KIWI down the STRADA

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HOBBS

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COLVIN

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THE death recently of Lord Freyberg, 'The General' or 'Tiny' as he was known to all members of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force, must have brought back many memories to the soldiers of the Division who served under him during the hard-fought Italian campaign of twenty years ago. Not, probably, that any of the men themselves would need to have their memories jogged on the subject of the war—and Italy. For there is no question what an unforgettable experience Italy was to all members of the Kiwi Division. Something, at any rate, deserving of a suitable memento after twenty years of peacetime living.

Designed primarily as just such a memento, this book should have an instant appeal to all 'dinkum Kiwis'—and should attract more than passing interest from their wives, and their sons and daughters. Who better to write the text than Leslie Hobbs, author of *The Wild West Coast*, who was there in person (admittedly as a 'chairborne combatant', a journalist on the *N.Z.E.F. Times*), to bring his keen powers of observation and his sense of fun to bear on the reactions of the Kiwis to Italy and Italy to the Kiwis? His reflective though light-hearted chapters are backed up by a generous selection of the wartime photographs taken by George F. Kaye, Official Photographer to the 2nd N.Z.E.F., and for good measure a number of Neville Colvin's popular 'Clueless' cartoons from the *N.Z.E.F. Times*. The whole makes a pleasing and valuable record of the Kiwis marching or strolling (mostly strolling) down the long Italian strada.

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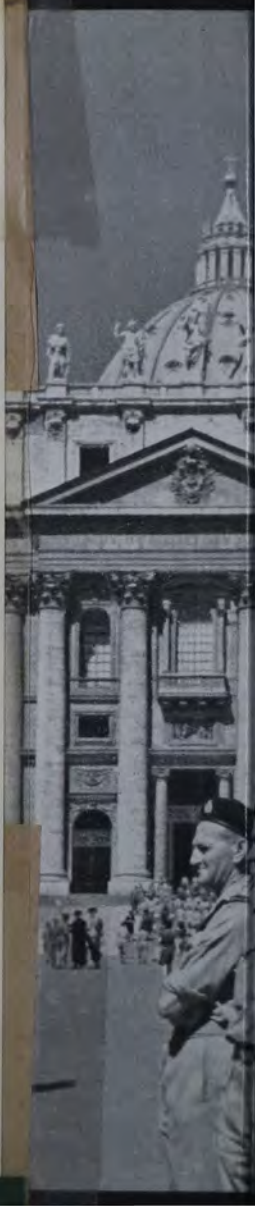

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This Book Belongs to
W A Hoban

Kiwi down the Strada

PRESENTED

TO

THE CORPS OF ROYAL NEW ZEALAND ENGINEERS

by

MR WATTY HOBAN
21 MEC. NZE
. . . . . .

on

3rd Feb 73
. . . . . .

COPY 1 OF 2

'And to think I once moaned about being a Coconut Bomber!'

Kiwi down the Strada

WRITTEN BY

LESLIE HOBBS

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY

GEORGE F. KAYE

(Official Photographer, 2 N.Z.E.F.)

AND NINE 'CLUELESS' CARTOONS BY

NEVILLE COLVIN

1963

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FOREWORD

More than a hundred years ago, it used to be said, the education of a young English gentleman was not complete until he had done a Grand Tour of the Continent, especially Italy. This book is written in the hope that it will amuse and stir the memories of some of the thousands of New Zealanders who, in Army issue clothing nearly twenty years ago, received a special and rather specialised education on their own Grand Tour of Italy—'Freyberg's Forty Thousand Young Gentlemen', as nobody ever called them.

They didn't travel in much comfort. Army boots are sometimes hard to walk in, the steel trays of Army three-tonners are poorly upholstered, and they always seemed to have to carry their belongings wherever they went. But whatever the discomforts (not to mention the dangers) of war, it is safe to assume, from what can be heard at reunions from Whangarei to the Bluff, that few who served in Italy have ever forgotten the experience.

War histories have recorded the campaigns, casualty lists the cost in life and limb; this is meant to be a light-hearted attempt to recall some of the less grim aspects of life in a country which, whatever else you might be tempted to call it, could never be regarded as dull.

Italy was not a pleasant experience for many in the Army, but it was not unpleasant for everyone all the time. These pages will have fulfilled their purpose if they do evoke memories of the excitement of the impact on the unpredictable Italians and their countryside of the unpredictable New Zealanders from the other side of the world. George Kaye's photographs, culled from thousands, have a nostalgic flavour now, and the publication again of some of Neville Colvin's cartoons poses the inevitable question: What ever happened to Private Clueless? He may even be your local M.P.

They're middle-aged men now, set in their ways, saddled with a mortgage, most of those Kiwis of wartime days in Italy. But how many would turn down a chance for one more summer's evening stroll, on leave, down the Via Veneto in Rome?

LESLIE HOBBS

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The photographs by George F. Kaye, taken in wartime Italy, will be found between pages 64 and 65 of the main text.

Cartoons by Neville Colvin appear as frontispiece and on pages 32, 60, 62, 66, 76, 82, 102, 108.

CHAPTER 1

SENSE OF HUMOUR

The ramshackle and war-battered theatre in an Italian town, plaster peeling from its walls, was packed with soldiers, many of them New Zealanders, watching an E.N.S.A. show. It was quick and fast vaudeville. One act ended. While they readied the stage, behind the curtain for the next, the leading comedian and a small boy stumped on to the stage—empty except for one stage effect, a placard bearing the date, August 20, 1984.

The comedian was bearded, an old man. The little boy looked up and spoke in a piping voice.

'And what did you do in the war, Grandad?' he asked.

The old man looked down, and wagged his head sadly.

'It was tough, son. I fought and I fought.' He shook his head bitterly. 'I fought hard, real hard—but in the end I had to go.'

The audience exploded in laughter.

Yet the difference between volunteers and conscripts had always been a sore point—sometimes under the surface but still there—in the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force. What the response to the joke showed was that in all circumstances the New Zealand soldier was prepared to laugh at himself—even when the spark was an old English music-hall skit.

For many a New Zealander there was very little to laugh about at all for most of his stay in Italy. Much New Zealand history can be read in war cemeteries in Italy, on crosses marking the graves of men from North Cape to the Bluff. For many others Italy was a place where endurance was tested to the utmost, a place of bitter memories, of wounds and hospitals.

But the purpose of this book, the very opposite of a campaign history (which the author, much of the time a chairborne editor of an Army newspaper, is not competent to write) is to recall some of

the pleasanter things that sometimes happened in Italy. The aim is to jog the memory of thousands of Kiwis, representative of one of the newest countries, who were suddenly dumped in the strident midst of one of the oldest, most vibrantly alive countries of the Christian world.

All over the Dominion now there are thousands of Kiwis who served in Italy. They still have what they had then, a tremendous sense of the funny side of things. And no one could ever complain that life in Italy was dull.

If anyone, however, has bought this book in the hope that it will be an exposure of carryings-on as between the New Zealanders and the signorinas he—although it may be she—should get their money back. Nothing is written here, it is hoped, which a former soldier's wife could not know about. And, indeed, if there were such goings-on this correspondent must have been somewhere else at the time.

Not that all the stories here will meet with the unstinted approval of all readers, particularly female ones, but then they did not have to spend a winter or two in the Italian campaign. By and large New Zealanders should still be pretty popular with the Italians, as they deserved to be, except perhaps with the waiters on the staff of the Hotel Daniele in Venice and in that other luxury hotel taken over in Rome. Those waiters sometimes could barely conceal their disdain that the Kiwis did not quite behave like English milords distributing largesse on a Cook's tour.

But probably every soldier who has memories at all of Italian families he met and knew would hope and expect that there were at least half a dozen homes, up and down the Adriatic coast, or in central Italy, or some other areas, where he could walk in tomorrow and be treated as a friend. Some who have since been lucky enough to make a Continental tour have done just that.

Obviously in the wine, cooking, fashion, culture and entertainment departments there were many lessons New Zealanders could learn from Italians and although they soon forgot them once back in the New Zealand scene, many did learn them—and had a lot of fun in the process. A few—a very few—learnt those lessons so well that they did not want to come home, and many others were vaguely restless and dissatisfied with finding, when they did get home, that Saturday night in Kaiapoi somehow lacked the attractions of the Via Veneto in Rome.

A batman-driver to a very distinguished, brave and brilliant officer in the last war was dilating over his cups, in Italy, at a gathering of his friends, on just how good his job was.

