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# The Star

## In fear of its shadow

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"Star"

THE 14-day ban on gatherings is another — and classic — example of the Government over-reacting in fear of its own shadow.

If it believes that Sunday's proposed rally in memory of Ahmed Timol might endanger peace or stir up racial hostility it is within its rights to ban that particular gathering.

And if, as has been surmised, the Timol rally is indeed the focus of objection, the ban must obviously be made wide enough to prevent it from being switched to another place, time and form.

But the Government proceeds to ban all open-air gatherings of 11 people or more over the whole Reef triangle and Pretoria for two weeks. And it does so to prevent people from attacking, criticising or even propagating, defending and discussing "any principle or policy of the Government."

Let us leave aside the question whether the Riotous Assemblies Act can be used to prohibit gatherings on those grounds.

The thing that sticks in the gullet is the bit about preventing the mere discussion of Government policy. The Government's sub-conscious response to political discussion is to silence it. Isn't the Government proud of its policy? Doesn't it want its principles discussed? This is a gratuitous invasion of freedom of speech. It goes too far.