

CIRCUS AT BERCHTESGADEN

THE Berchtesgaden circus has been in full swing during the last day or two. The merry-go-rounds have been operating, the big brass band has been blaring away at Deutschland Uber Alles, and the clowns have been diving head first into big barrels of flour. It has been all very spectacular. Kings and foreign ministers, and other people's brothers-in-law and sons-in-law, have come prancing across Europe to Herr Hitler's mountain hideout and thence to Vienna, in order to settle the affairs of Europe for the next thousand years. At least that's the big idea. And that is what little Dr. Goebbels tells us in his most threatening, and if I may say so, his most comical style.

It is only natural that we in Great Britain should be terribly scared by all this chatter-chatter. You can imagine the chill which has struck into our hearts this afternoon by the announcement that Hungary has signed the Axis Pact. Another army to come swaggering across the English Channel; another air force to come and throw bombs at us; another navy to threaten our sea communications. But it suddenly occurs to me that the Hungarians have no navy and no air force, and practically no army, so we can take a deep breath and recover our nerve. Maybe the Hungarian signature of the Pact will not have any very devastating effect after all. We've been told so often by Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini that democracy is miserable, effete and incompetent, whereas the dictator countries of the Axis are revolution-planning and swift in action. I wonder if this really is true. There has been a great battle going on at Berchtesgaden, and from all accounts, there was another great battle in Vienna when the boys got together again. But I wonder where all this chit-chat is going to lead them. In the meanwhile the wretched and unhappy democracies

A. G. MACDONELL Waxes Sarcastic About The Diplomatic Comings And Goings At Hitler's Hideout

(A News Commentary from the BBC on November 21)

have no time for battle or chit-chat; all they can do is to get to work and to get to work fast and efficiently.

One or Two Examples

I'll give you one or two examples of the way in which the democracies are using their time. You've just heard that the United States has already begun to use the naval bases leased from Britain. Colonel Knox, the United States Secretary of the Navy, said at his Press Conference to-day, that United States naval bombers were operating from Bermuda, and that United States ships are using the base at Newfoundland. Then it was announced this evening, that Britain is to have priority in the delivery of 26 four-engined bomber aeroplanes of the latest type, which are being built by the Consolidated Aircraft Company. Again, Great Britain has sent engines to America, to equip 41 Boeing Flying Fortresses. These enormous machines are big enough to reach any part of Germany from the British Isles. One of the two famous bomb sights of the United States has been released for use in British bombers.

From Canada comes the news that 18 large merchant ships are to be built, the manufacture of munitions in Canada is to take precedence over almost all heavy types of goods, and Canada will soon be making practically every type of gun that is being used in the war. Canadian tank production is going to be something pretty big in the early part of 1941. The largest group of Australian and New Zealand airmen which has yet come to Canada has just arrived to train under the Imperial Air Training Scheme.

The R.A.F. Keeps On

And while all this is going on, the Royal Air Force keeps on flying and fighting and bombing. While the Berchtesgaden circus is jumping through hoops and balancing balloons on its noses in the best style of the performing seals, Sir Charles Portal's bombers were flying fourteen hundred miles to attack the Skoda works at Pilsen in Czechoslovakia, as well as attacking their old routine targets in Berlin Leuna, Hamburg, Bremen, Gelsenkirchen.

In the meanwhile, the Italian part of the Axis is not very happy. I don't mean in the military, air and naval sense, but when Italians are fighting against anybody—except unarmed Abyssinians—they are never happy at all. I mean, in this case, that they are rather miserable from the civil point of view. The Ministry of Economic Warfare in London has just issued a statement describing a few aspects of the Italian situation. Among the civilians there is no enthusiasm whatsoever for the war. Italy has to rely upon Germany for coal, and

for heavy war material, and the R.A.F. has played such havoc with the rail transport of Germany that it is extremely difficult for the Germans to supply what Mr. Churchill described the other day as "their hopeful little jackal trotting timidly and nervously along beside them." The civil population of Italy has been told that they will get only 20 per cent. of the amount of last year's coal supply for domestic heating. Heating is not to start in private houses until December 1, and the maximum temperature of a room must not exceed 61 degrees.