'I couldn't have it better at home, Mac,' he said earnestly. 'Every morning the boss gets up and gets me a cup of tea.'

A few in the gathering laughed uproariously. His closest friends never raised an eyebrow. They knew it was true.

The Brigadier, the batman's boss, had a passion for getting up early every morning. And since he was a sensible man and did not believe in the duplication of jobs, he did indeed make the batman a cup of tea. After which the batman would get up, carry on with his duties all day, with no undue familiarity and a great deal of efficiency.

The example is given not because it will be news to many former New Zealand soldiers, but because it illustrates the peculiar, thoroughly efficient and probably unique officer-man relationship which, with no harmful effect at all on discipline, marked the closing stages in the existence of that remarkable institution known in the history books as the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

The example is not typical, and it is not suggested that many brigadiers got the early morning cup of tea for their batmen; but it is of some importance because it was taken as only a mild eccentricity which didn't really mean anything. For, whatever its causes, the fact is undeniable that their service with the 2nd N.Z.E.F. was for many New Zealanders an unforgettable time which has left an indelible mark on them, and perhaps on New Zealand's development.

This development of a spirit of its own, a soul of its own, in an army of some 30,000 or 40,000 New Zealanders on the other side of the world in the latter part of a gruelling war, is a phenomenon which you will not read much about in official war histories, but there are thousands of men who will testify to it.

What made it the more interesting was that it developed, whether accidentally or not is open to surmise, as part of an extraordinary clash in temperament and character between Italians and New Zealanders. Each country had something to teach the other; and in the process of adjustment the New Zealanders, Maoris as well as white men, both learnt much and also learnt to come to terms with a society they had never dreamed of in Ashburton, Taupo, or

even metropolitan Auckland. The lessons learnt then have never been forgotten, and some of the consequences of them are related in this book, which does not attempt to deal with the grimmer side of war and battles, but with the social excitements, and fun, and heartbreaks of living two years or more in Italy.

It took some time to achieve (after the discomforts, boredom and dissatisfaction of life in New Zealand before going overseas), but by the time they were ready to come home from Italy, pretty well every soldier in the New Zealand Army knew that he had been a member of an organisation he would never want to forget. Cherished illusions had gone by the board (after all, the Germans had turned out even less efficient than we were), there were plenty of grievances, but nearly every man was coming home much wiser than ever he had been before, and on the whole pretty proud of the Army. And he had enough memories to last him all his life.

This book is an attempt to convey, if it is possible so long after the event, some of the flavour of life in Italy, for those who came to know that country and its people under circumstances which will never again be matched.

Many New Zealanders, especially those who had fought against them in the desert campaigns, began with a deep contempt for Italians. Some of them never lost it. Others kept their contempt for Italian men as soldiers, but liked them as people. Some became wholeheartedly pro-Italian, to the extent of becoming Italian cooking and wine addicts, music and theatre lovers. But the great majority took the view that since they had to be in Italy they might as well make the best of it, and make the best of it they did. They drank a lot and most of them made friendships, necessarily fleeting because they were always moving on, with scores of Italians.

They seldom went in for generalisations, these New Zealanders in a strange country. But what one frequently heard was: 'All the Italian women should have been men and all the men women.' That was not said because Italian women were mannish; far from it. But in strength of character the Italian women seemed streets ahead of their menfolk, and it made a deep impression.

And so perhaps it was because they made common cause as fellow New Zealanders living, because they had to, in an alien civilisation, the New Zealand Army moved towards a relationship between all ranks that had certainly never existed in the mobilisation and home defence camps back in New Zealand.

CHAPTER 2

THE MONEY ANGLE

A writer compiling a war history, official or unofficial, would not expect to get much enlightenment from the figure-studded official papers of the Pay Corps. But in a hundred years or so if anyone with spare time enough ever were to read the official pay records of the 2nd N.Z.E.F. in Italy, he might well be puzzled by a strange phenomenon.

The New Zealand soldier, who can usually find need enough for money any time he is out of the field, apparently ran into an economy streak—a rigid economy streak—once he had crossed from Egypt to Italy. Thousands of them just didn't draw pay at all for months on end. There was the Pay Corps all bursting with money to which the soldiery were entitled. But the soldiers just weren't lining up to draw it. They could not care less about the Army's money, so it seemed, just so long as it was credited to their account every week—as of course it was.

This tremendous economy wave should have had more publicity than it has ever been given. There they were, thousands of Kiwis in a land where there was plenty to buy, and all of a sudden they gave up drawing their pay.

It got so that the senior officers of many units became worried about the look of the thing. Pay parades had become a thing of the past, worried Pay Corps men would call and ask in effect: 'What's wrong with our money? Don't they want it?'

The answer was that they didn't. More than one unit, under pressure from above, in fact, got round to enforced pay parades—to making men draw pay. Under those terms, the Kiwis had to line up for their pay. But they discovered that the regulations said money could be drawn down to a minimum of a five-shilling drag. Which is just what they drew, and there were many pay-books in

which the owner's drawings were about five shillings every three months.

Explanations were asked. The answer was always the same. 'I won it at the races.' But considering the few race meetings there were—even the unofficial unit ones with donkeys—it was clear that if this explanation was to be believed the New Zealanders had discovered a remarkable system for everyone to win at the races, and for no one to lose. The silly thing was that everyone, from general down to private, knew the answer. But the Army has an extraordinary genius for minding its own business when it is the sensible thing to do, and that is just what happened.

The short facts were that New Zealanders, mostly honestly but certainly illegally, had discovered the monetary advantages of having readily saleable goods in a country full of money but really short of goods. Any soldier could buy goods at an Army canteen, go round the corner and sell them at a profit.

He could also find a market for any surplus gear he had. Heaven knows how many Italian weddings were celebrated in Bari, Naples and many places in the South with the bride dressed in a frock which had its trimmings made from mosquito nets. Army blankets were readily saleable anywhere, and shirts, underclothing and all the rest of it were at a premium. And for food the market was unlimited and the price good.

Of course, selling Army property was a crime and if caught the offender got short shrift. But not very many were ever caught. That may or may not have been Army policy. The highly efficient boys from the S.I.B. (Security Intelligence Bureau) were on to the genuine crooks who stole stuff by the truck load, made fortunes, were often mixed up (especially in the Naples area) with gangsters who would have made some of Al Capone's boys look like refugees from a Y.M.C.A. camp; but little or no real effort was made to catch up with the Kiwi who sold one shirt, one blanket, one mosquito net when he was short of a few lire.

But it was possible without selling any Army property to get by very nicely in Italy without ever drawing any pay. Cigarettes bought at the canteen or even issued free fetched a very nice sum, sufficient to pay for the week's drinking and an occasional night at the opera. In fact, many New Zealanders, for once in their lives, probably had a happy glow of self-righteous happiness in the whole situation.

There they were helping out the poor Italians to get the things they needed and making a nice thing out of their good deeds on the side. If the Army frowned on such black-marketing (and officially it did, very heavily) then that was just another example of the Army being out of touch with modern conditions.

And if it was not always possible to have the same glow of good conscience about the odd 'flogging' of Army material, at least the seller of the goods could (sometimes anyway) complain that he was almost forced into it. Take the case of Private A———. Everyone believed this story to be true, and it may well have been. He was in a transit camp, coming back from a course somewhere, when he received a nasty dose of infective hepatitis. The Medical Officer who held the sick parades at the transit camp rightly had him admitted to the nearest N.Z. General Hospital.

It was winter time. He had an issue of six blankets. The Transit Camp had neither room nor wish to hang on to his gear, so that when he was bundled into a truck and sent to hospital, his blanket-roll went with him and was lodged in store there. When he left and was going to a convalescent depot, the hospital staff-sergeant quartermaster insisted that he be issued with six blankets. Thinking more of the inconvenience of having to lug around so much gear, the private insisted he did not need any more blankets, he already had six in store.

But regulations were regulations, said the quartermaster, and there it was down in black and white that every soldier discharged from hospital be issued with blankets from the hospital's store. After a moment's reflection, the private recalled that it was foolish for any private ever to argue with a quartermaster, took the six blankets, went round the corner to where his own effects were stored, and piled on to the truck heading for the convalescent depot with two bed-rolls, twelve blankets.

