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## NO WAY TO STILL THE FEARS

IF GENERAL VAN DEN BERGH'S Sunday night broadcast on State security was meant to reassure the country then it failed. He gave no real information, unless generalisation, innuendo and smear is classified as such. He made a half-hearted attempt to convince listeners that the country was using "acceptable Western democratic methods", which is demonstrably incorrect. And then he got down to what he really wanted to say, and that was that it was necessary to place policemen above ordinary law. This, of course, is exactly what the public fears.

The General built up his case for police power in a well-scripted interview. The theme was familiar: communists are unscrupulous and so should we be in fighting them. He did not explain how, if we use communist methods to maintain national discipline, we can then convince the deprived and the disaffected that life in our kind of State is better.

Instead, chillingly, he made it evident that he thought inroads into individual rights could make a positive contribution to freedom and security.

The country, he said, had found it necessary to abandon "hampering restrictions" on police activity. (These include the need to conform to certain rules before making an arrest; the need to bring a man to court quickly; the need to inform suspects of certain rights). Yes, the authorised periods of detention were reasonable for the times we lived in. (The "authorised periods" are forever, if required. The 22 detainees were held for more than 400 days and twice acquitted; Peter Magubane was held for more than a year and never charged.) States of emergency were ineffective because, he implied, they set a time limit on police arrogation of power.

Throughout his talk General Van den Bergh ignored the Western democratic principle that a man is innocent until proved otherwise. His attitude was that detainees were certainly guilty of something or other, it was just a matter of determining what. Indeed, he said as much: "All the arrests and detentions (in his day) proved to be justified — and the position has not changed."

So now our Security Police are infallible too. Is it any wonder that disquiet grows?