

## World &amp; Nation

## Police investigate deaths of pro-Solidarity priests

WARSAW, Poland (NC) — A pro-Solidarity priest from northeastern Poland was found dead in his apartment Jan. 30 — the second dissident Polish priest to die within 10 days.

Father Stanislaw Suchowolec, 30, was apparently asphyxiated by a fire in his apartment, church officials said. They said neighbors alarmed by smoke smashed their way into the priest's apartment in the town of Bialystok and found him and his dog on the floor near a bed.

Father Cezary Potocki, a Bialystok church spokesman, said police were investigating the cause and nature of the fire.

Ten days earlier, 74-year-old Father Stefan Niedzielak was found murdered in his Warsaw home. Father Zdzislaw Krol, a spokesman for the Archdiocese of Warsaw, said Father Niedzielak was beaten and his back was broken, apparently by a karate blow from someone skilled in combat techniques. He said the priest also had a broken nose, and several nails had been torn from his left hand.

Both priests had received death threats, and at times Father Suchowolec traveled with bodyguards. Church officials said both were on a list of more than 150 priests considered extreme by Poland's communist government.

Father Suchowolec was chaplain for the banned Solidarity labor movement in the Bialystok region. He celebrated a monthly "Mass for the Homeland" and supplied information to Solidarity's national Intervention Commission, which monitors human rights.

Father Niedzielak was not politically active but had been a chaplain for Solidarity and made St. Charles Borromeo Church at Warsaw's

biggest cemetery a popular shrine to Poles killed in the Soviet Union during and after World War II.

Cardinal Jozef Glemp of Gniezno and Warsaw presided over Father Niedzielak's funeral Jan. 26 and called the situation "unusual" because "such situations just don't happen."

"Even if there is a murder, the killers are usually known. He died violently, not naturally," the cardinal said.

Father Krol said Father Niedzielak had told his friends several times that he had received death threats. "Some of them were very brutal. On the morning of the day he died he told me, 'They are going to kill me,'" Father Krol said.

Another friend, Wojciech Ziembinski, said that two weeks earlier Father Niedzielak had told a friend the threats had become increasingly frequent and crude. "One said, 'If you don't calm down you'll croak like Popieluszko,'" Ziembinski said.

Father Jerzy Popieluszko, 37, a strong supporter of Solidarity, was kidnapped in northern Poland Oct. 19, 1984, and his body was dragged from a frozen river that Oct. 30. Four Polish security police officers were convicted in the incident, and pathologists at their trial testified that the main cause of Father Popieluszko's death probably was choking on blood from head wounds and vomit brought on by the shock of four severe beatings.

After Father Niedzielak's funeral, about 500 mourners marched one mile to Father Popieluszko's grave at St. Stanislaw Kostka Church. Marchers carried Solidarity banners and shouted, "Stop killing our priests."



The coffin of Father Stefan Niedzielak is carried to his grave Jan. 26 during an emotional funeral attended by thousands of mourners. The Polish priest was found dead in his home Jan. 21.

it was also the date of Stroessner's inauguration.

Stroessner was re-elected to an eighth term in February 1988, but church leaders said elections were meaningless because they were controlled by the Colorado Party.

Later in August, Archbishop Rolon said the Paraguayan government was "eliminating all difficulties that could impede" the growth of churches formed by followers of excommunicated Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. The archbishop said the Catholic Church could not oppose this because constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion, but he said he thought the church would "be making our discontent about this known" to Stroessner.

On Jan. 17, police blocked off the entrances to a church-run radio station, Radio Caritas, to

prevent a broadcast that featured Stroessner's opponents. Less than a month earlier, the government cut the station's power supply from 10 kilowatts to one kilowatt.

In late January, Paraguayan police surrounded San Pedro Parish in Coronel Oviedo, 80 miles east of Asuncion, to keep church and human rights activists from attending a Mass marking the first anniversary of police repression against activists seeking free elections.

The pastor, Father Eugene O'Connell, told Radio Caritas he was "practically a prisoner within my parish ... unable to leave because outside there was a double cordon of police detaining anyone who got near the church."

The priest said police justified their actions by citing a law that prohibited "ceremonies that might have political connotations."

## Army general justifies coup

ASUNCION, Paraguay (NC) — The army general who overthrew Paraguayan President Alfredo Stroessner Feb. 3 said he led the rebellion, among other reasons, to defend the Catholic Church.

In a statement read on an Asuncion radio station, Gen. Andres Rodriguez said: "We have left our barracks in defense of the honor of the armed forces; for the full and total unification of the (ruling) Colorado Party in the government; for the initiation of democracy in Paraguay; for the respect of human rights; for the defense of our Rõdman, Christian, apostolic, Catholic religion."

Rodriguez began his coup the evening of Feb. 2. The following day, he announced that Stroessner was under house arrest and later he was sworn in as the nation's president.

