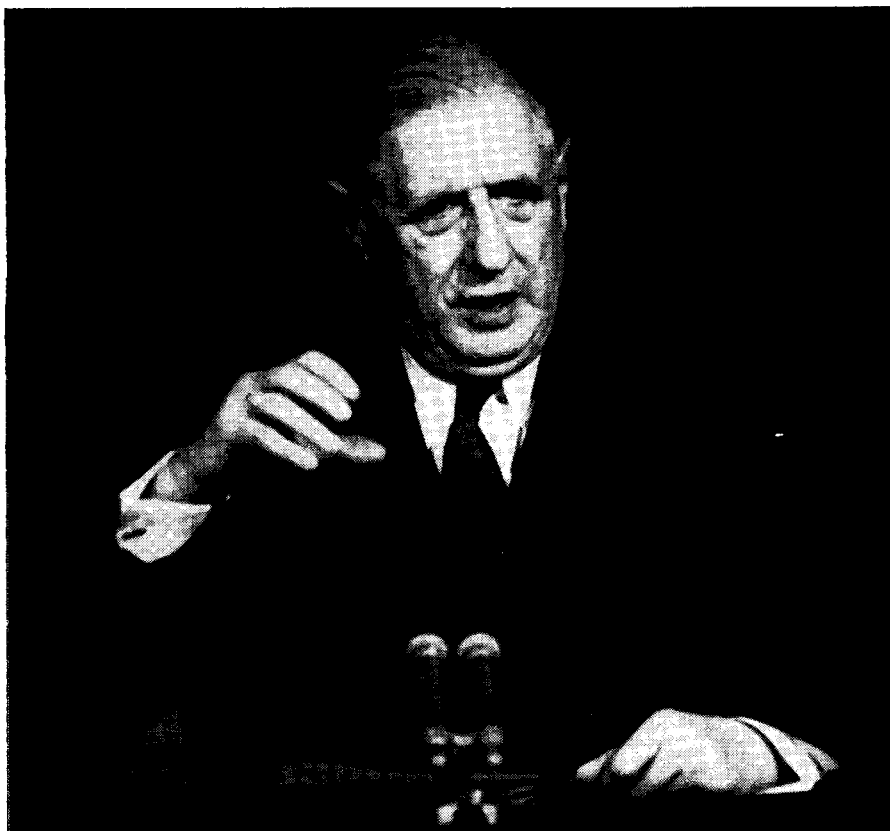


The General vis-à-vis FLN and OAS



De Gaulle—"a secret, long-range objective."

—Vander Veen (Pic).

"The Test: De Gaulle and Algeria," by **Cyrus L. Sulzberger** (Harcourt, Brace & World, 222 pp. \$4.95), expresses the essence of the author's columns for the *New York Times* from 1947 to May of this year. Hal Lehrman is a lecturer, author, and foreign correspondent.

By HAL LEHRMAN

FOR MORE than two decades Cyrus L. Sulzberger has served the *New York Times* abroad, and he is currently a regular columnist for that great newspaper. During some fifteen years he has observed, interviewed, and cordially known Charles de Gaulle, as intimately as a foreigner—and all but a few Frenchmen—can be said to know that aloof colossus who in his own lifetime already wears the patina of history. Mr. Sulzberger has now distilled the essence of what he feels he can place on record about the French General, ex-Premier, and President.

Except for eight fresh pages, "The Test: De Gaulle and Algeria" is a selected compilation of Sulzberger columns from 1947 to May of this year. Such stitched-together newspaper pieces make choppy, fragmentary, repetitive reading. The years since 1947 have been crowded with complex events; but Mr. Sulzberger offers only a bare list of dates at the start, instead of the traditional passages that would have connected his articles and illuminated their background. By definition there is nothing new in any of this twice-published material.

