he would get my vote for "acquittal." There were absolutely blood-curdling stories going the rounds in the Solomons in the first half of '42 as to what the Japanese had done on Bougainville to extract information. If Bogese had heard these stories . . . I am not surprised if he gave such information as was asked.²⁶

The administration, however, was unmoved. There was wide public interest in the affair, not least because of the crucial role played by the coastwatchers in the Solomons campaign and because of their dependence on the "cooperation of the natives" in operating behind enemy lines. Possibly to have threatened their security was, therefore, seen as a particularly serious matter, and one that required nothing less than a formal court hearing.²⁷ Accordingly, after a preliminary enquiry, five charges were laid against Bogese; to wit, that he did "with intent to assist the enemy:"

- 1 try to induce Rutu to lead the Japanese to the coastwatch base at Mahaga;
- 2 induce Nicholas Gee to go with the Japanese to Rabaul;
- 3 induce Rutu to tell him the whereabouts of the *Wai-ai*;
- 4 assist the Japanese to locate the *Wai-ai*; and
- 5 "voluntarily join himself with the enemy Japanese" between 1 May and 8 August 1942.²⁸

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Unfortunately for Bogese the bishop was not on the bench when the case was heard. In May 1946 he appeared before the Chief Justice of Fiji, Sir Claude Seton, sitting in Honiara as a judicial commissioner, with two former planters as assessors, J. M. Clift and H. A. Markham. On the first four charges, which related to specific acts and which called for factually precise evidence to prove that he had freely and materially assisted the Japanese, he was acquitted. But on the fifth, which was a more general charge and one where the prosecution was relying on its own perception and not on the testimony of indigenous witnesses who had been intimately involved in the events, it was a different matter. It was held against Bogese that "after he returned from Rabaul, he brought his wife and family in from a country place and they lived with him in Tulagi in apparently close association with the Japanese." On this charge he was found guilty and sentenced to four years imprisonment, of which he served three. Released from Rove Prison in 1949 he returned to the obscurity of village life.²⁹ Not for him would there be an obituary in the *BSIP Newsheet*.

Bogese paid dearly for his association with the Japanese. He lost his job and spent seven years in custody. Moreover, the colonial administration, unforgiving and ever distrustful--as its records abundantly show--would never risk allowing him an opportunity to regain a position of any standing or influence in the Solomon Islands, or to live down the reputation of traitor that he had acquired, if not earned. He had not been represented by a lawyer at his trial, he was refused leave to appeal against his sentence, and from prison he was prevented from contributing to a political discussion then flourishing among his compatriots.³⁰ In December 1946 he wrote an open letter to the people of southern Isabel, urging them to cooperate with the government if they wished to prosper and not to join the Maasina Rule nationalist movement. That in his exhortation he also touched on Solomon Islanders' entitlement to the "Freedoms" listed in the Atlantic Charter of 1940 and to the conditions of life prescribed by the UN Charter was unlikely to make the letter any more acceptable in the eyes of authorities who were already prejudiced against its author, because such claims were also being made by Maasina Rule.³¹ If anything, the letter was likely to strengthen rather than dilute the distrust they had for him. Contemplating Bogese's eventual release from prison, one official even saw risks in encouraging him "to do a certain amount of anthropological work. . . . Bogese as an Assistant Medical Practitioner was always apt to use his position to his own advantage, and might magnify his association with the University [of Sydney] to suit his own ends in some way."³²

In a similar vein, following his release, the high commissioner ordered that "[Bogese] should not be given any form of public employment,"³³ while in

June 1951 the resident commissioner, after meeting Bogese briefly and for the first time during a visit to Isabel, denounced him as "one of the nastiest bits of native composition I have met."³⁴ Presumably this was still his belief the following month when H. E. Maude, a former colonial official then living in Sydney, informed him that two Australian professors, A. P. Elkin of Sydney and S. F. Nadel of Canberra, were planning to bring Bogese ("who gave us so many headaches during the war") to Australia to assist them with their anthropological research.³⁵ The resident commissioner declared himself to be "very apprehensive about the idea" and needed no persuading to accept a recommendation that "Under no circumstances [should] Bogese be allowed to go to Australia for a year. He is a potential nuisance of the first order, and after a year in Australia he could wreck Ysabel in no time."³⁶ Instead Bogese spent 1952 working in the less corrupting atmosphere of Lever's plantation at Yandina.³⁷ He then returned to Isabel where, without profit to himself or danger to the government, he found some diversion in completing a Bugotu-English dictionary.³⁸ He died on Isabel, after a brief illness, on 18 June 1959, unlamented and unnoticed beyond his own district.³⁹