When he came to leave the convalescent depot, believe it or not, the story was the same. He received as he marched out another six blankets. That left him with eighteen blankets to cart round with him, and the weather was getting clearer and warmer. What more could a man do than get rid of the surplus to some Italians who needed them? Purists may see a flaw in that argument. What would happen, they may say, if ever it was discovered that three separate sets of blankets were on issue to the one man? But there is the

perfect answer to that one. Who in any Army would ever have the time, the opportunity or the wish, to compare vouchers from every unit against the names of thousands of men? And if the sale of twelve or fourteen unwanted blankets produced 14,000 lire (about £35 at the then current rate of exchange), well, it just served the Army right for being so slaphappy.

One beautiful racket that went on for months, and finally was only discovered through accident, must have netted many thousands of lire to the few in the secret—and it involved no dishonesty at all. Transport for civilian goods had just about broken down. The South was full of olive oil. The Rome area desperately wanted it for cooking. The men involved in this had one truck which made a regular run through from somewhere behind Cassino up to Rome. Those in the joke bought hundreds of litres of olive oil every time they came south at 125 lire a quarter, sold it in Rome, no questions asked and everyone glad to get it, for 500.

What was more, they carried the olive oil in full view of any provosts, civil police, security men and the whole Army. Their truck, like so many which had come across from the desert war in North Africa, carried, neatly fitted into place, over a score of jerry-cans—some ostensibly for water, some for petrol. In actual fact they were all for olive oil, and a fortune was made.

In most towns prices on the black market were fairly well fixed. They could vary from town to town and from district to district, depending on the particular shortages of commodities, but for such staples as cigarettes, soap, toothpaste, clothing, etc., not much shopping round would produce a better price.

There are probably scores of New Zealand businessmen now in their late forties who learnt a lot about commercial dealings in their forays into the black market in Italy. The Italians were shrewd traders. In fact there were always some among them—one at least in every village, scores in every town and city—who were first-class 'spivs'. Often they won hands down in their dealings with naive Kiwis, these smooth and friendly spivs; but occasionally they lost.

One battalion had a bicycle which netted a fortune for one platoon. They carried it always with them in a truck. It had been found, all new and chromium-looking, in the cellar of a deserted house in a village they occupied. In every place they went to the shrewd-heads in the platoon would make inquiries and find out who

was the local spiv, and proceed to extract tribute. The method was simple. Three of the men would walk through the village at dusk, wheeling their precious bicycle—worth almost its weight in gold in an Italian village. The spiv would stop them, make an offer. They would demur until he raised the price. Then, seemingly reluctant, they would agree, hand over the bicycle for a fistful of big-denomination notes.

The spiv would mount the bicycle. But from just around the corner where they had been lurking would come three other members of the platoon. They would be wearing, unofficially, regimental police armbands. They would stop the spiv indignantly, point to a stencil on the cycle which declared it (quite wrongly) to be Army property, and arrest the spiv for buying Army property.

Sometimes he would cry, sometimes try to escape (which was foolish because they had a jeep and he a bicycle), sometimes try to bribe, but always in the long run the result was the same. The bicycle was triumphantly recaptured, and carried on to the next village where the same process was repeated. That bicycle made a tremendous amount of money, would have made more except that in the last mad rush to Trieste a shell from a Tiger tank wrecked the truck that was carrying it, and the bicycle, like the truck, was a write-off.

It has even been reported—though some may find it hard to believe—that officers used the black market as much as did other ranks. They had opportunities all their own. They could shop at the various officers' shops all over the country, and buy clothing, shoes (the heavy-duty officers' shoes were highly regarded by Italians and it is a safe bet that many pairs are still being worn for Sunday best in some of the country areas), and a whole variety of goods. And temptation was often in their way. One Italian attendant in a very well known officers' shop not far from Rome used to hand every purchaser a little card as he left. It told him just where he could dispose of any surplus goods he might want to ease on to the black market.

One officer in the New Zealand Army before finishing his furlough received an odd communication from the War Office, of all places. They wanted to know, back in Whitehall, just how this officer had found it necessary to buy twelve pairs of officers' shoes up and down the country in the space of three months. He wrote back a

chatty note with the explanation: 'I'm a great walker. Helps to keep me fit, you know.' And nothing more was ever heard of the matter.

The Americans had heard of black-marketing, too. Some of them were excellent businessmen. They were often in the market for deals as between the forces. Parker pens, for instance, from their commissary were often sought by New Zealanders, and the price for them was so many bottles of Scotch, which came on issue at duty-free prices to sergeants and above.

But for both the Americans and the British the difficulty was that, once caught, penalties could be tremendously heavy. The New Zealander theoretically faced the same penalties, but somehow or other it seemed hard to get a court martial charge to stick, and penalties never seemed to be quite so bad.

The threat of fifty years' imprisonment and a dishonourable discharge (which was the sort of penalty the Americans used to impose) did not deter one group of American free enterprisers up the north at the end of the war—in an area which might be described as being fairly close to the sharp end. Their unit had been shifted there, in a hurry. A petrol point, a very necessary adjunct for any mobile unit, was set up and was manned by a skeleton staff. Then orders were changed, the main unit went somewhere else and for many days the petrol point was either forgotten, or deliberately left abandoned because it was too difficult to arrange transport for all that petrol somewhere else. So a tiny handful of Americans stayed there, in charge of thousands of gallons of petrol and no customers. By arrangement among the Allies any petrol point, say, for Americans would supply New Zealand or British trucks with petrol if they had to have it.

Some New Zealanders on a quite unofficial sightseeing trip called at this petrol point. They discovered that if they had the energy, the nerve and the time they could have made a fortune by a process which amounted to perpetual motion. The Americans filled the truck's two petrol tanks—glad to see any customers, they said. Then they put up their suggestion. It was far too dangerous for them to sell petrol to the Italians. But they had some Italian friends just around the corner. If the New Zealanders filled up the truck and went round the corner, the Italians would siphon it out and pay handsomely for the privilege. Then the New Zealanders could come back round the corner, fill up again, and repeat the process *ad infinitum*.

The Americans were getting their cut, and their thesis, which probably was true, was that every time the New Zealand truck pulled in they would put down a different registration number for the vehicle, and the New Zealanders would sign a different name—and as between New Zealand and American headquarters there would never be a check. It was a very ingenious argument, and it might have worked if the New Zealanders had not been so high-minded about the whole thing. Or so they said, although they did manage to have a good and costly trip and arrive back at their unit with far more money than they had when they started out—and with their pay balance still intact.

In the closing stages of the war in the mad rush towards Trieste the pickings were good for those who had time to gather them in—but it has regretfully to be said in the interests of those who did most of the 'liberating' and accepted most of the surrenders that they were too busy fighting and pressing on regardless to be able to do much. The real gains were made by those who came after them.

One unit accepted with some surprise the surrender of a German field pay office. They had not realised that they had gone so far so quickly as to catch up with Pay. For an hour or so pickings were really good. Then authority stepped in, collected the books, checked the cash (all Italian currency of a sort a man could use), and announced the deficit. Word went out that all money from the Pay Office was to be left in a certain building, and if it was all accounted for, no questions were to be asked.

The threat was a real one. The man who made it obviously meant it, and no one in his unit doubted that if all the money did not go back, and smartly, there would really be trouble—and just at the end of a war trouble was what no one wanted. The office was left empty for the requisite number of hours. A huge amount of cash was put back. When the authorities came to count it, they found that, according to the books, more had been returned than had been taken. Either the German bookkeepers had had an undeclared surplus (which seemed unlikely), or in an excess of zeal and repentance those who had returned the money had made sure that they were on the right side. As everyone had plenty of money anyway, it was not difficult. The excess was spent in a unit celebration.

A padre had an experience on similar lines. Some of the men in a unit to which he was attached had been somewhat too enthusiastic in looting a 'liberated' village, and had taken gear belonging to families who had not deserted their homes, but merely been hiding from *la guerra* in nearby cellars. These families were desperately poor, and they had had a hard war.

The padre's sermon was a real gem that Sunday. He tore his troops up verbally for nearly half an hour and the climax of a fighting sermon was that he expected a collection which would make good the loss the Italians had suffered. It was doubtful whether those who went to church had indeed been responsible; but as a tribute to a forceful piece of oratory the collection that night was almost enough to have started the Italians off with a new home. As has been mentioned before, these New Zealanders were not short of money.

As huge quantities of surrendered Nazi equipment were handed in a few astute Kiwis cashed in quickly. Truckloads of German boots, mostly new, from the quartermaster stores seemed to shoot back like lightning towards Rome where they sank without a ripple into the black market pool—at very high prices.

One scientifically-minded Kiwi who knew something about artillery made a small, perhaps even a big, fortune from the lenses in captured rangefinders. Beautiful pieces of German workmanship those lenses were, and how the Italians relished the chance of buying them.

