

Exotic Diplomacy. Relations between the Polish Government–In–Exile and the Émigré Authorities of the Republic of the South Moluccas

PAWEŁ GOTOWIECKI

University of Business and Entrepreneurship, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski
gotowiecki@wp.pl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0154-7935>

Abstract: This article is dedicated to the diplomatic relations between the Polish government–in–exile and the émigré authorities of the Republic of the South Moluccas. It presents the genesis of mutual contacts, their initiation, nature and course. The author discusses the level of joint initiatives and the importance of mutual communication for both emigrations.

Keywords: emigration, Polish government–in–exile, Republic of the South Moluccas, Republic of the South Maluku

On 18 December 1955, *Głos Powszechny*, a magazine that was an unofficial press body of the Polish government–in–exile in London, published a rather surprising announcement on its front page. The article stated that on 30 November 1955, a delegation of the South Moluccas, led by Minister E. A. Kayadoe, paid a visit to the official seat of the Polish government–in–exile. According to the head of the delegation’s statement, the reason for the visit was “the desire to establish bonds of friendship with the brave Polish nation, whose proud history is so remarkably similar to the history of the South Moluccas.” This declaration met with a courteous response from Aleksander Zawisza, the émigré Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹ It also initiated a mutual contact over several years between the two emigration centres, surprising due to the complete divergence of political interests. On the other hand, due to their “exoticism”, these relations are worth getting to know more closely.

The creation and short life of the South Moluccas are related to the process of decolonisation of the Dutch East Indies. After the war, the Netherlands was among those countries that did not want to give up easily having strategically and economically important colonies. The efforts of the Dutch authorities, which hindered the creation of an

¹ “Delegacja z Południowych Moluków,” *Głos Powszechny*, December 18, 1955.

independent Indonesia, included inspiring the secessionist actions of over two million ethnic Moluccans living in the Maluku Islands. With the support of the Netherlands, on 25 April 1950, the Moluccans announced the creation of the Republic of the South Moluccas (South Maluku), headed by President Johanis Manuhutu, soon replaced by Chris Soumokil. The republic, however, turned out to have a short political existence. In October 1950, Indonesian troops occupied Ambon, the capital of the state. Some of the Moluccans, headed by President Soumokil, took up the guerrilla fight.² More than 12,000 Moluccan soldiers and their families found refuge in the Netherlands. With time, the Moluccan authorities in exile also formed there, headed next by President Johan Alvarez Manusama after Soumokil's death. Initially, the government was represented by the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Republic of the South Moluccas abroad.³

For Polish emigrants, busy with their own affairs and the progressive Stalinisation of Poland, the disintegration of the Dutch colonial empire was of little interest. Although the Polish press sporadically reported on the events in Indonesia,⁴ these events had virtually no significance for the Polish émigré policy.⁵ It is not fully known in what circumstances the politicians of the South Moluccas established contact with representatives of the Polish government-in-exile. However, the first official document exchanged between both emigrant groups is known. In a letter of 14 February 1955, J. P. Nikijuluw, Plenipotentiary Representative of the Republic of the South Moluccas abroad, expressed in a highly courteous manner the hope of cooperation between the two emigrants and invited the representative of the President of the Republic of Poland to visit the Netherlands and participate in the 5th anniversary of the creation of the South Moluccas.⁶ Perhaps the initiative to establish cooperation came from some Dutch citizens supporting the independence of the South Moluccas while maintaining relations with Poles, for example, J. H. Ritzema Bos or Hendrik Pieter Coertzen de Kock.

However, it is not difficult to indicate the reasons why emigrants from Asia wanted contact with Poles. Several countries still recognised the Polish government-in-exile,⁷

² Soumokil himself was taken prisoner in 1962 and executed in 1966.

