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JUST FOR VARIETY

By ARMY ARCHERD

GOOD MORNING FROM LONDON: "There will be nothing political at all in it," said Charlie Chaplin as he chatted cheerfully, animatedly in the commissary at Pinewood studios, later on the set of "The Duchess From Hong Kong" where he's directing Marlon Brando, Sophia Loren and several members of the Chaplin family, Sydney most notable among 'em. Oona (Mrs. C.), looking more like Geraldine C's older sister than her mother, was almost constantly at her husband's side, smiling, and enthused about the proceedings, but far less audible about them. Charlie was hardly quiet for a moment. Whenever there'd be a lull on the set, he'd pop up and worriedly walk over to his camera crew, ask, "What's holding us up?" . . . It's hard to believe he will be 77 April 16 . . . He's wearing his white hair a little shorter and thinner these days, but still looks much like we remembered him 14 years ago. "I guess everyone expected me to come on stage with floppy shoes and baggy pants," laughed the conservatively-dressed Chaplin. When asked how he maintains his looks, health, etc., he smiled, answered, "By always keeping active." As for the theme of his film, he quickly said, "There's no theme to a picture. That's a lot of baloney. It's what you develop with your characters that counts. Then, if there's a good theme, it comes out. The story hopefully will show the motives for love and for sex; it shows today's mores. But nothing political. It's assuredly a comedy. It took me two-and-a-half years to write it." Why is he doing it? "Because it's fun working. I have another to do next year." Will Chaplin act in this one? "No, I will not be in front of the cameras — oh, perhaps just a walk-on. But I cannot direct myself in a comedy — not now. Sure, I used to be able to do it — without words and when you used to have a year to make a film. Now, if you took that long, all the profits would be in heaven!" What kind of schedule does he have? "I don't know what kind it is," he laughed, "except that I know it is a headache." (It is 12 weeks long) . . . When reminded that Marlon Brando's first experience with comedy, "A Bedtime Story," was not particularly funny, Chaplin answered, "He is not supposed to be a comic in this, he's playing himself — like he is, a fine actor — like he was in 'Streetcar Named Desire'." As for plans of coming to Hollywood again, he said, "No — my home is in Switzerland and I only leave to go on an occasional vacation to someplace like Jamaica." He was, however, pleased with the reports about daughter Geraldine's Hollywood visit . . . Chaplin is in touch with the U.S. on another count — he keeps track of the blackmarketing of his old pix. "It costs us hundreds of thousands of dollars to track them down," he said.