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Ugly Use of Photos

WERE I a regular marcher in peace parades, a student protester or a picketer for any liberal cause I'd be alarmed right now by the steady, sinister practice of the police and the FBI in assembling dossiers on dissenters.

As a "security tactic," it smacks of the Gestapo. And it's one step from suspension — by emergency decree — of the rights guaranteed us by the Constitution.

On television we were introduced to the police chief of Philadelphia, Frank Rizzo. His force includes a Civil Disobedience Unit which has built up a "rogues' gallery" of dissenters.

Rizzo dispatches photographers to every rally, every march, every

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gathering in behalf of a cause. He claims this practice spots the "troublemakers."

In truth, such tactics may be fairly regarded as intimidation, abridgment of civil rights and abuse of the privileges of the police badge. Not long ago the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit to outlaw this ominous business and to have the dossiers destroyed.

At first the ACLU was upheld, a wise judge perceiving the inherent danger in placing the names and faces of innocent persons in a "suspicious" file. But now New York state's high court has upheld the police.

One hopes the ACLU will press on, for at issue are rights as basic to liberty as oxygen is to life — the right to petition, to protest, to gather in peaceful assembly.

One of the attorneys involved in this case re-

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ports that the ACLU has received a number of complaints from people who said they were simply standing in a crowd, watching a demonstration, when suddenly a police photographer appeared and snapped their picture.

Like those famous "unevaluated" files on each of us now reposing in the vaults of the FBI, these police dossiers may be put to uses not dreamed of by honest citizens.

And here is the rule: The day may come when

you are denied a passport, a credit card or a promotion and your sleep will be haunted by the question "Why?" Was it your photo at the last moratorium? Did your name on a peace petition

forfeit your "clearance" with J. Edgar and Chief Rizzo? It's an ugly business, chilling in a Kafka-esque way.

It is particularly sickening to note, among the suspects in Chief Rizzo's

file, the most peaceful and high-minded of all protesters — the Quakers. Has any police force record keeper ever studied the record of the Society of Friends?

In South Vietnam today there are 40,000 am-

putees. The Quakers have set up the only civilian rehabilitation center specializing in fitting artificial limbs.

The Quakers are also operating a day-care center for children in Quang Nai.

It is the ultimate proof of the rot and evil creeping through our "law and order" agencies that the Quakers, the most benign and dedicated Christians, are now in the suspicious file at their local police stations.