Then there was a platoon, nearly all from the one district, which captured a northern town which had only one factory—it made fur coats and expensive ones at that. To this day the women of that West Coast town from which their menfolk came can be seen on important occasions wearing really expensive furs with a Continental look. (They were sent home under that convenient Army system which allowed a man to send home 'a soldier's gift'. Some such gifts included art treasures, a few of which have since been quietly and anonymously returned.)

But the staple goods of supply came as usual from cookhouses—captured cookhouses, or even sometimes Kiwi ones. A bag of sugar was worth just about its weight in gold to a middle-class Italian family with a sweet tooth and lots of lire and no goods to spend them on.

One fine piece of disposal of enemy property which never came off involved some senior men from both the Army and Navy—all of whom would deny it now. Up in the north the infantry had captured a huge, almost magnificent, Mercedes sedan, which had been the staff car of a high-ranking Nazi officer. It was in perfect order, obviously kept so as the pride of some German soldier-driver's heart.

It suddenly appeared, driven down by devious routes, in Bari, in the far south, many hundreds of kilometres from where it had first been acquired. It was to be garaged for a night or two, and then Navy transport had been arranged to ship it to Alexandria. Once it reached Egypt the transport back home to New Zealand would have been easy by using the business acumen of some Levantine merchant who could arrange anything for a consideration.

But someone talked too much. Into the garage came an S.I.B. man, quiet, reserved, obviously authoritative. He was making no fuss, arresting nobody, incriminating nobody. But that car was to go back whence it came, and smartly, to be there by a designated time. Or else. It went back, right on time.

Someone, who didn't have the courage to put his name to it, once coined the name 'Freyberg's Forty Thousand Thieves' for the New Zealand Division. It was thoroughly undeserved, as every right-thinking Kiwi will agree (he'd better), but the events narrated in this brief sketch at least may indicate that a tiny percentage of the Army did not waste their time financially. And their pay-books more or less prove it—although they probably tell their wives that in the last few months they really scarcely spent a penny, hardly anything at all. Rome was so cheap to live in, and so were Venice and Trieste.

In fact, money as a firm unit of currency carried round in one's pockets did not mean the same thing in Italy as it does in New Zealand. Some who were in the gathering admired the quickness of mind of a New Zealand officer who was drinking with a group of acquaintances in a cafe in Trieste, where every now and then they had some splendid Austrian beer. It was not expensive, but they expected to be paid for it. The party went on longer than expected and the New Zealander suddenly realised he would be unable to meet his commitments next time he had to buy a drink.

He went to the rear of the cafe, haggled a little with the waiter, came back triumphant. He afterwards related to his friends that he had managed it simply by going into the kitchen, selling the waiter the pair of socks he, the officer, was wearing. Under desert boots, and wearing slacks, no one in the party noticed the difference, the waiter was pleased to get a pair of first-quality officers' shop socks, worn for the first time that day, and everyone was happy. But it couldn't be done in a New Zealand hotel. That officer has now a high executive position with a New Zealand newspaper. He can certainly think quickly.

Another unit, in the South, solved its liquor problems simply by drawing an extra three rations a week, and taking them to a nearby wineshop as regularly as clockwork. It was only a small unit, and for all its members all the drinks were on the house every day. The Army might have frowned on it, but the rations went to a good cause—the innkeeper had a young and hungry family—and perhaps it was the fault of the depot that issued the rations in not checking the number of men in the units supplied.

Some soldiers, who in their home lives were not in the type of job which gave them much chance to haggle and make quick profits in the commercial world, were in the black and grey markets for fun as much as for the money they made out of it, or for what that money could buy. One New Zealand soldier, now in a very big job indeed, carried with him nearly everywhere a pair of civilian shoes he had bought in Cairo. He told the Italians, of course, that they were Army issue, of surpassing quality, and was always trying to get a high price for those shoes. Personally he found them uncomfortable, anyway. His friends swore that he carried and tried to sell them for the sheer joy of haggling—and it was certainly true both that he never managed to sell them and that he kept on trying to.

Others, frankly, made a whole lot of money. Whether legend or truth who can tell, but some Army people who should have known used to swear that one New Zealander owned a complete block of flats in Rome, and had left careful instructions with a reputable land agent about collecting the rents and protecting his investment. Another Kiwi driver, in the long months of waiting to go home after the war ended, bought a half share in a transport business. (He must have cut their costs a lot because he sometimes used an

Army truck to make his deliveries, and his firm never seemed short of petrol.)

It was extremely difficult for anyone to make arrangements to transfer any money he did make in Italy out to New Zealand, or even to Cairo. Perhaps the only man who managed it was even then giving proof of success in the commercial world—since attained. He wrote a book, had it printed by the New Zealand printing unit, and since it was the only book by a New Zealander available, sold it very well, and managed to get the money out, perfectly legitimately.

It may or may not have been a New Zealander—some think it was—who made a quite comfortable, highly illegal fortune out of a little excursion to a remote village high in the Apennines. The war had passed quickly through the village more than a year before, with an Army moving quickly to get into winter quarters at a lower, more comfortable altitude. But the Army, partly for its own transport convenience, partly to help the villagers, had left a memorial. A bridge over a deep ravine had been blown by the retreating Germans, the village had been left isolated—a drastic fate.

The Army could have found and used another route to get where it was going, but it took the easy way out and threw a Bailey bridge over the ravine, crossed it and soon went on and left the village for ever. The place was so high up, so remote from anywhere, so little use militarily, that the villagers found nothing strange in the fact that the Army did not return. The place was bypassed, forgotten.

Then when the war was weeks over, in came a truck driven by a corporal. He wore no New Zealand tabs, but there was some reason to suspect he might indeed have been a Kiwi—although he was never caught.

He came into the village, had a glass of vino at the small and only store, asked for the *padrone*—the head man.

He was brief and to the point.

Translated into English, the conversation went this way:

'We're sorry about this, but that bridge is Army property, you know, and I've come to dismantle it and take it away. I'm just having a preliminary look, and tomorrow I'll be back with the men to do the job.'

The head man was all excitement and fear. In gesticulating, voluble dialect he replied in effect: 'You can't do that. We'd all starve. We can't cross the river without the bridge, couldn't sell anything, buy anything, couldn't get a doctor in, couldn't even go to Mass.'

The corporal clucked his teeth sympathetically—they were false teeth, one of the signs that he might have been a Kiwi. But he was adamant. That bridge was Army property, had to come down, be taken away.

The *padrone* was thoroughly alarmed, upset.

'Couldn't you possibly stay here an hour or so while I call a meeting in the village and perhaps we can work out some form of a petition we can get you to take back to the Army?' he urged.

The corporal, sympathetic still but adamant, said he didn't think a petition would have the slightest chance of success—once the Army wanted its property it would have to get it—but he didn't mind staying. The wine was very good.

They brought him a bottle of even better wine.

The *padrone* rushed away to call his meeting.

When he came back the corporal was still sober—which was probably a disappointment to the villagers—but the *padrone* was full of a new idea.

'Would the Army care to sell the bridge?' he asked, and he produced a huge bundle of notes, all in big denominations. They were probably the result of years of saving.

The corporal didn't think so. The price would be too high.

'How high?' The *padrone* was insistent.

The corporal, a keen judge of Italian notes, had had a look at the bundle shown to him. He named a sum just three times that.

The *padrone*, nearly in tears, shook his head, but said he would go and sound out the others.

In twenty minutes he was back. He had the money.

At this stage the Italian had changed to the shrewd money-conscious peasant.

'There'd have to be some agreement, of course. An agreement and an official receipt. Of course for the receipt you could discount the money by ten per cent, take that for yourself.'

The corporal was righteously indignant. As if he would be a party to taking ten per cent secret commission on an Army deal.

No, he would sign a receipt, give an agreement that the village could keep the bridge, but the full amount would go to the Army.

He signed the receipt 'A. Swindle, Corporal', had another glass of wine, shook hands and departed—with a fortune.

The villagers might never have found out they were duped, but they did months afterwards when an Allied Military Government team came into the area by accident (they had lost their way) and told them that the Army did not work that way. The bridge was long since written off, it would not have been worth the trouble to pull it down, and it certainly would not have been pulled down in any case.

They have probably called off the search for Corporal Swindle by now, but it lasted a long time. When the story got round, most New Zealanders regarded it as an especially mean trick. Middle-class city Italians were the people to take down, if you had to take someone down, not poor villagers. But Corporal Swindle kept, and has since kept, his identity to himself. Not many tourist trips were as profitable as that one—and no matter how expensive his tastes Corporal Swindle must have found it hard to spend all that money before leaving for home.

