By WILHELM SCHULZE

LEHRBAS HAS A LITTLE TALK

T he darkest period for the Allies in the Greater East Asia War has so far been the second half of March, 1942, when Hongkong, Manila, Singapore, and Batavia had already fallen and the fall of Corregidor was imminent. It was during this time that General MacArthur, a beaten general, arrived with his wife and four-year-old child at a small military airfield in Australia. He arrived unannounced and, for that reason, unhailed. Only one man was there to receive him, an American lieutenant colonel by the name of Lehrbas, whose position was that of Public Relations Officer of the US Army, P.R.O. for short. A P.R.O., an American invention, is an officer who is in charge of maintaining good relations between the army and the general public—in other words, a publicity agent in uniform.

Before the Australian public knew anything about the arrival of the American general, Lehrbas and MacArthur had a little tête-à-tête, and no Australian newspaper was able to report the contents of this conversation. But on the following day, when MacArthur appeared before the reporters of the Sydney papers, he had a mimeographed statement ready for them about an order by Roosevelt to leave his troops and about his “breaking through the Japanese lines.” Of course, he said, he would be glad to meet the journalists later, but for the time being they would have to be content with his mimeographed statement. He could not tell them anything more at the moment, and nothing further should be printed about his appearing in Australia. Well, see you later . . . !

The Work Begins

The Australian journalists are obliging people: in no Australian paper is there a single word that differs from Lehrbas’s version of MacArthur’s flight. And, because they were so obliging, they received during the next few days and weeks as much material as they could desire about MacArthur, who had meanwhile already been dubbed the “victor of the Philippines.” Lehrbas had gone to work.

One day, MacArthur declared that “success in modern war demands more than courage and the readiness to die,” and these words appeared in all the papers accompanied by an ascetic por-
trait of the hero MacArthur. On the following day, MacArthur stated that he would keep faith with his soldiers and, in spite of the obvious discrepancy between the words and the deed, the statement was used as a fine heading for a special MacArthur number, with photographs of his father, grandfather, and all his relatives, with photographs of him at West Point, during the Great War, and from the brilliant days of peace in the Philippines. When Corregidor fell, MacArthur indicated threateningly that, although he had escaped from the Japanese, he would return there one day. And after that the Australian press published in huge headlines that, according to MacArthur’s words, the halo of Jesus of Nazareth had descended on the fallen sons of weeping American mothers and that God had taken them into His Kingdom. Lehrbas had really gone to work, in every direction.

“MACARTHUR ROSES”

Even Mrs. MacArthur and her little son did not escape the attention of Lehrbas. Just as MacArthur himself, at the beginning of his Australian career, had said that it had never been his policy to advertise himself, Mrs. MacArthur declared in the mimeographed sheets handed out by Lehrbas that she was accustomed to staying in the background and that she saw her sole duty in keeping a pleasant home for her overworked husband. But, notwithstanding this, there followed a hail of messages to the women of Australia, while series of portraits of Mrs. MacArthur swept into the editorial rooms and one tea reception followed another. Suddenly there appeared “MacArthur roses,” dedicated to the wife of the general. Lehrbas knows his trade and is fully aware of the fact that Australia is a country in which the influence of women must not be underestimated.

Gradually, and probably in proportion to the developments in the cable exchanges between Canberra, Washington, and London, a new note began to creep into MacArthur’s utterances, as issued by Lehrbas. After a visit to the Australian Parliament, MacArthur said that, if the Australians fought as bitterly as their M.P.’s quarreled, God should have mercy on the enemies of Australia. This was the first time that MacArthur touched upon the domestic conditions of Australia. Getting still bolder, he made a short speech a few days later at a government dinner which Premier Curtin afterwards handed to the press because “it is the greatest speech ever made with such brevity before this assemblage.”

“There can be no compromise,” he said in this speech. “We shall be victorious or we shall die, and under this slogan I pledge for our fight the entire wealth and all the strength of my country and the blood of all my countrymen.”