Nevertheless, the book is significant because of its timely emphasis on Algeria. Other De Gaulle preoccupations are noted, but the focus is the General's monumental grapple with the Algerian rebellion. That match has just now had a climactic round, and from it has emerged an independent Moslem Algeria. Today's headlines are already throwing the clear, cold light of accomplished fact on issues that only yesterday were obscured by

opinion and theory. It is now possible to ask: How right has de Gaulle been? Or, more pertinently here, how right has Mr. Sulzberger been? Normally, a columnist writes hastily, for the next day rather than for the ages. The trash basket and his readers' short memories protect him from accountability for quick judgments. But Mr. Sulzberger has laid his prognostications on the line by resurrecting them in permanent form.

Algeria's fate involves its own ten million inhabitants, and France, Western Europe, the United States—the whole free world, in fact. The dispatches of an eminent analyst to an eminent newspaper helped determine that fate, influencing public opinion and even, subtly, public policy. Mr. Sulzberger's was a strong voice in the large reportorial chorus which, by its tireless testimony for Algerian "liberation" and for de Gaulle's policies, played a responsible historical role in achieving the result now visible. How right, then, has Mr. Sulzberger been?

Brilliantly right, in divining the General's secret long-range objective—total Algerian independence—as early as June 1958. This was a time when nearly everyone else, and certainly all of us who were then in Algiers listening to de Gaulle, thought he was solemnly guaranteeing a reformed, enlightened, but forever French Algeria to the gratified local European community and the French Army, whose combined uprising a month before had scuttled the weak Fourth French Republic and installed the General in power. Mr. Sulzberger was right, too, in describing de Gaulle as "*rusé*" (tricky), "*Machiavellian*," "an unyieldingly obstinate man."

But, if he was aware of this die-hard trickiness, he was not so right in accepting as reliable every somersault in de Gaulle's shifting Algerian policy. And he was dead wrong in believing that "the unity, prestige and fate of the Western world" demanded this policy. These errors may be confirmed from two sources: Mr. Sulzberger's own words, which he eats month after month as the scenario unfolds, and every new day's tidings of disaster from Algeria itself.

Thus Mr. Sulzberger first approves of the de Gaulle régime's apparent intention to enlist the great masses of pro-French Algerian Moslems that existed to defeat the anti-French National Liberation Front (FLN) militarily, and of the program of economic and social reconstruction to defeat the FLN morally. But when de Gaulle comes out instead for negotiation with the FLN, Mr. Sulzberger comes out for

it too. He seconds the General's resolve to negotiate "with the various elements of Algeria, including the FLN"; when de Gaulle elects to negotiate solely with the FLN, Mr. Sulzberger writes off the other "various elements." He is confident that the General "aims at settling the Algerian question on the basis of self-determination," *i.e.*, by allowing a free choice among a variety of political structures and leaderships, including adherence to a liberal France. And when de Gaulle blesses an "Algerian Republic" in advance and singles out the FLN as its future rulers, thereby notifying the Moslem population that the FLN will be able to cut the throat of anyone who votes otherwise, Mr. Sulzberger finds the General "consistent."

At one point the author assures us that de Gaulle "has pledged his honor and integrity" not to act dictatorially. But after the General has demanded and received "an authority never before granted to a republican chief of state" (and has set up concentration camps), Mr. Sulzberger blames it on the "frustrated" army and on Algeria's desperate Europeans. He casts doubt on the "extent and importance" of the Europeans' Secret Army (OAS), brands its leaders as "silly" or "muddled," its militants as "dead-end bitter boys," its purpose as "conspiracy." Two months later he discovers that most of the Europeans in Algeria are "ardently pro-OAS," an organization of "serious men [who] earnestly believe in the rightness" of their struggle. Like de Gaulle, Mr. Sulzberger expects that a deal with the FLN to "end the war" will obviously bring peace. When one million Europeans, reading this surrender to the FLN as their own death sentence, react by support of the terrorist OAS, he muses over the "supreme irony that an underground guerrilla war has ended only to be replaced by an underground civil war."