CHAPTER 3

THE LEGENDS

Army legends die hard. If twenty reputable New Zealand doctors, all with Army experience, swore on Bibles tomorrow that it was untrue, thousands of New Zealanders (and most likely many of their wives) would vouch for the truth of the legend that the Army put 'something in the tea'. Everyone knew all about it.

The idea, it was said, was to make certain that soldiers kept their minds on their work, and not their love-affairs. The legend sprang from the British Army, probably from World War I. But many believe it to be absolute truth—just what the Army would do and did do. Perhaps, twenty years later, they are even more sure of it.

Another legend, which the Army used to disavow at every opportunity, and which certainly is not true, is that if a man was killed, or died, on active service, the Army charged against his pay the cost of the blanket he was buried in. A grim story, frequently denied, but just as frequently believed.

Rumours that grew into legends were frequent in the Army, disproving the theory that it is only women who gossip. There probably was not one troopship which left New Zealand on which the story did not sweep like wildfire that among the privates lined up for medical inspection days after sailing from New Zealand shores, one private, from the infantry, too, was discovered to be a woman masquerading as a man. It might have been true once, but it couldn't have happened on every ship.

And there were always rumours that the Division was about to be packed up and moved somewhere else. It was no rumour, of course, that if Japan had not caved in when she did the New Zealanders would have gone to the Pacific theatre—J-Force went there in any case—but what was uncanny was the detail with which soldiers, who could not possibly have known the plans,

embroidered their chapter and verse about where and when the troops were going, exactly where they were to train in the United States (in the San Francisco area), and just what was going to happen.

Then there were the legends—they sprouted like the ones of twenty years before about the Model-T Ford—about American high-level bombing, and the things and places the United States Air Force sometimes bombed. There was one story to the effect that up Bologna way was a huge Italian mental hospital-cum-gaol for the criminally insane. As a rule Italians did not bother much about mental hospitals, patients, unless they were violent, simply staying in the care of their families, which must have been a great saving to the taxpayer, but there this place was supposed to be for the criminally dangerous lunatics.

The story was that through a kind of unofficial grapevine between the retreating German and the advancing Allied armies (that grapevine was another legend perhaps) an unofficial arrangement had been reached. Both sides would bypass the place, and each in its turn, depending on whose territory it was in at the time, would see if possible that the hospital was undisturbed, and its food supply maintained.

But, said the story, an American bomber flight on a mission somewhere miles away had mistaken the target, bombed the place, and without hitting the buildings blown down the high surrounding walls so that the inmates all escaped.

'They had to call the war off for a few days while they rounded them all up,' those who retailed the story used to swear. It could have been true; it could have been just another Army story. But it was no Army story that the fuss caused when a United States bomber did score a direct hit on General Mark Clark's plush caravan near Cassino was a welcome diversion in an otherwise grim period for a lot of people who knew about it.

Sometimes, as happens in the Army, legends and rumours fell short of the truth. There are a few hundred men living in peace and comfort in New Zealand today who can say with grim and bitter memories of the place that all that was said about cruelty and toughness in the genuine Army 'glasshouse'—the British one —was understated. The British have never believed in making

Army prisons rest-homes, but there are some grounds for thinking that some of their establishments went a little too far.

Wherever soldiers met there were always stories about field punishment centres, detention barracks, and the like. The New Zealanders hated them. They hated even worse the British men who staffed them. Anything ever written about the infamous 'glasshouse' of the British Army will readily be believed by anyone who served in the New Zealand Army, for almost everyone knew someone who had spent time in one.

It is not pleasant to see a man who comes out of gaol with his spirit broken—or even worse with a feeling of defiance and resentment against the whole Army system. The punishments seemed, to New Zealanders, out of all proportion to Army offences.

No detention centre in Italy ever approached in evil reputation the Army gaol in Abbassia, in Cairo. No one who has been there will ever forget it. But the ones in Italy were bad enough—and occasionally New Zealanders were sent there, although a remarkable number of sentences were never served because the prisoners had them suspended while they rejoined their unit in action.

There was one New Zealander who really went to gaol on behalf of his unit. He was a driver, one of a convoy, calling at a British ration dump. He was the luckless last in the procession out the gate. Waiting outside the gate, to come in after the New Zealanders went out, was a British truck, laden with genuine brand salmon—obviously senior officers' mess, for the use of.

The New Zealanders slowing down past the guardhouse to go out had soon acquainted themselves with the desirable cargo on that truck. The word was passed back. The driver of the British truck had left his vehicle unattended, while he chatted to the guard waiting for the Kiwi convoy to pass out. The spare driver in each New Zealand truck hopped out, hoisted a case of the salmon, had it on the New Zealand truck and away.

Our man was unfortunately the last man to engage in this manoeuvre—and he was the only man caught. The unit got the charge-sheet. There was no way out of it. More in sorrow than in anger the officers in charge, who had greatly enjoyed the salmon, sentenced the unfortunate driver to two months in a British gaol (the sentence not being of convenient length to transfer him to a New Zealand field punishment centre, he had to stay with the British).

This New Zealander, a quiet type, was a brilliant cabinet-maker and the officers at this new British 'glasshouse' were determined to make themselves comfortable—even if they also saw to it that the prisoners were far from comfortable. Our New Zealander spent his time making furniture. But from then on, not once in his army career, for the sake of the unit or anyone else, did he ever run the risk of going back to a place like that.

He and others were full of dark stories about real violence in the 'glasshouse'—about how prisoners goaded beyond endurance would attack warders, sometimes murderously. Of course, the prisoner always lost, but in the eyes of most New Zealanders the conduct of most 'glasshouses' was something of which the British Army had no right to be proud. And many of those stories about violence were true.

What the average New Zealander wondered at most was what such disciplinary methods were intended to achieve. Certainly it was no way of making a good soldier to break a man's spirit, but just the way to produce men who from then on hated the Army and everyone in authority in it, and took good care never to be caught doing anything.

There is a well authenticated story of another New Zealander. After a spell in action in which his unit had taken a hammering, some senior officer had been persuaded that what the other ranks needed was discipline. So they were all set guard and picket duties. This particularly grim New Zealander, who had had a tough time in a tough campaign and was no longer as young and fit as he used to be, was given the job—at night—of 'guarding' a disused shed, which housed nothing. He thought the whole thing absurd and showed his contempt for the whole procedure by going to rest inside the empty hut. He was found asleep on guard duty—a heinous offence—and his sentence was a term in a very tough English 'glasshouse'. His defence was it was a waste of his and the Army's time to be put on guard duty, guarding an empty hut. But it availed him nothing. He had been a fine soldier before. When he came out of gaol he was useful for nothing—deliberately and of set purpose. It was a man wasted for the purpose of proving something. Nothing will ever convince the man himself (now in a big job overseas) or his friends that the sentence was either just or wise.

'I just saw red.'

One Army rumour that was more grim in reality than the rumour itself concerned saboteurs. Security warned everyone against them, and some of the forward units occasionally found that spies and saboteurs were not beyond signalling to the Germans from the top of wrecked church steeples and the like. But back in Bari, at that time the recognised home of the 'base wallahs', saboteurs were credited with what must have been one of the worst explosions of the Italian campaign.

The port was full of ships, as it usually was. There were hundreds of dockers—Italian labourers many of them, others Maltese and other units working as stevedores, and some hundreds of British Army members of port units. Just before noon hundreds were queued up before an Army cafeteria, waiting for the lunch whistle. It had just begun to blow when something else blew too. An ammunition ship exploded, and so did the one next to it. Another ship was set on fire, and, with a scratch crew of all Allied nations, a British Navy officer in a small ship towed the burning ship out to sea—where it blew up, too. Another ship, on fire, drifted clean along the beach.

Buildings within a range of half a mile were wrecked. The cafeteria and the waiting queue disintegrated. Some miles inland at the 3rd N.Z. General Hospital it was washing day at the Nurses' Home. About three minutes after the explosion (in which several hundreds died) down came a tremendous mess of oil from the exploding ships, ruining every piece of washing in sight.

And a mile away in a waterfront cafe, three New Zealanders were enticing a fourth, just arrived in Italy, to try a special pre-lunch drink—the pride of the house. He was a teetotaller. He took a sip. The whole front of the building fell in, bottles, glasses and spilled wine were everywhere. 'You told me it was tough stuff, but I didn't know it was as bad as that,' he said, and then everyone trooped through the wreckage to see what was left of the place.