Both as the first Solomon Islands native medical practitioner, and as a reputed traitor, George Bogese has a firm claim to a place in Solomon Islands history. But he also has other grounds for that claim. He was the first Solomon Islander to have his writings published in a recognized academic journal. Already in 1940 he had published a brief article, "Notes on the Santa Cruz Group," in *The Native Medical Practitioner*, a journal published in Fiji, but during his internment he completed another and more ambitious project. This was an account of the traditional culture of Bugotu.⁴⁰ In May 1945 Bogese wrote to A. P. Elkin, professor of anthropology at Sydney University and editor of the journal *Oceania*, introducing himself and describing the project. He had probably become aware of Elkin through the latter's involvement with the Society for the Protection of Native Races. In July he was to write to him again, enclosing a long affidavit about the events of 1942 and requesting the society's help in obtaining "an official enquiry into the unfair treatment I received from Mr D. G. Kennedy, and my subsequent deportation and internment."⁴¹

Despite his reputation in official circles for self-seeking, there is, however, no reason to suspect Bogese of any duplicity in contacting Elkin. His first letter, and it was followed by seven others before his request for assistance, was one such as any editor of an anthropological journal would welcome, and does not suggest that he was seeking to ingratiate himself for personal advantage:

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I am a native of the Solomon Islands and a Native Medical Practitioner by profession. I understand that you have some interest in natives' welfare and all that I wish to inform you [is] that at present I am writing, in very simple English, Anthropological work about my own District, BUGOTU, Santa Isabel, S.I. The subjects dealt with are: short history, clan totemism, sacrifices in altar, fables, tales, dances and songs, feasts and marriages, diseases and treatment of herbs and their methods, fishing house and canoe building, children's play and a tale of Mogo tribe (now extinct), Bugotu vocabulary in English, etc. If you think that this will be any use in your dept., please kindly inform me. After the war you may publish it if possible.⁴²

The work was eventually published in two parts in *Oceania* in 1948. With its appearance Bogese, the "educated native" rejected by the colonial regime for his lack of docility toward his "masters," and punished for being reluctant to risk his life for them, at last earned himself a measure of notability unsullied by scandal. At the same time he provided a legacy of knowledge for his people and set a precedent that other Solomon Islanders could honorably follow. And as time has passed and more information on the war has come to light even his unfortunate involvement with the Japanese can be seen in a more honorable light. At a conference in Honiara in 1987 numerous Solomon Islands war veterans publicly expressed misgivings at the readiness with which they had given their youthful loyalty to the Allies, and admitted to some bitterness at how little it had benefited them. Could he have been there Bogese would surely have smiled knowingly. He too had learned not to expect generosity from colonial rule, but well before they had. The most ironic and surprising revelation of the conference, however, came from Bill Bennett who admitted that while serving with Donald Kennedy he, like Bogese, had come to hate him. So much so that during a skirmish with the Japanese in September 1943 he had taken advantage of the confusion to try to kill Kennedy although only succeeded in wounding him. Yet Bennett finished the war a hero.⁴³

Such admissions indicate the complexity and subjectivity of the notion of loyalty, and of how it is to be assessed. Loyalty to whom? To what? Why? At what cost? They also contribute to the rehabilitation of Bogese's reputation. He was no hero but he was more than "just a bloody traitor." Indeed, without stretching ingenuity too far it may be suggested that latter day Solomon Islanders might usefully find in Bogese a source of national pride. He was intelligent, self-assured, and pragmatic. And it was for displaying such qualities that he, more than other Solomon Islanders, attracted an opprobrium that reflected above all else the unwholesome fears, insecurities,

and pretensions inherent in the colonial regime--as in all colonial regimes--from which the Solomon Islands became independent in 1978.

Notes

1 Boutilier 1989; Cooper 1946, 15-16, 28-29, 47-53; Feldt 1946, 110-111, 150; *Government Monthly*, March 1984 (1:27); Horton 1970, 49-50, 72, 94-96, 149; Macquarrie 1946; *PIM*, May 1984, 73; *Solomon Star*, 23 March 1984, 21 January 1988; *Toktok*, 22 March 1984.

2 In response to a request by Bill Bennett at the Pacific Recollections of World War II Conference, Honiara 1987, a list of all Solomon Islanders recorded as serving in the war was published in Laracy and White (1988, 117-237).

3 Unfortunately the court records for the trials of Bogese and McDonald appear to have been lost. The trials were held in Honiara in 1947 before Sir Claude Seton, the chief justice of Fiji, sitting as a judicial commissioner of the Western Pacific High Commission. The records are not in Honiara, neither in the High Court archives (the court was not set up until later in 1947), nor in the National Archives; nor are they in the Fiji National Archives, where Fiji judicial records for that period have been deposited. Evidence given at the preliminary inquiries for both hearings is in the Solomon Islands National Archives, BSIP CJ 1945.

