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Apologies to Charles Chaplin.

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Apologies to Charles Chaplin

Many of us have been rather hard, in print, speech or thought, on Chaplin's political fairy-tale, The Great Dictator. The comedian-director has been scolded ^{for} his lack of realism and consistency, his baroque humour and grotesque exaggerations. Critics intimated that the tremendous problems Mr. Chaplin was dealing with, should have been treated with more seriousness and less eccentricity.

I submit that we have been mistaken and owe a sweeping apology to the genius of Charlie Chaplin. His film may have feeble spots and hardly is the most successful one of his accomplishments. However, it ~~was~~ is unfair to disparage this daring phantasmagory as a distortion of ~~the sober~~ reality. ~~The reality of this incredible epoch is not sober; it is mad, savagely paradoxical, bewildering and utterly eccentric.~~

The dream-like episod of Herr Hess' flight to Scotland not only confirms but infinitely surpasses even the boldest inventions. ~~Chaplin or any other artist may venture on~~ It is, indeed, a priceless episod - quite apart from ^{its} ~~the~~ political implications and consequences. For it reveals, with an almost miraculous simplicity, the ^{fundamental} ~~whole~~ madness of this whole phenomenon called National-Socialism. ^(Chaplin could not have done better) Every detail involved is exuberantly amusing. ~~The red-painted toe=~~ nails he showed to the bewildered nurses of Glasgow, and the Nazi decorations which adorned his British pajama; the narcotics in the pockets of his uniform and the Messiah complex in his muddled head: the whole set-up ^{is perfect.} ~~simply couldn't be nicer.~~

^{Hess} Is ~~he~~ a madman? A swindler? A confused idealist? The head of a secret conspiracy against Hitler? The answer may be, or may not be known when these lines reach the reader. But no conceivable explana=

tion could change the intrinsic absurdity of this interlude.

Are the rulers of a big country insane? ^{Or} do the rulers of a big country deem it decent and promising to play such preposterous tricks ^{on} the rulers of another big country? Are those rulers so much afraid of each other that one of them - he whom the supreme chieftain used to call "My magnificent Maurice," - jumps into a ~~car~~ plane and seeks the protection of a loathed, abused, contempted enemy? ~~is~~

What sort of a country is this? What kind of people are these so-called rulers? Is this the way they want the new order to look like? ^{What has} ~~this~~ sordid nightmare to do with the lofty objectives of human history?

That Nazism is ^{ghastly} ~~horrible~~ and destructive has been known for years. Charlie Chaplin and Rudolf Hess remind us of its indescribably ridiculous elements. The ^{bloody} ~~tragedy~~ assumes, for a stunning moment, the savage merriment of an inspired farce. And we are allowed, for a change, to ask laughingly the astounded question so often asked in horror and with tears: Can this be true? Can ^{it} ~~this~~ last?

K. M.

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