

Every Friday Price Threepence

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War in the Air

UNTIL a few years ago war in the air meant physical war and nothing else.

It meant bombs and machine guns and spying and fire-lighting, with barbarous threats, by which few were really alarmed, of showers of poison and disease germs. To-day it means spiritual war as well. You destroy your enemy physically if you can. But you also poison his mind as well as his body, and release hate against him day and night.

How much of the Palestine story on page 9 is true we do not know. Some of the charges made are probably exaggerated, and all of them, at this remove of time and place, are unverifiable. The narrator is not a historian, or even a trained journalist. But he knew, when he sat down to write, what was happening to him, if he did not so certainly know why; and we know, from a hundred other witnesses, that although radio can do much worse than he says it is doing in Palestine, it can never in war-time do much better.

It is necessary to face the fact that broadcasting, though it may one day draw all men together, is far more likely in the immediate future to drive millions to premature death. It is not merely an aid to war but a weapon of war—all the more deadly because everywhere available. The world does to some extent still withhold the ordinary weapons of war from primitive races. It is not even trying to withhold radio. While this sentence is being written British experts are busy in Uganda testing wireless on native minds.

And so it goes on the whole world over. Propaganda in print requires some preparation in the victim. If he can't read he must at least be brought into contact with pictures. Broadcasting requires nothing but ears.

COMEDY HARMONISTS AGAIN

New Zealand Tour In Two Months' Time

TOWARD the end of 1937, six gentlemen visited New Zealand. There is nothing extraordinary about that, of course. But they happened to be the Comedy Harmonists. Of their progress, one falls back on the good old "veni, vidi, vici." They are undoubtedly wonderful propagandists for music. The amateur musicians whose vocabularies on the subject were limited to "scat" and "bull-fiddle" lapped up the overture to the "Barber of Seville" without a murmur,

to Hamburg and Leipzig. They made records. They visited London and broadcast on numerous occasions from the B.B.C. They appeared in German, French, and English films. Wherever they have gone, people have been charmed with their singing; like the humorous record, it is "something new."

They have amazing versatility. The high and the low-brow find a common denominator at their concerts. They have attracted everybody, from jitterbugs to Rubenstein and



and highbrows went to the lower levels at the delightful renderings of such treacly stuff as "Cheek to Cheek."

Now for the news—the Comedy Harmonists are coming back. When they return to New Zealand in about two months' time, theirs should indeed be a triumphant success. They will give several concerts while they are here, of which "The Listener" will announce details later on.

The Comedy Harmonists are what Americans would call "bright boys." They give an eternal lie to the idea (which is sadly prevalent) that serious musicians are long-faced individuals with little or no sense of humour. For a little over a decade now these six Austrians have been singing for their supper like the conscientious child in the nursery rhyme. They've been singing for breakfast and dinner, too, and they've done it in every country in Europe except the Balkan States. We're frequently told about the long search to find matching pearls; but surely Harry Frommmermann's achievement in bringing together these voices so perfectly balanced is just as remarkable.

They all get on together very well. But they make a point of each having his own room in hotels, and on boats they have separate cabins. They argue that they see enough of each other during working hours.

The Comedy Harmonists made their first appearance in "Casanova" in Berlin. They were an immediate success. After the first appearance in the German capital came visits

Schneevoigt, who sat among the red hot mammy worshippers at one of their concerts in Australia a while back.

They have sung in many different lands under many different conditions. They once hit their high notes in a very low place; that was when they gave an impromptu concert for miners in a Calgoorlie mine, 1800 feet below the surface!

The boy someone heard whistling "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" as he bicycled down the street the other day in Palmerston North was on the right track. Most people can give a recognisable rendering of "The Chestnut Tree," but when they get back as far as Bach or Mozart, the original melody is not usually distinguishable from a Zulu war chant. That is where the Comedy Harmonists excel; they are equally at home with the old masters and the modern fakes. They can make the dithery emanations of Tin Pan Alley sound almost as good as Schubert.

There is a suave, delightful humour which goes with their presentations; and for this, Herr Frommmermann is largely responsible. He is the buffo of the group, and before the Harmonists came together he was an actor. Besides tickling the public's risibilities, he arranges, with extraordinary cleverness, the music. The other Comedy Harmonists are Roman Cycowski, Hans Rexeis, Erich A. Collin, Fritz Kramer, and Rudolph Mayreder. You see their smiling faces above—soon you will be able to see them again in person.