4 This is a comment Bennett commonly made whenever the subject of Bogese was raised in conversation.

5 Bennett 1987, 259-263, 286-299; Hilliard 1978, 282-285; Laracy 1983.

6 Bennett 1974, 174; Cooper 1946, 29; Laracy 1980, 140; Moorhouse 1928, 6-8.

7 In a tape recorded interview Bogese's daughter Margaret pronounced the name as Shima (Kolotevo 1971). But he seems to be the same man known to Bishop Aubin and most others who have occasion to mention the English-speaking Japanese familiar with the Solomons as Ishimoto (Aubin 1942, 3 July). Feldt describes him as "A Japanese who had lived in the Solomons, and had also been a barber in Fiji, [and] was the head of the Native Department" (Feldt 1946, 111). He was also known as Yoshimoto.

8 BSIP 4 FS 66: Bogese, affidavit 5 July 1954. In this document Bogese presents an account of his life up to 1944.

9 BSIP 4 FS 66: Yoshimoto, notice, 15 May 1942.

10 BSIP 4 FS 66: Bennett, statement, 4 May 1945.

11 BSIP 4 FS 66: Bogese, affidavit, 5 July 1945.

12 BSIP CJ 1945: Statements collected at preliminary inquiry.

13 BSIP 4 FS 66: Bennett, statement, 4 December 1945.

14 BSIP CJ 1945: statement of Bogese. Other accounts of these events, but consistent with Bogese's statement, are in Bogese's affidavit and in various letters filed in BSIP FS 66.

15 BSIP 4 FS 66: Bogese to Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC), 4 August 1944.

16 BSIP 4 FS 66: Bogese, affidavit, 5 July 1945; Guthrie 1979, 28.

17 BSIP I/III, F 58/3: Miller to SMO, 8 October 1934; Crichlow to Secretary to Government, 25 October 1934.

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- 18 BSIP I/III, F 12/7/11: Acting Resident Commissioner to WPHC, 11 August 1936; BSIP I/III, F 58/3: Bengough to SMO, 31 July 1936; BSIP 4, FS 66: Bogese, affidavit, 5 July 1945.
- 19 Nelson Basily, personal communication.
- 20 BSIP I/III, F 58/3: Miller to SMO, 8 October 1934; Crichlow to Secretary to Government, 25 October 1834.
- 21 BSIP I/III, F 58/3: Bogese to acting SMO, 23 May 1939.
- 22 BSIP 4, FS 66: Kennedy, note on Bogese, 20 January 1945.
- 23 BSIP 4, C 5: Kennedy, report on coastwatching, 20 November 1943; BSIP 4, FS 66: Bogese to WPHC, 8 August 1943, 4 August 1944; Kennedy, note on Bogese, 20 January 1945; Bogese, affidavit, 5 July 1945.
- 24 BSIP 4, FS 66: Bogese to WPHC, 8 August 1943, 15 November 1943.
- 25 BSIP 4, FS 66: Bogese to Curtin, 22 March 1945. Other Australians learned about Bogese through *PIM*, April 1945:25; May 1945:34.
- 26 BSIP 4, FS 66: Baddeley to Noel, 5 October 1945.
- 27 BSIP 4, FS 66: Resident Commissioner to WPHC, 22 October 1945.
- 28 BSIP CJ 1945: order for removal of trial, 11 February 1946.
- 29 *PIM*, August 1946:2.
- 30 Elkin Papers P 130, 4/12/135: Bogese to Elkin, 22 July 1946; BSIP 4, FS 66: Bogese, request to appeal, August 1946.
- 31 BSIP 4, C 91: Bogese to Secretary to Government, 16 December 1946, enclosing "Open Letter." The United Nations, noted Bogese, aimed to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all "without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion." *Charter of the United Nations*, Article I, para 3.
- 32 BSIP I/III, 58/3: Trench to Elkin, 26 November 1948.
- 33 BSIP I/III, 58/3: WPHC to Gregory-Smith, 7 July 1949.
- 34 BSIP I/III, F 14/3, III: Gregory-Smith, Ysabel, 9-18 June 1951.
- 35 BSIP I/III, 58/3: Maude to Gregory-Smith, 18 July 1951.
- 36 BSIP I/III, 58/3: Gregory-Smith to Davies, 24 July 1951; Davies to Gregory-Smith, 25 July 1951.
- 37 Elkin Papers, p. 130, 4/2/122: Bogese to Capell, 19 January 1952.
- 38 Cited in Capell 1962, 179-180, but apparently lost subsequently.
- 39 Nelson Basily, personal communication, 16 October 1987.
- 40 Jee Bogese (1941, 1948).
- 41 Elkin Papers P 130, 4/2/122: Bogese to Elkin, 22 July 1946; Wise 1985.
- 42 Elkin Papers P 130, 4/2/122: Bogese to Elkin, 20 March 1946.
- 43 This discussion is based on a large body of evidence in Laracy and White (1988), and in White et al. (1988).

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