³ S-0681-0013-00010-00001: J.P. Nikijuluw, Republic South Moluccas, The UN Archives; Artur Patek, Jan Rydel, and Janusz Węc, *Najnowsza historia świata 1945-1995* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003). To this day, about 45,000 Moluccans and their descendants live in the Netherlands. There are still émigré authorities (the current president in exile is John Wattilete). Currently, the emigration authorities of the South Moluccas focus on political activity, although in the 1970s, the emigration from the Moluccas was also active in the field of terrorism.

⁴ For example, an article in the *Orzeł Biały* weekly from 1951 critical of Sukarno's politics.

⁵ Stefan Rokita, "Wpływ Indonezji na stosunki w Holandii", *Orzeł Biały*, April 7, 1951.

⁶ Letter from J.P. Nikijuluw to A. Zaleski, February 14, 1955, A.11.E.1302: South Moluccas, Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (PISM).

⁷ In 1955, these were the Vatican, Spain, Ireland, Cuba and Lebanon.

and in many other countries the government maintained unofficial representations at a fairly high level.⁸ Emigration from Poland to the *European continent* was relatively numerous and well organised. There was still a discussion in the public space about the reconstruction of the Polish Armed Forces. In addition, a group of the highest–ranking Polish politicians and military had contacts in the political circles of Western countries. There was indeed a split among Polish emigrants in 1954. Many of the aforementioned assets were on the side of the so–called National Unification Camp, a centre competitive with the Polish government and the President of the Republic of Poland. Still, indeed, the politicians of the South Moluccas were not that well–versed in the internal situation of Polish emigration. Anyway, even taking into account that the centre with which they were trying to establish contact was of less importance and influence, the relations with Poles seemed potentially beneficial for the Moluccans.

The benefits that the Polish government–in–exile could gain from establishing contacts with the emigration of Moluccas are less apparent. The Polish government generally, relying on legalistic doctrine, avoided establishing official relations with refugee committees not recognised in the international arena. Such was the nature of the authorities of the South Moluccas, a state that never existed *de iure* and was not recognised by other states. In addition, there was the issue of the position of the South Moluccas at the periphery of Polish geopolitical interests.

The first reactions of the Polish authorities in exile were not enthusiastic. In a letter of 18 February 1955, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aleksander Zawisza, asked Stefan Łubieński, the Representative of the Government of the Republic of Poland in the Netherlands, to provide basic information on the nature of the Moluccan emigration and the attitude of the Dutch government towards it. The issue of sending Łubieński to the Republic of the South Moluccas anniversary celebrations depended on this.⁹ He also included his reservations in an official letter before the expected visit of the Moluccans to London. He wrote to B. Włodarczyk, intermediary in relations between emigrants:

In this letter to you, the representatives of the South Moluccas inform you that they have prepared a draft of some kind of agreement (treaty) between the two governments. Well, I kindly ask you to inform to whom it is appropriate that the Polish Government, in the current situation, has not concluded any international agreements and currently does not see the purpose of concluding such agreements. They cannot be clear and may not relate to any specific issues. The inadvertent preparation of such an act could jeopardise the seriousness of the ideas represented by the governments of enslaved nations.¹⁰

⁸ Krzysztof Tarka, *Emigracyjna dyplomacja. Polityka zagraniczna rządu RP na uchodźstwie 1945–1990* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2003), 159–183.

⁹ Letter from A. Zawisza to S. Łubieński, February 18, 1955, A.11.E.1302: South Moluccas, PISM.

¹⁰ Letter from A. Zawisza to B. Włodarczyk, no date, A.11.E.1302: South Moluccas, PISM.

