

ADENOID HYNKEL COMES TO LONDON

BBC Hails "The Great Dictator" As "Biggest Debunk Of All Time"

While diplomatic experts were pondering the future relationship of the Vichy Government and Hitler, the other day, the ordinary people of London were having a good laugh at the expense of the dictators. Charlie Chaplin's long-awaited film "The Great Dictator" was shown publicly in London for the first time, and there were big crowds to see Chaplin, making his first screen appearance for several years, portray the ups and downs of Adenoid Hynkel, the Fooey of Tomania.

Laughter, thunders of it, clearing Heaven and earth, is still one of the most potent weapons of all, and realising the significance of the occasion, the BBC went along, first to watch and interview some of the people standing in queues at each of the three theatres where "The Great Dictator" was simultaneously released, and then to see the film itself.

BLITZ or no blitz, the BBC reported, London was taking an hour or two off for a special occasion. Early in the morning queues were beginning to form, which is something fairly uncommon these days, and there was a good deal of eagerness among the people waiting. Soon the buskers were back on their familiar pitch, and even a barrel organ was there, adding a unique touch or normality.

All sorts and classes of people were waiting. A soldier for instance, up from the country on leave. "I've heard a lot about dictators, and I think it's about time I had a laugh at them," he said. Then a girl, "I've come up to London to see 'The Dictator' to see what Hitler looks like, or what Chaplin's trying to make him look like. . ."

And in the queue also was Lady Peel, better known as Beatrice Lillie. "I've been waiting three years to see this picture, and I'm quite sure I'm not going to be disappointed," she said.

BBC's Appraisal

And here is what the BBC observer, Geoffrey Paignton, had to say when he had seen it:

"Planes, flash bombs, destroyers—we certainly have a lot to thank the United States for. Yet I rather feel that the Chaplin film I've just seen is one of the most potent to date of American contributions to the war effort. The tonic effect of laughter is well known, and we ordinary men certainly feel better for a good bellyful of hearty laughter, which is what Chaplin has given us.

"The London audience I joined to-day had quite obviously said to itself, 'What a chance,' and let itself go. What a chance it was too. What a chance to see the dictators in all their chattering fatuity, and what a chance to take it out of them, to join in a grand, communal, soul-relieving debunk of Hitler and Mussolini. It's the first opportunity we've really had. For years we have been hearing those twin rasping, ranting voices coming over the ether. Heard them by

mistake usually, while twiddling the radio knob. But heard them some time or other most of us have, and stayed perhaps to listen a while, wondering whether it could really be true.

"Our first instincts would be to laugh, but we can't get much satisfaction laughing at an inanimate radio. You can't answer it back. But to-day, what a chance. We took it. Napolini and Hynkel scrapping over who was to double cross the other first was particularly apposite to-day, and the audience lapped it up.

Gibberish Speeches

But what went down best were Chaplin's magnificent gibberish speeches. Never again shall we hear the voice of Hitler without thinking of Chaplin, the mouth all cluttered up with gutturals and sibilants, reaching for a glass of water to wash them down.

"Some lily-livered critics have found fault with Chaplin's final speech, but it is the very embodiment of our dearest wish that one day a leader will arise in Germany who will not only sway the gullible, hysterical people of the Reich, but who will talk sense. On that day we shall be able to get on with the ordinary business of living, but for the present we can only send our heartfelt thanks to America for the most valuable and effective debunk of all time.



THE LITTLE JEWISH BARBER is the old familiar Chaplin, complete with bowler hat and walking stick



TWO DICTATORS GET TOGETHER FOR A CONFERENCE. Adenoid Hynkel and Napolini discuss the partition of Austerlitz

"May it be seen by the peoples of the world, may it be seen by Hitler and Mussolini themselves. Above all, may it be seen by the German and Italian people. For if they saw it, how could they fail to rise and with one voice cry out, in the expressive language of Chaplin, 'Hitler unt Mussolini isst stunck,' and wipe them off the face of things?"

Closer Than a Clam

So London has seen the Great Dictator. New Zealanders, however, in spite of a vast amount of conjecture and surmise, can really only guess at the full details of the film, for Chaplin has been closer than a clam about his first picture since "Modern Times," in 1935.

For upwards of two years the air has been filled with rumours—that Chaplin had reached the brooding stage with his new picture; that he had begun to write the script; that casting was under way; that shooting had begun. But they were mere vapours, and will-of-the-wisps of public fancy. Chaplin hardly took time off to comment on reports. He was, it seems, too busy making the film.

The story was kept secret, and even Chaplin's employees did not see a synopsis of it. When an American magazine of national circulation attempted

(before Chaplin thought the time was ready for publicity) to reproduce a portrait of "The Great Dictator," purloined from a frame of film, Chaplin saw that a legal injunction for trespass was clamped upon the publication.

Some Statistics

It has been disclosed, however, that Chaplin dug down into his purse for 2,200,000 dollars, not including his salary as a star; that once work had actually started, the production took 300 odd days to complete; and that with his usual energy, Chaplin wrote the story and dialogue, played the two leading roles, directed the film and edited and scored it. The camera crews shot more than 500,000 feet of film, of which the public sees about two and a-half hours'.

Chaplin plays a dual role, a little Jewish barber, happy in his ghetto with the girl he loves (Paulette Goddard) until brutal storm troopers paint "Jew" on the window of his shop. The same Chaplin plays the part of Adenoid Hynkel, the Fooey of Tomania, but the baggy pants, loose patched coat, bowler hat and walking stick give way to a splendid uniform and the Double Cross state insignia.

Close to the dictator is his ally, the plump scheming Napolini, played with Fascist fury by Jack Oakie. The two are scheming to attack a country by the name of Austerlitz, but trouble arises when it becomes necessary for Hynkel's troops to march across Napolini's territory, which causes uneasiness in what passes for Napolini's heart.

Speaks Normally

Chaplin had made only two other films in the last decade, "City Lights" and "Modern Times." In "Modern Times," made in 1935, he spoke a few words of gibberish in one scene, a belated tribute to the arrival of the talkies. In "The Great Dictator" he speaks normally for the first time.

A rumour persists that his voice is shrill and cockney; in reality it is soft and cultured. Chaplin despite his humble beginnings and lack of education, has read and studied widely.

He is not, as is generally believed, a Jew.