

Security

By BEN LEVINE

SECURITY is the most used, misused and abused word of present times. I recognized two of its many shapes in the mouth of Robert Morris, counsel for the Senate Internal Security committee, when I heard Mr. Morris answering John Wingate's questions on Nightbeat.

Wingate had asked Morris why he left a \$38,000 job as a judge to take half that salary as a Senate sleuth.

Mr. Morris, before modestly telling us how he saw his duty and he done it, prefaced his remarks by saying he was of course interested in "security," by which he meant his bank account, but to defend the national security he was prepared to endanger his own little horde, or at least half of it.

And while he guards the national security, this bloodhound with the delicate nose can smell a threat to the nation, as I gathered from his remarks, in advocates of social security.

★

TELEVISION plays around with another use of the word security, by which they mean what former generations called "happiness." It is the psychologists' and psychiatrists' and psychoanalysts' contribution to literature. Perhaps it should be spelt psecurity.

The prolific TV playwright, Tad Mosel, played around with such a conception of security in his latest offering on Studio One, "The Morning Face," where the job security provided in a private school conflicted with the heroine's happiness-security.

The excellent acting of Barbara Bel Geddes, Arthur Hill, Rex Thompson and Meg Mundy gave me too much pleasure for complaint against the bewildering treatment of the theme. A lovers' knot, it seems, tied up the contradiction between the urge for excitement and the urge to seek cover.

Barbara Bel Geddes, I remarked to my wife, was as good as Kim Stanley, but she reminded me that "Barbara was there first." And Rex Thompson as the rich juvenile delinquent continued the sinister tradition of the kids in "The Children's Hour" and "The Bad Seed."

★

A PLAYHOUSE 90 science fiction horror wrapped up all the current conceptions of security. This drama, "A Sound of Distant Drummers," by Robert Alan Authur, attacked security in all its forms, national, social and private, the good and the bad.

The government, in this drama bans all books and executes all readers (as in Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 435.") A psychoanalytic machine calms the dissenters. The machine has all the answers, adjusting the mind to the tyrannical environment. The only entertainment outlet offered is baseball on TV, and the only protest permitted to faithful members of this nightmare society is the complaint that the "Tokyo Yanks" are unbeatable.

Many things in this play irritated me. It failed



to solve the problem, present in all science fiction, of creating characters as interesting as the gadgets. The hero and heroine and the other revolutionists were not too bright. It did not distinguish between thought control and food control.

But it did breathe something of the spirit of Thoreau, whose phrase about marching to distant drummers it used in its title. The hero at the end makes an impassioned refusal to be a stoolpigeon before a government committee.

★

TV VIEWERS, horrified by this nightmare portrait of a world without books, might think of McCarthyism, but many will also relate it to the attempt of statesmen in Socialist countries to control their artists. Certainly Khrushchev's speech recently quoted in the Sunday Times will not lessen their fears.

I do not doubt that in a Socialist state, the government, being the only publisher, is forced to give some hints to writers as to what will be printed. This makes the case different from what it is in this country. But yet why couldn't Khrushchev, who called for critics to be vigilant against "errors," have instead urged critics to be vigilant in discovering new talent?

At any rate, the results in the literary output of the Soviet Union incline me to agree with the basic contention of the Playhouse 90 drama, that politicians can help art best by leaving it alone. The politicians' only function in this regard should be to see that artists, like the rest of the population, are assured the minimum standard of living proposed in the Heller report. That is the only security we have a right to expect from them, or they have a right to offer.