

Caricaturists Don't Always Live Up to the Caricatured

PEACE IN THEIR TIME: Men Who Led Us in and Out of War, 1914-1945. By Emery Kelen. Drawings by Derso and Kelen. 444 pp. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.95.

By MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

FAMILIARS of the old League of Nations at Geneva will all remember the Cafe Bavaria. Its walls were lavishly decorated (may still be for all I know) with cartoons by Kelen and Derso depicting personalities and events connected with the

Mr. Muggeridge, a former editor of *Punch*, wrote "Winter in Moscow," "The Thirties" and edited the English edition of the *Ciano diaries*.

League. There journalists gathered, and imagined themselves to be exchanging inside information. Occasionally a delegate in person would come along. I once saw Litvinov sipping a *fine* with his English wife, Ivy, and H. G. Wells. This, however, was a rare occurrence. For the most part one met at the Bavaria one's colleagues rather than statesmen, or even diplomats.

When, after the 1939-45 war, the old firm reopened in Manhattan under the same management (but with a new name, the United Nations) Kelen maintained his connection—this time,

in its television department. In "Peace in Their Time" he recalls in tranquillity the long-standing association. It seemed to me that the old Geneva days evoked more lively sentiments than the subsequent Manhattan ones, perhaps because he was younger then; perhaps because the League, with all its manifold faults and deficiencies, was somehow a more vivacious enterprise than the United Nations has so far proved—a first love affair, rather than the practised adultery of middle-age.

In Geneva Kelen's cartooning brought him into contact with

most of the leading actors in what began by being a drama of high intentions and ended as a sorry, if not sordid, farce. The League was ushered into existence on a tide of Princetonian platitudes as an instrument for eliminating war; its last coherent discussion was on the codification of level-crossing signals, conducted while the Wehrmacht and the Red Army were actively engaged in, between them, squeezing Poland out of existence.

Kelen is ideally suited by temperament and avocation to recount this tragi-comedy of our time. (I should have mentioned that he is a Hungarian, as practically everyone seems to be, especially cartoonists). His basic good humor is imperturbable; his eye is sharp, and his wit discriminating. What is a comedian, he asks, but a moralist gone wrong?

A cartoonist's eye has its own particular insights. Kelen's judgments of men like Austen and Neville Chamberlain, Aristide Briand, Curzon, Eden, Hitler and Mussolini were unashamedly based on their physiognomy rather than on their utterances and professed intentions, but were none the worse for that. In fact, had the makers of Anglo-French foreign policy turned for counsel to

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Emery Kelen, left, and his colleague Alois Derso, right, at the Cafe Bavaria with a friend in 1926. Caricatures by Kelen and Derso line the wall.



Rumer Godden.

Spoil-Sports in the Love

THE BATTLE OF THE VILLA FIORITA. By Rumer Godden. 312 pp. New York: The Viking Press. \$5.

By L. P. HARTLEY

RUMER GODDEN has an innate understanding of the problems, especially the moral problems, of childhood, which has been at the center of many of her novels. Her latest, "The Battle of the Villa Fiorita," is no exception.

The Villa Fiorita is the temporary love nest of a guilty pair, Fanny Clavering and Rob Quillet, a film-director who has swept Fanny off her feet. Her husband Darrell has divorced her and been granted custody of her two younger children, Hugh, 12, and Caddie, 10.

Fanny and Darrell's elder daughter, Philippa, who had interests outside family life, took the divorce in stride. Not so Hugh and Caddie. Feeling that the bottom has dropped out of their world they resolve to leave England, to go to Italy, foil the honeymoon and fetch their mother back.

Whether such children would really carry through on such a project is a doubt that lingers in the reader's mind. They might contemplate it, but that they would be resourceful and purposeful enough to put it into action strains credibility. Nevertheless, Hugh and Caddie raise the money for their jour-

ney by selling Capony, overcome the complications of fore and finally reach Fiorita—greatly to the nation of their quarrel.

This is a story in is bound to take side must be said that Miss holds the scales of remarkably even. Moreover, or at any rate tian principles, the in the right to a mother back. We ohaps, to be on their it would have been Miss Godden to load their favor. Yet Fanny in love with Rob, who ful and likeable man children come to like we know so little Clavering he seems than a cipher; we believe that Fanny eared for him.

It is to Miss Godden that she doesn't sent the children. Hugh is ill-mannered, opinion and Caddie, despite qualities and a cap self-sacrifice, is no Presently they are jo third child, Pia, Rob's by his first wife. Pia smart, clever and sop and just as anxious father back as they back their mother.

None of the trio

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Caricaturists

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cartoonists like Kelen, rather than to their so-called experts, their diplomatic, service and intelligence advisers, they would have done much better.

Anyone who has to draw the human face, as Kelen indicates, comes to recognize shifty eyes, criminal protuberances, a weak, false mouth. These provide some indication of a person's character. One has only to read the official dispatches which passed during the League's short, troubled existence to realize that those who drafted them had no criteria at all. Incidentally, Kelen considers that certain characteristic American physical traits derive just from living in North America rather than from pursuing happiness, being free, or anything like that. He notes an increasingly close resemblance between the contemporary American and Red Indians. Mr. MacNamara would seem to be a case in point.

In his cartooning Kelen soon ran into a difficulty which afflicted me during the five years I was editor of Punch. "No caricaturist," he writes, "can ever be as funny as statesmen." How true! The art of caricature, as the very word implies (from *caricare*, to load), is to exaggerate some feature or propensity in order to demonstrate its absurdity. Who can hope to exaggerate the obstinacy of a de Gaulle, the banality of a Kennedy, the fatuity of a Macmillan, the clownishness of a Khrushchev? It just can't be done. Our age is itself a carica-

ture, as those who have achieved eminence in it are themselves caricatures. It is like trying to be funny about the B.B.C. The original exceeds one's wildest inventions.

Unobtrusively, Kelen's own political attitude emerges. It is tolerant, liberal, European. His hero is Briand, who attempted without success to achieve the Franco-German rapprochement brought about by Adenauer and de Gaulle after another disastrous war, who envisaged a United States of Europe years before the first tentative steps were taken towards achieving one. Yet, Kelen reflects sadly, an enlightened, far-seeing man like Briand is forgotten, and it is the Yahoos like Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, who continue to be the subject of public curiosity. Creditably, now that he is an American citizen and resident, he does not waste his time on nostalgia for his European past. Even political conventions have their compensations for him. "I prefer," he sensibly writes, "funny hats to steel helmets, bandwagons to armored cars, and smoke-filled rooms to smoke-filled skies."

It would be idle to pretend that Kelen goes very deep, and he has the occupational disease of all humorists of repeating old chestnuts. Yet his account of the diplomatic history and leading characters of the last four decades is clearer and shrewder than that of many more pretentious commentators. The scene he so engagingly evokes was inglorious, if not fatuous, but we lived through it.

Mr. Hartley is a British short-story writer and novelist.