The real irony is that the Algerian débacle was plainly foreseen by sober Frenchmen who had less facilities for research than their Chief of State, and even by certain foreign observers less reputed for vision than Mr. Sulzberger. It is no excuse, I think, to protest that the future of the European community has been jeopardized merely because some went berserk and others fled. Responsible statesmanship should and could have anticipated this, and re-examined its own program accordingly.

Like de Gaulle, Mr. Sulzberger thought non-Moslems would be secure in an FLN Algeria; that the FLN was the valid spokesman for the Moslems; that "NATO would be strengthened by Algerian peace"; that a "free" Algeria

and its Moslem North African neighbors would cooperate—even "confederate."

When a distinguished journalist like Mr. Sulzberger misses the mark so widely, one wants to know why. Perhaps it was because of the Algerian myth that has dominated the Western mind in recent years. It would seem that Mr. Sulzberger sometimes chose the myth instead of the evidence of his own eyes and ears. He knew that more Moslems were fighting against the FLN than for it, yet he suggested that the FLN "represented the emotional aspirations of all North Africa." He knew that the French Army had reduced FLN military strength inside Algeria to insignificance, yet he argued that de Gaulle had to seek peace with it because the last guerrilla had not been crushed. The FLN enjoyed "public sympathy among Algerian Moslems," he wrote; yet the only Algerian Mos-



lem he cites in the entire book shakes this shibboleth to the roots: "When they [the FLN guerrillas] come they ask for food and money. If we do not give?" Brahim draws his hand across his throat . . . They tell us that the French must go. But what is my quarrel with the French? . . ."

Possibly the myth that leads Mr. Sulzberger most astray is the myth of de Gaulle, whom he treats with near-veneration. This reviewer does not mean to contest the General's authentic "grandeur." But even a great man can make a mistake; and when he does, it can be a whopper.

Life Is a Zest, an Ache, an Itch

By Jeannette Nichols

I'VE gotten out before,
 been riled at the streets,
 stores, sotted mailboxes
 and roared off in my mad horsepower
 to burn back roads, byways, rutted
 dirt lanes with their hangdog trees,
 and even then not eased it.
 I've boasted along blocks
 looking in at dinners, readers,
 pedigreed winners of their daily
 dog-tired bread,
 and found no salve to soothe it.
 I've let it nab me
 like an itch,
 stitch me like an ache,
 squeeze my love-gland dry;
 and been stymied by it
 in the fast and far Coast towns
 I tried to run it down in.
 It has flashed like Summer lightening
 by me in the bashed, down-trodden face
 dashing at better-times,
 bared its hook-nose,
 sick-limb, lame-eye, truth and lie
 in this slick and human town
 I collide with;
 but it's still there
 to chase and tame me
 till I go after it again
 on the hopped train, next plane
 out, full of the healthy rage
 to rout the lust that drives me
 crack-brained, full-tilt,
 head-on through.

Success by Chicanery

"The Sound of Bow Bells," by Jerome Weidman (Random House, 531 pp. \$5.95), an "East Side morality fable," portrays a writer turned literary hustler through the machinations of a parasitical wife. David Boroff, associate professor of English at New York University, frequently comments on current fiction.

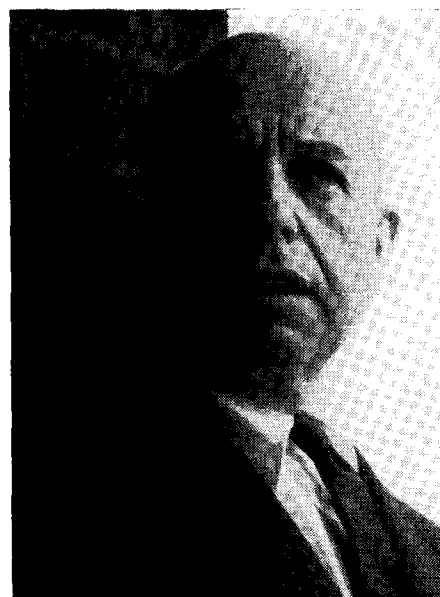
By DAVID BOROFF

JEROME WEIDMAN's imagination has long been dominated by the figure of the ruthless, unscrupulous manipulator. The archetypal character was Harry Bogen in Weidman's sensationally successful first novel, "I Can Get It for You Wholesale," written when he was only twenty-four. But he reappears as Daniel Schorr in "The Enemy Camp," which was widely read

