

## Vanishing people

AS THE RAIDS and detentions continue we must again state our concern about a disconcerting aspect of Security Police activity. This is that people are disappearing, without any official announcement.

As far as friends and associates are concerned, they simply vanish. Someone fails to turn up for work, and only later does the word get around that he has been detained.

Again yesterday it was only through the medium of the Opposition Press that the public was informed of people being detained. Each time we have been able to do this only because relatives of the detainees informed us. The authorities have said nothing — so that the Government newspapers have been able to report nothing; they, too, have learnt the news from us.

What is more, we have to admit that we do not know whether we have reported all the detentions. There may be any number that we know nothing about.

### Accusations

Now it is no good the Cabinet and the Nationalist Press going berserk with fury again because we have expressed our concern about this. The fact is such things are deeply worrying, and as long as we are not a controlled Press it is our duty to give expression to that worry.

Many wild accusations have been thrown at us for doing this. It is necessary, therefore, to keep the record straight; to restate clearly our point of view.

We are not conducting a campaign to undermine the Security Police. We are saying we don't believe the Security Police should have been given powers to bypass the courts.

We are not saying the Security Police are abusing those powers. We are saying they *may* be, and that when special powers have been given to the police there should be special vigilance to ensure that they don't abuse them.

We have never said Mr. Ahmed Timol did not commit suicide, nor that he did. We have reported what the Security Police said, and what Mr. Timol's father said. It is up to the inquest court to decide how he died.

### Inquiry

We have not said that the Security Police torture people. We don't know. What we have said is that with 17 deaths in detention and numerous allegations of ill-treatment, there is a lot of public suspicion and that there should be a public inquiry to clear the air.

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Finally, we come back to this matter of the secret disappearances. It frightens us because it is associated in the mind with totalitarian states. It is the sort of thing that happened in Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia. This is what we mean when we talk of "jackboot methods". We do not believe it should happen in South Africa.

This apart, it also encourages rumours which in turn foster an atmosphere of fear and resentment. We don't believe this is in the interests of security in a country like South Africa.