

STATEMENT ON FR. A. D. SCHOLTEN, OP AND FR. S. P. MKHATSHWA

16 June 1977

It has been brought to my notice that the Secretary General of the Conference, Fr. A. D. Scholten, OP, has been receiving anonymous telephone calls threatening his life if he does not leave the country within 24 hours. The caller, speaking in English in a carefully dissimulated voice, presented himself as speaking in the name of "The Society".

It is further reported to me that the two members of the Security Police whose names have been given to me, posing first as "telephone officials" and then as "members of the local Gezina Police Station in Pretoria" gained illegal access to the premises of the Administrative Offices of the SA Catholic Bishops' Conference in Pretoria. When this was brought to the notice of the Security Police it was admitted that these men have acted wrongly and dismissed the incident with the remark to forget the whole thing.

Finally, I have personally made an on the spot visit to F 524 MABOPANE where Father S. P. Mkhathswa has been banned to acquaint myself with the living conditions there. He is also Secretary of the Conference in South Africa and to the regional body of Bishops covering 8 countries. It was distressing and embarrassing to know that the previous owners of the F 524 house had been ordered by the authorities to vacate the house to make room for Fr. Mkhathswa.

A water tap, the only one, fixed outside the house was removed the day after the banning. No electricity is laid on. No inside doors, not a stick of furniture is provided. Neither is there a ceiling or inside doors.

I want to express my grave concern at this state of affairs, which smacks of intimidation and harassment. It seriously hampers the work of the Church in South Africa and its role in Africa as a whole.