There were other odd rumours, too. One was that the Maori Battalion once took a prisoner who was out on a reconnaissance to find out what unit was opposing his particular unit's section of the line. He found out. They caught him, roughed him up a little, listened to his story (so the rumour went), debagged him, and stencilled, on his Nazi behind, the Maori Battalion unit number. Then they sent him back, unharmed, but improperly dressed. They

had no objection, it seemed, to the enemy knowing that they faced the Maoris. But when a war correspondent went to trace a rumour like that, he could never pin it down.

The very climate, of course, helped the course of rumours in Italy. The Italians loved them, passed them round freely, always had a different line, and seemed to believe them passionately. Every few weeks before the war was over in Europe, a rumour would sweep an Italian city that the armistice had been signed, all the lights would go on and there would be excited and premature rejoicings—all of which would turn to gloom the next morning. Then they would go to the other extreme, and even when the Germans were fast retreating would have the most alarming and circumstantial stories of a German counter-attack and breakthrough.

Gossip and rumours were part of the life of every Italian. Every family knew the 'secret' scandals in the home of every other family in the block for at least three generations back, and retailed (probably with embroidery) the most scandalous stories at the drop of a hat.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICS

A senior New Zealand officer with a great interest in politics stood in the foyer of the elaborate New Zealand Forces Club in the Via Nazionale in Rome, and watched with absorbed interest while hundreds of New Zealanders made preparations for a day's sight-seeing, relaxing and generally enjoying themselves on leave in Rome.

He turned to a friend.

'You know, things will never be the same in New Zealand after this,' he said.

'You're dead wrong,' his friend replied. 'They'll be exactly the same, and what is more, if these blokes can help it they'll stay that way for years to come.'

They agreed to differ, but on the balance of the postwar years the second man was nearer the mark.

In spite of the novelty, the excitement and warmth and vitality of life in Italy there was scarcely a New Zealander who was not overwhelmingly convinced that New Zealand had a better way of life. The contrast was too great between the prosperity in New Zealand among all classes (if there were any classes, compared with social gradations in Italy) and the tremendous extremes in Italy, where the rich were tremendously rich and the very poor near starvation and beggary, with no hope of much improvement wherever they looked, whatever they did.

It tended to make New Zealanders conservative—not politically so much but in the sense that they were determined to keep the things they thought good in New Zealand. And that has been blamed, or credited (depending on the viewpoint), for voting trends in the Dominion since the end of the war.

Certainly the Labour Prime Minister for most of the war years (Mr Peter Fraser), who had been to Italy and talked to the troops,

knew the meaning of this new spirit of conservatism; and that may have been one of the reasons why the New Zealand Labour Party almost immediately after the war backtracked on plans for more and more socialism—culminating in the famous 1949 decision to allow rehabilitation-aided farmers to acquire the freehold of their properties, a step traditionally against the party policy.

In contrast with what he knew and saw of Italy, what the New Zealand soldier remembered of home—although distance may have made the scene more enchanting than it was—was just about exactly right, and the thing to do was to keep it that way. He had seen enough of hunger and unemployment, of girls being forced into prostitution to make a living, of children begging for food and money, to want any drastic changes. He did not want to change the social security scheme—nor did he want any grandiose social experiments which might menace life back home as he remembered it. Yet, perhaps unconsciously, he was influenced against socialism —any more socialism than he knew already—by the attitude of Italians towards private property, money in the bank and personal security represented by a man's own assets.

The war in Italy probably killed communism stone dead—if it had ever been really alive—among most male New Zealanders. What he saw of the Yugoslavs he did not like much, especially when, as victory seemed won, the Yugoslavs in the Trieste area seemed as if they might provoke another war.

The attempts of Communist Party organisers to whip up support in Italy annoyed him more than they interested him (although many New Zealanders thought that Italy might finally go communist); and when the war was over in Italy the many New Zealanders who went through to Klagenfurt were sickened by what they saw of the Russians' treatment of their own men who had been prisoners.

Almost every Kiwi who was in Italy at the end of the war either had had some slight contact with the Russians or had a friend who had, and communism made many enemies and no converts at all.

On the other hand, there was little enthusiasm among the men of the 2nd N.Z.E.F. for the American way of life, as it was to be seen in the army. The tremendous differences between officers and other ranks in the United States Army came as an unwelcome surprise, and the penalties that American courts martial handed

out to convicted offenders seemed out of proportion. There were many close friendships between Americans and New Zealanders, there was great admiration for the technical skill of the Americans, but nothing that could in any way be interpreted as a desire for New Zealand to become more American in its outlook and its ways.

Psychologically, too, there were barriers between the Americans and the New Zealanders. Too many Kiwis, too long away from home, were resentful of the reports they heard of Americans enjoying themselves in New Zealand, many with New Zealand girl friends, while they were thousands of miles away. And there were too many members of the 'New Zealand Turf Club'—Kiwis who had been 'turfed out' by their girl friends in favour of Americans who were on the spot while the New Zealanders were a long way from home.

There was much more New Zealand sympathy for the British soldier, regarded by most New Zealanders as underpaid, underprivileged and not particularly well looked after. The New Zealanders, comparing their own welfare organisations with those of the British soldier—their clubs in Bari, Rome, Venice, Florence, for instance, with the meagre facilities given the British—saw no reason to change their original attitude that Britain had a lot to learn in the way to treat her rank-and-file.

A sidelight on this was the number of New Zealanders who won considerable sums in bets on the result of the election which, at the peak of victory, saw Sir Winston Churchill replaced by Mr Attlee. Anyone who had spent much time with British soldiers knew how they felt, not about Churchill personally (he was greatly admired), but about some of the men in his Cabinet; and if their feelings were to be reflected in the British General Election of 1945 there was not much doubt how the result would go. Moreover, it was easy to get bets with British officers, or with Americans, who just could not see Churchill beaten.

Nor did other members of the Commonwealth Forces, although many were liked, give Kiwis any reason for considering that there was the slightest need for changing the way New Zealand was. Canadians kept pretty well to themselves—they had one big base town, Avellino, in the south, which was pretty well all Canadian, and some Canadians, notably the French Canadians, made few friends at all among New Zealanders.

South Africans, the old Rugby rivals, were perhaps closer friends. But it was not difficult to foresee the race trouble they were going to have in the future. Some New Zealanders sympathised with the white South Africans, but it is doubtful if there were any New Zealanders at all who felt that South Africa would be an ideal, or even a pleasant place to settle in after the war.

Of Australians, New Zealanders saw little in Italy, except for those in the Royal Air Force, and they were generally regarded as being more or less honorary New Zealanders, thinking the same way, except that they were even more inclined to get into trouble on leave.

Summed up, life in Italy, even as a soldier, was a political experience for many New Zealanders. No one ever had to tell them in later years of the evils of inflation. They had seen money become nearly worthless, and they did not think it pretty, especially in its social results. They learnt quickly the merits of a two- (perhaps at worst a three-) party system. The splinter parties all over Italy were obviously going to be ineffectual, and the New Zealanders thought their own system, with all its defects, infinitely better.

And so, until there is another depression or the last of them is dead, there is likely to be little change in the conservatism—the desire not to change things which are working reasonably well—which was a legacy of service with the New Zealand Army in Italy. Those who thought that the British Army men's vote in 1945, for Labour, meant a swing to the left were wrong, and events have proved them so since. All that voting indicated was a dissatisfaction among the rank-and-file with class inequalities which, in any case, war itself was eradicating.

There were very few indications, in fact, of any marked political feelings (except for the desire to keep things as they were) in the New Zealand Army. Notoriously argumentative, especially after certain brands of vino, Kiwis never seemed to get heated about politics. The visiting politicians of both sides who came to Italy were politely (in the main) but unenthusiastically received, it was always hard to rouse interest in by-elections, and such political controversies as the burning of the ballot papers, which apparently were exciting the folks back home, scarcely caused a ripple. Those New Zealanders who had voted in the General Election in Egypt in 1943 had thought the Army scrupulously fair in the handling of

the whole situation, and the general feeling was that the row about the burning of the ballot papers was a great deal of fuss over very little. Politics, in fact, were the very least of the worries of the New Zealand soldier. What he wanted was to get the war over and done with and then to get home as quickly as possible to New Zealand as it used to be.

