

Public protest meeting organised

Repeal Terrorism

Act—

Helen

STAFF REPORTERS

THE NATION-WIDE CALL for a revision or repeal of the Terrorism Act mounted yesterday as academics, politicians, Coloured leaders, clergymen, lawyers, and leading Afrikaner philosophers came out in full support.

The official Opposition has already organised a public protest meeting in the Johannesburg City Hall on Friday at midday. And there are indications that students of the University of the Witwatersrand are planning a mass protest meeting on the campus.

Mrs. Helen Suzman, Progressive Party MP for Houghton, said yesterday that the Terrorism Act "should be struck off the Statute Book at the first opportunity".

In an interview she said that no amendment to Section Six of the Act would prevent abuses of the powers given to the police to hold people in solitary confinement.

Mrs. Suzman added that she had opposed the Act unlike the United Party, at every stage of its passage through Parliament, because it was obvious even at that time that such powers would be abused.

When the 90-day Detention Act was enforced and magistrates visited detainees, it "in no way prevented suicides and deaths under strange circumstances."

"All those laws that give Ministers or the police the right to deprive a man of his liberty before he has been duly charged in a court of law, found guilty and convicted, must be repealed," Mrs. Suzman said.

Parliament had made a "palous mistake" in giving these vast powers. It was a tragedy that the official opposition did not see fit to oppose these laws in principle when they were first introduced.

"I have no doubt that this gave the Government the green light to go full steam ahead in using its full power to detain people without trial," she said.

Professor Barend van Niekerk, of the University of Natal's Law Department, said the Terrorism Act was the "antithesis of justice" and appealed to the legal fraternity "to kill the Act by refusing to accept evidence

Repeal Act says

Suzman

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obtained under its provisions". He added that it was "a vicious bit of medievalism and its application constituted a complete abdication of justice. With this Act on the Statute Book no person, and least of all a lawyer, can go about his business with equanimity."

The prominent Afrikaners "Sethiger" author, Mr. Andre Brink, said it was imperative that the whole Act be reviewed if South Africa wanted to "salvage the smallest vestige of respectability".

He dismissed the events of the past two weeks as "disgusting and tragic" adding that the Prime Minister appeared to be bent on "identifying himself with the Hitler image".

The leader of the Coloured Labour Party, Mr. Sonny Leon, said his party believed the whole Act should be scrapped. To remove any doubts from the minds of the people the institution of a judicial commission "was a matter of public urgency".

FAILURE

Failure by the Government to set up such a commission would "convince the people that there were good grounds for refusal".

Mr. Mike Mitchell, United Party shadow Minister of Justice, said the matter had become one of vital importance to the country and for this reason he was glad that he had been invited to speak at the party's protest meeting.

Mr. Mitchell's call for revision of the Act was backed by three prominent United Party politicians.

Mr. Japie Basson, MP for Beudenhout, said the matter would be raised as early as possible during the next session of Parliament. It was essential to devise a system of continual judicial supervision in cases where people suspected of subversive activities had to be held for investigation and questioning.

Mr. Lionel Murray, MP for Green Point, said the Cape region of the party gave its unqualified support to Mr. Mitchell's call for revision of the Act.

Mr. Harry Schwarz, deputy leader of the United Party in the Transvaal, said he opposed subversion and terrorism as much as everyone in the country, but he wanted to deal with

the situation "with clean hands."

Brigadier Kurt von Keyserlingk, formerly a senior police officer and now MP for Umhazi, condemned Cabinet Ministers for "evading their duties" in allowing the police to take the blame for carrying out laws of the country.

"The Ministers are a bunch of political cowards hiding behind the police force. They have shown that they are not fit to control the departments under them. The Government has created a Frankenstein by introducing these Draconian laws."

IMPERATIVE

In Durban yesterday, Professor F. E. Stook, principal of the University of Natal, said the Security Police raids on students and staff at his university had a considerable intimidatory effect and may well influence student examination performances.

He said in a statement that "this effect would be greatly reduced if it could be guaranteed that all those detained would be charged in court without delay, and if they were allowed immediate access to their legal advisers."

In a special interdenominational prayer service at St. Alban's Cathedral in Pretoria, yesterday the Anglican Bishop of Pretoria, the Rt. Rev. E. G. Knapp Fischer said "We pray for the victims of injustice and those who condone it by their silence."

About 60 people prayed for all people detained without trial and for all banned persons and their relatives and dependants.

The Al-Jihaad Islamic Movement, a Cape Town Muslim organisation, issued a statement yesterday, signed by Mr. M. S. Matlhe, chairman of its action committee, calling for a "full and public investigation" into the death of Mr. Ahmed Timol, so as to allay public mistrust and dissatisfaction.

The one dissenting voice came from Brigadier Rocco de Villiers, a retired Deputy Commissioner of Police, who said that although he was not in sympathy with Government policy the maintenance of law and order was essential.

"A repeal of the Terrorism Act will be disastrous in the present atmosphere of world terrorism," he said, adding that the police, in his view, should always be answerable to the courts.