

Former secret agents charged for framing martyred Polish priest

Polish prosecutors have charged three former communist secret police agents with attempting to frame Blessed Jerzy Popieluszko before they abducted and murdered him.

The three were among four men convicted of Blessed Popieluszko's murder; all four were released early after controversial sentence revisions.



Blessed Jerzy Popieluszko

Marcin Golebiewicz, an official with the Commission for Investigating Crimes against the Polish Nation, said the agents faced up to three years' jail if convicted of creating false evidence under penal and criminal code provisions against "communist crimes and crimes against humanity."

His statement, published Jan. 28 by Poland's official National Remembrance Institute, said the agents illegally entered Father Popieluszko's apartment and left "ammunition, explosives, leaflets and publications."

"This behaviour constituted, at the time of its execution, an act of repression and persecution against a priest for political and religious motives," the statement said.

It added that Blessed Popieluszko had faced subversion charges when the three men later "discovered" the planted items during a legal search of the priest's apartment in December 1983.

Blessed Popieluszko, 37 at the time of his death, was linked with Poland's outlawed Solidarity movement and was known nationwide for sermons defending human rights. His bound and gagged body was dredged from a Vistula River reservoir in October 1984 after he was kidnapped returning from a Mass in Bydgoszcz.

Blessed Popieluszko has been recognized as a martyr by the Roman Catholic Church, and was beatified on June 6, 2010 by Archbishop Angelo Amato on behalf of Pope Benedict XVI. A miracle attributed to his intercession and required for his canonization is now under investigation.