Almost 93 percent of Paraguay's 3.7 million people profess Catholicism, and the Catholic Church had become the only national institution able to criticize the government effectively.

Stroessner, who ruled Paraguay for nearly 35 years, was Catholic, but he alienated church

leaders, who repeatedly criticized him for what they said were violations of human rights.

Church-state tensions in Paraguay increased after Pope John Paul II's May 1988 visit. In July, the government expelled a Spanish Jesuit, Father Juan de la Vega, after he gave a lecture on liberation theology. Paraguayan bishops called the action part of the "propaganda of the government which, in various ways, has sought to stain the activities undertaken by the church."

In early August, about 45,000 people marched silently through the streets of Asuncion to an open-air Mass to protest alleged persecution of Catholics in Paraguay. Opposition politicians described the march as the biggest demonstration in three decades against Stroessner. Priests carried a banner that read, "The truth will make you free," a phrase used often by the pope during his visit.

Archbishop Ismael Blas Rolon Silvero of Asuncion canceled a traditional "Te Deum" thanksgiving Mass Aug. 15 marking the anniversary of the founding of Asuncion because

## Dominican superior disassociates order from Father Fox's statements

By Tracy Early

NEW YORK (NC) — The Dominican master general has disassociated himself from a statement published by Father Matthew Fox, a Dominican specializing in creation-centered spirituality. In the letter, Father Fox compared a top Vatican official, as well as the institutional church, to a "dysfunctional family."

Father Damian A. Byrne, head of the worldwide Dominican order, said at a New York

press conference Jan. 30, "I wish to disassociate myself and the Dominican order from the comments Father Fox made in this letter" about the church, the pope, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In a prepared statement, Father Byrne said, "I do not think that anyone has the ability or knowledge of the universal church today to say that it is a 'dysfunctional family' or to ascribe other emotional problems to members of the church or to the entire community of faith."

Father Fox, who was asked by Father Byrne to take a year's sabbatical beginning Dec. 15, published his statement, "Is the Catholic Church Today a Dysfunctional Family?" in the November-December issue of *Creation* magazine. It also was published in the *National Catholic Reporter*, a weekly newspaper published in Kansas City, Mo.

In the statement, Father Fox said church members have "appeased and placated" leaders in hopes that they "will not become violent yet another time."

"I see 10 parallels within the Roman Catholic Church today that convince me that our church is indeed a dysfunctional family, a dysfunctional organization," Father Fox wrote.

He said those parallels included the Vatican deficit and declining vocations, an "obsession" with sexual issues, church leaders' "heightened sense of power," "control games," lack of communication, and what he called a "loss of memory," particularly about the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

Father Byrne, who was in New York after a trip to the Philippines and Japan, told reporters he also wished to make it known that he — not the Vatican, as Father Fox asserted — decided Father Fox should take the sabbatical and refrain from publishing or public speaking during the next year.

Father Byrne said he did not consider it so much a "silencing" as giving Father Fox time for reassessment and reflection within the church community.

"That requirement was imposed by me as a way of preserving the positive things in his approach to spirituality for the church," the master general said. "I regarded it as a pastoral approach to a brother."

He said the Vatican had originally raised questions about Father Fox's "creation spirituality," and that Cardinal Ratzinger subsequently pressed for action. "But, he said, the only specific request Cardinal Ratzinger made was that Father Fox cease to direct the Institute of Culture and Creation Spirituality at Holy Names College in Oakland, Calif.

Father Byrne said Cardinal Ratzinger had "scrupulously" honored the request of the Dominican order that it first be allowed to handle problems involving its members before action is taken by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In a Sept. 17, 1987, letter to Father Byrne, Cardinal Ratzinger said Father Fox should be "instructed to cease from further dissemination of the central thesis of his book, 'Original Blessing.'"

Father Byrne told reporters in New York that he had read the book and found nothing unorthodox or erroneous in what he considers its central thesis, "the goodness of creation."

The difficulty, he said, was a lack of balance about the reality of sin and the need for redemption. The problems easily could be corrected in a second edition of the book, Father Byrne said.

In addition to calling the church a "dysfunctional family," Father Fox published a separate advertisement in *The New York Times* a statement criticizing "fundamentalist zeal" in the church. The advertisement appeared in mid-December.

### Diocese offering tuition help for economically hindered

The Rochester diocese will offer tuition subsidies for the 1989-90 school year for students attending Catholic secondary and elementary schools.

According to Brother Brian Walsh, superintendent of diocesan schools, the program aids economically disadvantaged children who wish to receive a Catholic education but don't have the means to do so.

Registration and acceptance at a Catholic school is required before application can be made for a subsidy. Forms for secondary tuition subsidy will be available at each diocesan high school on March 1.

Interested students and parents should contact the parish school of their choice or call Sister Virginia Steinwachs at 716/328-3210.



Father Matthew Fox

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