

CISKEI COURT ACQUITS FATHER MKHATSHWA

The secretary general of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa was acquitted on charges of subversion, incitement to public violence and addressing an illegal gathering.

At the trial (9/3/84) the southern African catholic Bishops' Conference was represented by the president Archbishop Denis Hurley, Bishop W. Napier, vice-president, Archbishop Buthelezi, Bishop Murphy and Bishop Brook, the associate secretary general and three other members of the conference staff.

Bishop Van Cauwelaert represented the Bishops' Conferences of the Netherlands and Belgium and Justice and Peace Commissions and the Pax Christi organisations of these countries. The International Commission of Jurists of Geneva was represented by Mr. A McNulty from London. Advocate J. Wilpert from West Germany was the observer for the German Justice and Peace Commission and the International Movement of catholic Jurists. Sister Catherine Hughes represented the Catholic Institute for International Research and Sister Dymphna Vanweesenbeeck was present on behalf of the Central Mission Board, Holland.

Numerous catholic priests, nuns and lay people from Pretoria, Johannesburg and Durban crowded into the hall. The South African Council of Churches was represented by Dr. Kistner, and Anglican priests from the Ciskei and from Durban were present.

During the first day of the trial, four state witnesses gave evidence. One of these told the court that he had signed a statement under duress and that he now rejected that statement. On leaving the court, he was arrested and will be brought to trial for statutory perjury.

The remaining state witnesses gave evidence which seemed to confirm that, instead of inciting students to violence, Father Mkhathshwa appealed to them to 'remain calm and to act with responsibility and dignity'.

Magistrate J. Kotze, acquitted Father Mkhathshwa of all charges. There was tremendous applause from all present, except the security police. Bishops, priests and nuns jostled with one another in trying to embrace and congratulate Father Smangaliso.

At Sacred Heart Convent, King William's Town, Father Mkhathshwa and friends joined in a thanksgiving service presided over by Archbishop Hurley and Bishop Murphy.