Nor was there any feeling, one way or the other, about trade unionism at home. Soldiers are sometimes resentful about gains made by unions during a war, because the last thing a soldier can belong to in the Army is a trade union. There are no strikes—and no lock-outs—in an Army. There were occasional bursts of resentment. One shipload of returned men had to have their arrival delayed a day because, so the report said, watersiders would not handle the ship on a public holiday. The *N.Z.E.F. Times* headlined the story 'WELCOME HOME—ANY DAY EXCEPT A HOLIDAY', and there were some repercussions to that.

Reports of the big wages being earned in New Zealand by watersiders and others while soldiers were on basic pay really only affected the married men, thinking of their wives. That was partly because the peculiar system operating in the Italian grey and black markets meant that few Kiwis in Italy were ever short of money and because they knew, in their newly gained self-confidence, that they would be able to do just as well themselves when they got home.

The Government, in the closing stages of the Italian campaign, also helped by making elaborate and successful arrangements to publicise its rehabilitation scheme. The scheme sounded and read as if it would work, and in practice it finally worked out even better than predictions would have indicated. A special branch, E.R.S. (Educational and Rehabilitation Service), sent a competent staff to Italy, and worked with real success.

It is doubtful, however, if the earnest officer in charge of one E.R.S. lecture will ever forget the response he got from one audience of men in a transit camp. He had explained at length how the Government intended to finance any soldier wanting to start his own business, and would train him for it. At the end of his talk, he asked for practical questions about possible ventures.

A good-looking Maori boy at the back got up.

'Yes, boss,' he said. (Many soldiers, especially Maoris, regarded anyone outside their own unit as a civilian, called their own officers 'Sir' and no one else.) 'I've been thinking about this a long time. There's a business in the town I come from that makes a lot of money, and the man who runs it has got it on his own—no competition at all and the big money all the time.'

He wanted to know, he went on, how the Government would feel about setting up a competitor. 'The feller I mean he's a good friend of the Government, pay a lot of money in taxes.'

The E.R.S. man looked thoughtful. Then he made it clear that there would be equal opportunity in all fields and the question of protecting a man from competition would not arise.

'I'd need a lot of capital, boss,' said the Maori boy.

That, too, would probably be all right provided the business could show a return which would finally repay the loan, the E.R.S. man said.

'It would do that all right,' the Maori boy said with a big smile.

'Well, come and see me afterwards,' said the officer. 'But what business is it first?'

'He's the town bookmaker,' said the Maori.

If the Rehabilitation Department ever did finance a bookmaker, the venture is not shown on the records.

It might have been expected that New Zealanders would have come home full of inside knowledge of fascism, deeply disgusted with its workings. But that was not really so—mainly from the difficulty of ever finding an Italian who would admit to being either a fascist or a supporter of Mussolini. The man next door, the man across the road, might have been, but never the man you were talking to. And many Kiwis saw enough of the punishments meted out by partisans after the war to suspect the justice of some of them.

It was perfectly obvious that there must have been fascists everywhere before the defeat of Italy. But they managed to keep it a secret, and although you could see where it had been it was hard to find out much about it. There were the physical signs of it—huge, palatial Government offices in cities which a few blocks away did not try to hide the meanest, most insanitary of slums. There were the magnificent *autostrada* in the north, roads such as the New Zealand ex-soldier still dreams about; the rest homes for

the favoured few and their children all along the Adriatic coast.

Many of the smaller cities had some sort of sports stadium, or arena, such as no comparable city in New Zealand could dream of boasting. Even in wartime some of the city flats were magnificently built and furnished—reflecting a standard of living for a privileged few (as against grinding poverty for the many) that staggered some Kiwis.

Mussolini had obviously had his favourites. Newspapermen were among them. Men from the literary staffs of New Zealand papers were astounded at the way in which the working journalist had been treated under fascism. Perhaps it was because Mussolini himself had been a newspaperman. More likely, it was because if they were well treated it was easier for them to sell out and become fascist supporters. At any rate, in Italy, in status, pay and privileges they were infinitely ahead of their New Zealand counterparts.

But tradesmen—printers, railwaymen, mechanics in the writer's knowledge—were infinitely worse off in their standard of living. And as for peasants and tenant farmers, especially in the south but in areas in the north, too, the worst years of the depression in New Zealand in the 1930s would have provided them with a much higher living standard than ever they could hope for under the system as it was seen to be in Italy.

In fact, for the many thousands of Kiwis who were off farms back home, and who regarded farmers as the salt of the earth, the people who worked the land in Italy were not really farmers at all. Even when they owned property, the Kiwis thought little of the way they managed it.

Skilled Kiwi artisans thought highly of Italian tradesmen of all types—cabinet-makers, process engravers (the forged 5000-lire notes the Italians turned out as bogus Allied Military currency were much better printed than the genuine ones), but little of their capacity for sustained hard work.

One of the hazards of a war for politicians is that, for some reason, it leaves many soldiers with an abiding cynicism about individual politicians—and most of them have never lost it. Their Army training more or less had accustomed them to the idea of the acceptance of necessary authority. But while they were perfectly prepared to accept the Government's authority, they were sadly lacking in deep respect for the men who made politics their living.

It was not an individual dislike of the several V.I.P's who came to call and talk, but an almost instinctive and more dangerous distrust of politicians generally.

The number of ballots cast for Hedy Lamarr in the 1943 election, where you had to write in the name of your candidate, might have made some politicians sit up and think. The same cynicism was extended to most civilian 'big shots' of any description who came through the lines of troops. On some well known occasions, when there were important visitors to the British Army, newsreels were taken of the affair. The camera could not lie, of course, but soldiers who saw the newsreels were often puzzled at the soundtrack. The cheers and the applause sounded much louder than their memory told them they had heard—which was not surprising since they were dubbed in afterwards. Or so the soldiers swore.

Since the New Zealand Army was a cross-section of New Zealanders there were a number of Members of Parliament in it. Most, but not all, had commissions. The Speaker of the 1956-59 Labour Government, Mr R. M. Macfarlane, was one who stayed a popular non-commissioned officer. And it was fair comment that no one was ever impressed with anyone simply because he was a Member of Parliament. In fact, it was a hurdle most of them had to surmount before being accepted as ordinary types.

Nor was there any enthusiasm at all for entering politics when Army service was over. It would be interesting to work out figures of returned soldiers who have become Members of Parliament since the war to see if the percentage was up to the percentage of men who went overseas. 'There must be better ways of making a living' was how most Kiwis summed up politicians.

Some other political side issues came from the war. One was the view, only too widely held, that Government money, like Army money, was not the same as private money and there was not the same diffidence about taking what was going—not by theft, of course, but in the way of hand-outs.

As after World War I, there were a few former soldiers who became almost professional scroungers after the war—the few who drew everything that could possibly be drawn from patriotic funds. Others would almost have starved before touching a penny of it, working on the principle that they had gained self-reliance during their war years and never intended to lose it. But whatever was

going from rehabilitation benefits, grants, etc. (the £100 grant for furniture was a big attraction) was taken as of right, and it was perhaps on the principle that if the Army, which was using Government money, could spend whatever it wanted during the war, so could Governments in peacetime—while the money lasted. But rehabilitation loans were a huge success. The amount not repaid was infinitesimal.

Many soldiers, too, had a real grievance about Army pay. It was not that they needed it in Italy, but they knew how much was being made, and perhaps saved, by those who were not in the Army and were home in New Zealand, and they were jealous of the opportunities they had missed of making money—big money—while they were young and could earn it. Married men, especially in the ranks, were more sore about this than the politicians realised. The troops overseas could not help reading about the earnings of labourers and watersiders, and would have been less than human if they did not compare the figures with their own.

Trouble over this might have been much worse if rehabilitation plans had not been carried out on so generous a scale, but it would be hard to find any infantryman in the New Zealand Army who thought he had a fair deal in pay.

Chapter 5

CHARACTERS

Everybody overseas knew, and most of them thought the more of him for it, that General Freyberg could have done much better for himself, at least in rank and power, if he had forsaken the New Zealanders and taken permanent command of a bigger, more numerous formation—at the least a corps, perhaps even an Army. But he chose to stay with the New Zealanders. In a sense it left him more free than he would otherwise have been, for he always had the right of consulting the New Zealand Government if there was any move to shift the New Zealanders to a field in which he did not want them to be, or commit them to some new enterprise.

This vesting of final responsibility for the commitment of New Zealanders in their Government 10,000 miles away meant that the General Officer Commanding the New Zealanders was in a more independent position than almost any other divisional commander. It meant that there would be no repetition of committing New Zealanders to the ill-fated special force attack on Kos and Leros, which aroused New Zealand's ire (it also meant that no New Zealander could be executed for a crime such as murder because the New Zealand Government of the time would not allow it); and almost the only difficulty about it was that it did stop many New Zealanders who might have done extremely well outside the Division from doing so.

