

FOR

MERCY'S

SAKE

The Star

SATURDAY, 13 APRIL, 1957

For mercy's sake

WITHOUT wishing to comment on the substance of the inquiry into the treason charges—this would be manifestly improper—we feel that in the name of justice and humanity the general public should give sympathetic heed to the plea on behalf of the "Treason Trials Defence Fund."

The circumstances of the inquiry are unique in South Africa. It seems probable that the proceedings, begun last December, will continue for a considerable time. No fewer than 156 persons are involved. all of them, it is stated, of more or less humble means. During the hearings, concentrated in Johannesburg for the conveni-

ence of the prosecution, many of the persons concerned are compelled to live away from their homes.

Though they are out on bail, they are unable to pursue their ordinary occupations, and the maintenance of themselves and their families is thus seriously jeopardized. . .

Whatever the outcome of the inquiry, the public conscience cannot be satisfied to allow any undue hardships to be borne while the process of justice takes its course. Besides the humanitarian aspects, the legal costs of the defence in a case like this must run to a very large figure. So important are the issues at stake, for the community as well as for the individual, that the defence should not be handicapped in any way by financial or other difficulties.