Ultimately, despite some reservations, the contact was established. Arguably, the sympathy of Polish refugees with the national liberation movements and sharing the grim fate of the refugee played an important role. Probably not without significance was also the fact that the emigration centre around the Polish government and the President of the Republic of Poland was going through a deep internal crisis. For this reason, every element of external recognition had a propaganda dimension. After short negotiations, the visit of the South Moluccas delegation to the London seat of the President of the Republic of Poland on 28–30 November 1955, mentioned in the introduction to this article, took place. The South Moluccas side was represented by a four–person delegation headed by Dr E.A. Kayadoe, representing the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Republic of the South Moluccas abroad, J.P. Nikijuluw. On 30 November, Prime Minister Antoni Pająk, accompanied by Minister Zawisza, received the delegation on behalf of sick President Zaleski. The three–day visit ended with the adoption of detailed arrangements. Among other things, the Delegation of the South Moluccas undertook to host Polish political refugees in the territory under its control and grant economic privileges to potential Polish settlers in the future. Mutually, the Polish side undertook to provide consular protection to the citizens of the South Moluccas residing in the countries with which the Polish government–in–exile maintains diplomatic relations. Both sides were also obliged to cooperate in the fight against communism.¹¹

The visit of the South Moluccas delegation was discussed in more detail at the meeting of the Government of the Republic of Poland on 7 December 1955. Minister Zawisza explained the issue of recognition by the Government of the Republic of South Moluccas. Zawisza informed that despite the fact that the delegation of the South Moluccas asked for *de iure* recognition, the government decided that such a form was not possible but proposed the exchange of declarations and mutual information campaign and consular assistance.¹² Stefan Talmon, an expert in international law, calls it “some unspecified recognition”. Oxford professor points out that this was the only form of recognition of the South Moluccas in the international arena.¹³

In the second half of the 1950s, the contacts between the Polish government–in–exile and the emigrants from the South Moluccas were quite intense. In February 1957, during a tournée of the capitals of several European countries, Minister of Foreign Affairs

¹¹ Visit of the South Moluccas delegation. Circular of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 December 1955, A.44.49/27: The Polish Embassy to the Holy See, PISM; “Wizyta delegacji Południowych Moluków”, *Polska Agencja Telegraficzna*, December 21, 1955.

¹² Protocol No. 63 from the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland, December 7, 1955, 2376/61: Files of Antoni Pająk, Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN).

¹³ Stefan Talmon, *Recognition of Governments in International Law With Particular Reference to Governments in Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 305–306.

Aleksander Zawisza, at the invitation of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Republic of the South Moluccas abroad, also visited the seat of the Republic in Rotterdam, meeting with politicians from the South Moluccas and several parliamentarians from the Netherlands. Moreover, Zawisza visited a camp for refugees from the islands of Ambon, Buru, Seram and others.¹⁴ Museum Maluku in Utrecht retains a photo of this visit of the Polish minister in its collection.



Aleksander Zawisza, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish government–in–exile, visits the South Moluccas refugee camp. Third from left: Johan Alvarez Manusama, President of the Republic of the South Moluccas (between 1966 and 1993), Aleksander Zawisza in the centre.

Source: F 99.9126, Museum Maluku (Utrecht).

The politicians of the South Moluccas saw representatives of emigration as intermediaries in political contacts with Western politicians and structures. They needed this mediation because the official policy of Western countries was very conservative, if not reluctant, in terms of the aspirations of the Moluccans. This is well illustrated by the Memorandum

¹⁴ A. Zawisza's Expose, April 26, 1958, A.44.49/35: The Polish Embassy to the Holy See, PISM; Note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Polish Government–in–Exile, London, December 14, 1955, A.44.49/27: The Polish Embassy to the Holy See, PISM.

by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Drumwright) to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs of 13 April 1954:

The Department has no evidence which would positively identify Nikijuluw or the 'Republic of the South Moluccas' with the actions which Indonesia alleges. However, as the group is an insurgent one inimical to the interests of the Republic of Indonesia, I have recommended against granting interviews to Nikijuluw or other persons identifiable with the 'Republic of the South Moluccas' since to do so might embarrass US–Indonesian relations and seriously hinder the achievement of our objectives with respect to that country.¹⁵