Cold Comfort for Italians

But the kindly Signor Mussolini and his benevolent friends in the Fascist Grand Council, have hit upon a most comforting method of warming the Italian people until such time as they can get coal from their Nazi chums. This method takes the form of advising the Italian people to wear warm underclothes. This would be a most wonderful example of a leader taking a paternal interest in his subjects, if it were not for the unfortunate fact that there are no warm underclothes in Italy. There is a serious shortage of cotton and wool. There is also a shortage of iron and petrol and oil and fertilisers and meat and fat and fish and feeding stuffs for animals. With these small exceptions, Italy is in pretty good shape. Coffee is practically unobtainable, soap is very poor in quality and rationed to half a pound a month, and there is a great scarcity of rubber. But as I say, with these trivial exceptions, Italy is getting on fine. It's true that her armies are being driven back at all points by the Greeks, it's true that her much boosted air force seems to be turning out to be a collection of old junk, which finds it much easier to fall down than to go up, and it is true that the Italian Navy is, to a very considerable extent, lying on the beach at Taranto harbour. But the Berchtesgaden circus goes on talking and Hungary has signed the Pact. Well, I don't think we're going to lie awake at night worrying about it.

Incidentally, the Italians have found a new enemy in the air. Fighters of the Royal Australian Air Force lately carried their planes over the Western Desert in Africa. There were 4 planes manned by Australians and they met a large force of Italian fighters. They shot down five of them and lost only one of their own. While this was going on, our bombers were knocking hard at the Albanian ports of Durazzo and Valona. These are the two ports through which the Italian armies in Albania get their supplies. We also bombed oil refineries in the harbour of Bari, on the Italian coast.

India's Contribution

Mr. Amery, Secretary of State for India, has made an important statement about India's contribution to the Imperial War effort. He said that in the



A. G. MACDONELL

last war India put a million and a half men into the field, and he declared that India will do the same again if so many are needed and if the equipment is there. An Indian Army, he said, is being rapidly expanded as the first step to a Force of about half a million men of all arms. More than a hundred thousand recruits had already been taken in, and a large proportion of these were already fully trained. The mechanical transport has been increased from five thousand vehicles to thirty-two thousand, and next year it will be sixty-four thousand. India can draw to-day, upon the world-famous fighting men of Nepal. The Gurkhas of Nepal are as enthusiastic, said Mr. Amery, to fight for the Empire in 1940 as they had been for a great many years in the past. The Indian Air Force is proving very popular among the quick-witted young Indians. Only the other day a batch of Indian pilots arrived in England to complete their training, and the Royal Indian Navy has been more than trebled since the outbreak of the war, and it is being steadily increased in size by new vessels which are being built in India, and in Australia and in this country.

Supplies from India

Mr. Amery went on to say that there are 40 thousand separate items which go to make up the equipment of a modern army. India can already supply 90 per cent. of it. Nor is this all. India is at this moment sending substantial quantities of pig iron to this country. It is also supplying the Near East, and Iraq and East Africa with steel. Many millions of pounds have been contributed to the British war chest and to the Red Cross, and what is perhaps the most encouraging and inspiring thing of all, there is an immense volume of whole-hearted and valiant co-operation in the Empire determination to destroy the Dictators once and for all. So when you read of the dashing backwards and forwards across Europe of Foreign Ministers and Kings and Dictators, I beg you not to be depressed. The Free Peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and their fellows in the United States, are working at high pressure to produce the goods which will produce the results, which will be a good deal more important than all the jabbering in Herr Hitler's mountain dug-out.

Broadcasts To Natives

To combat enemy and other subversive propaganda among the natives and generally to prevent unrest among them during the war, the South African Government has linked up every location compound, mine compound, hostel and other centre where large numbers of natives congregate on the Reef. By means of land lines, authentic news and propaganda is broadcast daily by telephone and loudspeakers from a central broadcasting station in Johannesburg.

It is estimated that there is a potential audience of close on 750,000 for the new nightly feature to ensure that authentic news of the progress of the war reaches the natives in their own language.