a few years ago. The hustler, to be sure, is an inevitability in the savage landscape that is Jerome Weidman's special province. For this novelist—at a time when one would think its literary possibilities had been thoroughly exhausted—is still the chronicler of the Lower East Side and the arduous trek uptown.

"The Sound of Bow Bells" is the East Side morality fable once more, this time given a literary setting. The story of Sam Silver's climb out of the ghetto, it describes how he wrote his first short story at the age of nineteen, and became a best-selling novelist as a result of chicanery not long thereafter.

Sam's evil genius is an East Side girl who went to high school with him. Thin, intense, passionately determined, Jennie Broom has a malignant faculty for turning up at crucial moments in Sam's life. It is she who deflects him



Jerome Weidman—entertainer with a purpose.

from pursuing a serious career as a writer by inciting him to transform a deeply-felt short story into a sleazy film scenario. Later, after they marry, she does some fancy wheeling and dealing in an effort to turn Sam into a handsomely paid hack, writing "art-

THE AUTHOR: It was two years since I had last interviewed Jerome Weidman, and in the interim he had not been idle. He had brought for a musical made from his novel stories, "My Father Sits in the Dark," and had written the book for a musical made from his novel, "I Can Get It for You Wholesale." Since the story collection had done well and the musical was still packing them in on Broadway, he should by rights be a reasonably contented man.

And so indeed he was, but current successes were behind him and his mind was busy with future projects. His big new novel, "The Sound of Bow Bells," was just out, bearing a Literary Guild imprimatur; and he was part-way through another musical with songwriter Harold Rome, this one an original. Our conversation thus darted from one to another of his multifarious enterprises.

Jerry Weidman is an engaging fellow, modest in his demeanor, animated in his conversation. You would never guess, meeting him for the first time, that he is one of the most successful professional writers in the business, with a

dozen or more novels, 200 short stories, and a couple of hit musicals to his name—and all by the age of fifty. His attitude toward himself is strictly objective; he happened to be born with a talent, which he exercises as naturally as a man breathes. No highfalutin artiness about him on the subject of writing.

"I honestly believe that a great deal of art is unconscious," he said to me. "To my mind, the biggest bores in the world are the people who consciously set out to be artists. William Faulkner is my idea of an unconscious artist. Writing comes naturally to him, and he just laughs when the pundits start analyzing his stories and telling him what he put into them. The writer in my new novel, Sam Silver, writes almost without knowing it, and it is only in time that he discovers he has a tool or talent he must protect."

As you may have surmised, there is much of Weidman himself in his Sam Silver. Both grew up on New York's Lower East Side, and made the transition to plush midtown by dint of successful writing. "Part of the story and some of

the characters, such as the woman Jennie, are obviously invented; but most of Sam's reactions are mine," Weidman confessed. "Sometimes a novelist, when a character has become clear in his mind, identifies to a greater or less degree with that character, except where the plot might require a particular development. This is the case with Sam. In the book, for instance, Sam knows rather more about abstract art than I did, because the plot required it. So I made it my business to talk to experts and give him the background he needed."

Weidman has always been a systematic producer, and you get the impression that nothing less will suffice the beginning writer. "All over the country young writers are turning out stories and submitting them to editors. They come back with rejection slips. But #32 suddenly clicks, and the young man gets a check. He thinks he has found the secret, quits his job, comes to Greenwich Village, and starts sending out more stories. To his disappointment, #33, #34, and #35 come back. Instead of trying to discover what was right with