At the beginning of 1956, a representative of the South Moluccas turned to the Polish government with a proposal for the participation of Polish lawyers in creating a memorandum on the occupation of the South Moluccas by Indonesia.¹⁶ A few months later, the authorities of the South Moluccas turned to the Polish government for support in contacts at the UN forum.¹⁷ Yet another initiative was to allow the delegation of the South Moluccas to visit Ireland and use Polish diplomatic and consular assistance. The mentioned event took place in early 1957, and it seems to be one of the few occasions for the emigration of the South Moluccas to manifest its formal character.¹⁸ Polish emigration also helped to publicise the issue of the South Moluccas. An example may be the initiative of Marian Szumlakowski, the Legate of the Republic of Poland to Spain, who, on his initiative, sent a Spanish–language brochure on the South Moluccas to Spanish politicians and public figures.¹⁹

In April 1960, Minister Zawisza visited the Netherlands once again, participating in the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Republic of the South Moluccas.²⁰ In the following years, occasional contacts were still maintained. There were several visits of the South Moluccas to the seat of the Polish government. In 1966, Johan Alvarez Manusama sent a commemorative letter on the occasion of the Millennium of the Polish State.²¹

It is difficult to precisely determine when the relations between the Polish government–in–exile and the Republic of the South Moluccas expired. It probably happened in the late 1960s. What were the reasons for this? We can guess that there were several.

¹⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, East Asia and the Pacific*, Volume XII, Part 2, ed. Carl N. Raether, Harriet D. Schwar (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1987), 418–419.

¹⁶ Note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Polish Government–in–Exile, February 3, 1956, A.11.E.1302: South Moluccas, PISM.

¹⁷ Letter from J.H. Rintzema Bos to A. Zawisza, December 9, 1956, A.11.E.1302: South Moluccas, PISM.

¹⁸ Letter from J.H. Rintzema Bos to A. Zawisza, January 16, 1957, A.11.E.1302: South Moluccas, PISM.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Letter from J.A. Manusama to A. Zawisza, May 12, 1960, A.11.E.1302: South Moluccas, PISM.

²¹ Telegram from A. Zawisza to J.A. Manusama, May 4, 1966, A.11.E.1352: South Moluccas, PISM.

First, the presidential centre in the structures of Polish emigration was experiencing a crisis caused by isolation and internal conflicts. In 1970, Aleksander Zawisza, undoubtedly one of the promoters of contact with emigrants from the South Moluccas, resigned from the posts of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister (between 1965 and 1970) of the Polish government-in-exile. Finally, it should not be forgotten that in 1970 terrorist actions against Indonesia were initiated by a young generation of Moluccas emigrants. Polish partners certainly did not welcome it, as they avoided this type of political demonstration.

After 1970, the issue of the South Moluccas was occasionally raised in the Polish émigré debate as part of the review of the geopolitical situation in the world. Such was the nature of, for example, an article by Jędrzej Giertych in the *Opoka* journal, which showed sympathy for the Moluccans.²² Probably, however, political relations with the government of the South Moluccas were no longer maintained by Polish émigré diplomacy.

To conclude, it should be stated that the relations between the Polish government-in-exile and the South Moluccas emigration authorities had no significance for the Polish emigration policy. However, they had something of romanticism, expressed in the traditional Polish 19th-century insurgent slogan "For your freedom and ours". Their true character is well defined by the words of Minister Aleksander Zawisza, spoken on 28 January 1956 during an exposé to the Council of the Republic of Poland (Polish quasi-parliament in exile):

If I have allowed myself to pause for a moment, the attention of the High Council on this part of the work of my ministry, it is only to illustrate the general attitude of the government to the efforts of nations fighting for their freedom, regardless of their power, their degree of ties to business with us, or their geographic location. Our attitude towards them is based on our understanding of their longing for freedom and on our national tradition.²³

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²² Jędrzej Giertych, "Moluki", *Opoka*, June 1977, 102.

²³ A. Zawisza's Exposé, 28 January 1956, 9/12: The Polish government in exile, Pilsudski Institute of America (PIA).

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