The initiated must have known from this speech that the negotiations with Washington and London were about to be completed. In the second half of April, the result of the protracted cable exchanges was finally released: at midnight on April 20, General Douglas C. MacArthur took over the supreme command with almost unlimited powers over all Allied forces in the southwestern Pacific. Publicity had extinguished or at least covered up his past.

AMERICAN BALLYHOO

Now the MacArthur ballyhoo really started in America. It is true that the General himself was clever enough to comment on his nomination to the effect that his success or failure would depend mainly on the means placed at his disposal by the various governments. In this way he already prepared his line of retreat, should things go wrong again. But Lehrbas and his colleagues in America let all restraint fall, and the American-Australian public followed them blindly.
In New York, East Side Drive was renamed "MacArthur Drive." Thirty-nine other towns suddenly acquired a "MacArthur Avenue." Westpoint, the leading American military academy, received a bust of its famous pupil, which was unveiled in a solemn ceremony in the presence of high military authorities and representatives of the State Department. Scores of fathers named their newborn sons "MacArthur," among them three negro fathers. Tin Pan Alley brought out a new march: "Hats off to MacArthur & Deil our boys down under!" MacArthur was made the president of an "international movement" called "Let the Flag Wave in Every Home." He exchanged congratulatory messages with Wavell and other defeated colleagues who extolled him as a master of strategy. Finally, Roosevelt gave him the Congressional Medal, the highest decoration that can lie in the United States, and naturally all the exiled governments, from Poland to Greece, immediately followed this example.

**A PRAYER IN LITTLE ROCK**

It is impossible to list all the absurdities produced by Lehrbas's publicity. We shall just mention one more which is typical of the Anglo-Saxon mentality. On one occasion, Lehrbas induced MacArthur to cable to the preacher of the church in Little Rock, Arkansas, in which he was baptized, asking him to pray for divine guidance for his servant in the great struggle that lay ahead of him. Of course, the preacher fulfilled MacArthur's request, so that a few days later the following prayer went out over all the cables of the Allies and over all their broadcasting stations: "Above all we beg Thee, O Lord, to protect Thy servant MacArthur, who was consecrated to Thee in this church. We beg Thee, Lord, to preserve him in body, to lead him in spirit, and to strengthen his heart and his soul, that he may serve Thee and our country wisely, loyally, and effectively. Amen!"

Thus it appears that Lehrbas and his employers have succeeded in making MacArthur, a defeated general, into a victorious commander who, in the eyes of the Anglo-American public, is a guarantee for final victory. American publicity has supplied its masterpiece. Not only has it forged history: it has actually made history. Anyone who knows anything at all about American domestic politics, will know that matters do not end here. When, during the height of the publicity campaign for MacArthur, the New York papers began to moot his nomination as Secretary for War, MacArthur knew what he was doing when he brusquely declined. Anyone who has as much publicity value in America as MacArthur does not head for the obscure job of Secretary of War. He knows that a victorious general has a far better starting position in the struggle for the highest post to be had in America.

**REDEARS AND STRAWBERRY BLONDES**

Aside from MacArthur, Lehrbas's attention is devoted mainly to popularizing the US troops in Australia. As publicity officer for the American troops, he knows how to arrange receptions for them, how to publish reports, interviews, and pictures in the Australian press, in short, how to create goodwill for his soldiers. During the first few weeks after their arrival, even the American privates were flooded with invitations. The months of March, April, and May were the honeymoon in the American-Australian marriage.

A queer document dates from this time. It was printed in many Australian newspapers (with the appropriate change in the name and address of the organizer), in the form of an open letter and reads:
Dear Madam:

On behalf of American sailors, soldiers and airmen in Melbourne, I offer the following suggestions for entertaining them. I do it aware of the risks. I'll take a chance because it's wartime and these boys need looking after.

To contact them you have got to put your name and requirements down in a black book at the ACF Hospitality Bureau, Town Hall. Rev. H. L. Hawkins, organizer, does the rest.

Now, here is what the men want:

**Parties.**—Gay parties with swing music, redheads (Say, miss, we've never seen so many good-lookin' redheads before!), strawberry blondes (not suicide, synthetic or bottle—just blondes), beer (Boy! Do we like Melbourne beer!), lots of sweet-smelling flowers, and asparagus rolls.

**Tennis.**—Only if you can supply racquets, redheads, and strawberry blondes.

**Bridge.**—Well, not unless you have to.

**Dinner.**—Don't make it too formal. Family dinner parties are nicer than dowagers and diplomats. Serve melons for sweets—they love them.

**Luncheon.**—Tohoreo soup, sweet corn with melted butter sauce and grills. (I'm telling you, miss, your grills are better than anything we got back in the States.)

**Picture Parties.**—Think twice before you take the plunge. They've seen most of our shows, anyway.

**Swimming.**—Only if VERY hot.

**Quiet evening at home.**—Well, not too quiet, please. Remember the strawberry blondes and redheads.

**Dances.**—And how! They love our big uncrowded ballrooms. Here again, your blonde and redhead friends will be useful.

How do I know all this? I'm not giving away any secrets, but it's first-hand information passed on straight from the horse's mouth.

Yours in earnest,

A Woman Reporter.

**FIGHT OR MARRY?**

We have printed this document in full, not only because it is a masterpiece of Lehrbas publicity, but also because it shows to what lengths the Australian population was at that time prepared to go to please the American troops and adjust itself to their whims. The Australian troops returning at that time from North Africa and the Near East were only of secondary importance to the Australian editors compared to the American newcomers, just as

the Australian General Blamey was overshadowed by the American General MacArthur, or Mrs. Blamey by Mrs. MacArthur.

With his methods of publicity, Lehrbas dominates the Australian newspaper field from Port Darwin to Melbourne and from Perth to Brisbane. He does not irritate his public, and he avoids mistakes like that made by Major Cowan who, in his capacity as representative of the "Morale Branch of the US Army" (also an exclusively American invention), began a quarrel with the heads of the Church in Australia over Sunday movies and Sunday dancing for American soldiers.

The Australian Council of Churches finally won in this conflict, for it was agreed upon that Sunday entertainment for the American army should not take place in public and for private profit and that it should be limited to men in uniform and not form a precedent for after the war. But this quarrel led directly to the first profound conflict between the feelings of the Australians and the Americans. Within five weeks of the first American landings in Melbourne, there had already been twenty marriages between American soldiers and Australian girls, while hundreds had already applied to the authorities for licenses, and no statistics told the number of love affairs.

Probably as a result of unfavorable experience, the Roman Catholic Church of Australia was forced a few weeks after the American invasion to refuse marriages unless the Americans could prove that they were not committing bigamy. The Archbishop of the English High Church in Brisbane, less diplomatic than the Catholics, declared that, after all, the Americans had come to Australia to fight and not to marry. The Head Chaplain of the American army had finally to put a temporary end to this
conflict by the announcement that he had instructed all American commanders to prevent as far as possible any marriages between American soldiers and Australian redheads and strawberry blondes. "They can’t, after all, take their wives with them when things get hot," the Head Chaplain said at the end of his announcement. Of course, he overlooked the fact that General MacArthur did bring along his wife when he fled from the Philippines. But then MacArthur is a general.

Things really only began to quiet down when the Americans were gradually transferred to the newly built camps, the first of which was named after MacArthur and only the second after the Australian Minister of War, Fords. These camps are far from any settlement. "98 per cent of the service in Australia consists of dullness and boredom in the desolate Australian bush," wrote Allan Raymond of the New York Herald Tribune, who is much quoted in Australia.

FUN AND DAFFODILS

Dullness and boredom arouse in the American, once he is let loose, that rowdiness for which he is known throughout the world. The little town of Healesville near Melbourne can tell us something about that, something that has apparently escaped Mr. Lehrbas’s notice, for we found the story printed on an inner page of the Times Weekly. One night Healesville was awakened by violent explosions which shattered all the windows in the main street. Detectives searching for the miscreants traced the deed to two American officers from the near-by camp, who calmly admitted having exploded a few sticks of gelignite in the sewers "for fun." They had not intended any harm, they said.

Now the Australian soldiers and men are annoyed because they see themselves thrust into the background in the eyes of the Australian girls by the Americans with their high pay. The Australian girls are annoyed because they have taken up with the Americans without any chance of marrying now. The peaceful Australian citizen is annoyed over the disturbance of his peace by the uncouth behavior of his guests. And the American soldiers are annoyed because they had entirely different ideas of life "down under" as saviors of the country.

After the honeymoon, a certain disappointment over the American allies cannot be denied. In a letter, which got into our hands in a round-about way, a simple Australian girl writes to her Australian sweetheart at the front: "Everybody here is complaining about the air support of the Americans which you have had. Yes, darling, we don’t believe much now in the BBC broadcasts. We call the American pilots ‘daffodils.’ They are nice to look at, but they are yellow."

And, finally, the American authorities are also annoyed. Not MacArthur himself but, on his behalf, the Administrator of the Lend-Lease Act in Australia, a Mr. Wassermann, clearly expressed this annoyance in an interview in which he said: "But Australia must make some efforts herself; she cannot rely on America alone winning the war for the Australians. Australia must bear not only her just, but more than her just share."

IT TAKES MORE THAN A LEHRBAS

The Australian papers are full of items which seem to justify Mr. Wassermann in his demands. The number of "con-shies" (conscientious objectors) continues to be terrific. Encouraged by the lenient policy of the Minister of Labor and National Service, Mr. Edward Ward, who himself in the last war avoided joining the armed forces, the number of consciences too tender to carry arms or even to work for the war effort seems to have been growing beyond expectation and comparison with any other country where exemption on conscience grounds is allowed. No wonder, then, that the press abounds in bitter comments and biting cartoons about the "rabbits" who, before the Magisterial Courts deciding about their demand for exemption, gave answers such as these:
Question: “If an enemy soldier attacked your wife, what would you do?” Answer: “Sit down and pray.”
Or, Question: “If you saw your mother attacked, what would you do?” Answer: “God would tell me what to do—my duty would be to pray.”

Now, there are cowards in every nation, and the establishment of courts of exemption may be a strong temptation to weak characters. If we learn, however, that “it is reckoned that 14,000 applications for exemption from combatant and noncombatant service have been received in New South Wales alone, and this when only three of the five classes liable for service have been called up” (The Bulletin, Sydney, April 15, 1942), the existence of a certain percentage of cowards is no satisfactory explanation for such a phenomenon.

It appears that the Australians are finding it very difficult to give up their lives of comfort for the grim reality of war and its demands. Thus, without wishing to minimize the efficiency of Lt. Col. Lehrbas, P.R.O., we see again that war is not a matter of publicity. It is, in the last analysis, decided by the will of a nation and of each of its citizens to fight for victory.

Items from Recent Allied Publications:

**Busy Defense Council**

The District of Columbia Defense Council operates a “date machine” for soldiers. Girls file information on their height, weight, and dancing ability on punch cards. Date-seeking soldiers specify their requirements, and presto—the sorting machine gives them the cards of girls who will suit.

*(The Reader’s Digest, January 1942)*

**Washington’s Main Product**

Checking rail freight movements, the US Chamber of Commerce found that the biggest item of export from Washington is wastepaper, baled and en route to paper mills for reclamation.

*(The Reader’s Digest, January 1942)*

**Smart Boy**

A reluctant conscript faced the army oculist, who asked him to read a chart. “What chart?” asked the draftee. The doctor persevered: “Just sit down in that chair and I’ll show you.” “What chair?” asked the man.

Deferred because of bad eyesight, the draftee went to a nearby movie. When the lights came on, he was horrified to discover the oculist in the next seat. “Excuse me,” said the conscript as calmly as he could, “does this bus go to Shipley?”

*(Digest of Digests, April 1942)*

**General Nuisance**

“Do you know who I am?” shouted the irate General to the Australian who had neglected to salute him.

“Do you know who I am?” he persisted, as the soldier looked blankly at him.

“Here, boys,” said the Australian, turning to his friends, “here’s something good. A General who doesn’t know his own name!”

*(Digest of Digests, March 1942)*