For if General Freyberg could not go higher in rank—he ultimately attained the rank of Lieutenant-General—obviously other New Zealanders under his command also had a similar ceiling a stage or two lower. It was notoriously difficult for any New Zealander to get seconded, say, to the British Army. A few did, most of them in the Long Range Desert Group's New Zealand Squadron, and their achievements were history. Major-General Steve Weir for a

time commanded a British division in the northern Italy campaign, and there were a few others. But when they did come back to the New Zealand Division those who left had to take their place in the queue for promotion. And this may have been one of the reasons for the New Zealand Division being such a closely knit group. There was no doubt that many New Zealand officers could have done extremely well in other parts of the Allied Army, and they knew it, but they stayed where they were, all carefully listed names in order of seniority in what was popularly known as the 'degradation list', an order of seniority on which the laws of the Medes and Persians had nothing. (There was a tremendous commotion once when a new Gradation List, the official title, was printed and two of the pages were out of order, thereby technically demoting scores of officers.)

Some soldiers did not like any generals at all. Either it was the instinctive old-time colonial reaction to 'big shots' or perhaps merely because generals were the epitome of authority in the eyes of the ordinary soldier, a natural rebel. Even those few New Zealanders who did not like General Freyberg respected him. For one thing it was common knowledge—proved a score and more of times in two world wars—that he possessed more than his share of that quality which all men admire—courage. For another it was impossible to be in any sort of contact at all with either him or any part of his headquarters and not respect, perhaps even fear, that personality. He had a most commanding presence, and commanding eyes, and in spite of all their known ability to give 'cheek' to authority there was no soldier game enough to beard the General face to face and say what he thought of him.

Occasionally at concerts they would get in a crack or two when the General was on the stage and unable to identify voices from the other side of the footlights. One notable concert, long remembered in 2nd N.Z.E.F. history, had had two famous artists, Jack Benny and Larry Adler. At the end of it the General, full of radiant good humour, made a speech.

He thanked Mr Benny and then he thanked that other, as he said, world-famous artist, for coming all the way to entertain New Zealanders. The world had given them deserved reputations as amongst the very best entertainers on any stage anywhere. He would like to thank Mr Benny and Mr . . . . and then Adler's

name went completely out of the General's mind. He groped, and finally making the best of a bad job, turned and said, 'What is your name again, Sir?'

Adler told him with perfect aplomb, and the General finished his speech using Mr Adler's correct name.

Then when it was Adler's turn to reply, he got his revenge. No one could imagine, he said, just what pleasure it had given himself and Mr Benny to give a show to New Zealanders. The world was full of admiration for the fighting qualities of the New Zealanders. Their fame was legendary and so, of course, was that of the famous and distinguished man who had commanded them for so long—'General . . . General . . .' A long pause. And then: 'Just what did you say your name was, General?'

And before the General could say 'Freyberg' the audience dissolved in mirth, and with one happy thought a whole chorused cry came back: 'Just call him Butch.'

Months after the tragic battle of Cassino, a party of New Zealand political V.I.P's was visiting the forces in Italy and, passing through the ruins of Cassino, now hundreds of kilometres behind the front, heard a personal account by the General from the heights above the city of what had happened.

With the party standing some distance away was a brilliant young New Zealand officer, at that time stationed in London and accompanying the group. He was at a sufficient distance, he thought, to be inaudible to the top men of the party. Just when the General was explaining some detail at length the New Zealander, half to himself, broke in with the muttered explanation: 'You'll have to talk fast, Tiny.' And by the sheer luck of things he said it just as the conversation a few yards away had stopped in silence and in the clear Italian air that remark shot through like a pistol shot.

The look that came in his direction from those frosty blue eyes was enough to make that young man very glad indeed that he was not under the General's command. But not another word was ever said.

One of the best known, most respected senior officers of the Division had the nickname of 'Spout'. It was apt enough because his surname was Fountain. All the men in the battalion in which he served so long always referred to him as 'Spout' behind his

back, but what really rocked the occasional visitor was when some private or n.c.o. in earnest conversation with the boss face to face would absentmindedly call him 'Spout', and neither party to the conversation would apparently notice it. In how many armies could that have happened? There were plenty of other New Zealand officers it could not have happened to, anyway.

Who would have been bold enough to call the General 'Tiny' to his face? But he, too, had a tremendously human side. In one place where divisional headquarters was sited, a special shower had been erected for the General's use. It was a hot summer and water was scarce.

One morning a sergeant cook, rising early as cooks had to, carefully surveyed the rest of the encampment for any sign of life, found none and crept quietly over, at first light, to beat the General to his shower. He took only a little water—there was little enough available in any case—and was covered with soapy lather, which he was about to rinse off, when he looked out and saw the General approaching in bare legs and dressing gown—a full hour earlier than he should have been for that shower.

The cook did not fear a court martial so much as a telling-off from the toughest man in the Army. But the General sighted him, waited, silently.

The cook washed that lather off in record time, using as little water as possible. Then he stepped out, prepared if necessary, and if it would do any good, to apologise for using the General's shower. But the General just nodded at him, threw off his dressing gown and stalked into the shower. Then he turned and spoke to the sergeant: 'Look at them, look at them, sergeant.' And he showed his wound scars acquired in two wars. The sergeant looked, goggled, backed away as quickly as he could. And he never heard another word about it.

In how many armies could a sergeant usurp a general's exclusive shower and get away with it?

On other and notable occasions General Freyberg, who looked like one of the most regimentally inclined senior officers in the Commonwealth armies, showed that he knew better than most other officers just when not to be regimental. One band of really 'grim digs'—an early reinforcement, who had joined the overseas army not long after the first three echelons—had been waiting in

Italy for long weeks in a makeshift transit camp while shipping arrangements home were arranged. (It was much easier, even in the closing stages of the war, to get soldiers to a war than it was to get them away from it.)

They had all long ago left their own units, which for years had been their homes, and were simply an assorted bunch of New Zealanders sick and tired of waiting for a ship. Leave they could no longer have, for strenuous efforts were being made to get them a boat—although, of course, for security reasons they could not be given any clear indication of dates.

They were getting tired of being in the one cheerless camp—all transit camps are cheerless—and even more tired of doing nothing. Finally, although the men could not be told, a ship was found, and a few days before they were to take off for an Italian port to join it the General came to say goodbye to the men who had served him so well.

But they were in no mood for formal parades, or even for the effort of dressing up. And the gathering the General addressed must have been one of the most unorthodox in Army history. It was warm weather, the end of a hot season. The men came out of their tents in any and every sort of undress. Some were shirtless, some unshaven; few were enthusiastic about speeches from generals. All they wanted was a movement order. And so there was no parade at all. The men drifted into a semi-circle, and lounged or squatted, while the tall, stiff-backed ramrod of a General told them what was being done to get them home, thanked them for their contribution to the success of the Division, and wished them well. A lesser man might have stood on his rank, demanded a formal spit-and-polish parade, and got it.

Yet, when he wanted spit-and-polish he could insist on that, too. He held some memorable parades in Italy—such as those when decorations were awarded or when the Division said goodbye to General Kippenberger, making a brief appearance in Italy after he had been fitted in a London hospital with two artificial feet.

It was just that after nearly six years the General (no matter who else might hold similar rank there really was only one General so far as New Zealanders were concerned) had a built-in awareness of how his New Zealanders ticked. He knew how far they could be pushed in any direction, and, instinctively, when they could not be pushed at all.

Showers were not the only facility laid on in exclusive quarters for senior officers. One camp, near Matelica in Central Italy, also had an elaborate toilet—senior officers, for the use of. Some of the other ranks who were not particularly enamoured of a visiting colonel laid a beautiful trap for him, but alas, like most Army planning, it was wrecked by the human element.

The officer for whom all the plans were worked out with precision duly set off for the toilet. But on his way there his path converged with that of an even more senior officer—this time one who was widely feared and too respected to be the subject of toilet practical jokes. And, rank being rank, the junior of the two gave way to the senior—and the wrong man went in.

There was just time for him to be seated—when out he came roaring like a bull, and everyone in sight fled. What had been done was to wire two leads from a truck battery to the metal clips holding the seat together, so that once the power was connected, anyone on that toilet seat was in line for a shock. But the wrong man got the shock. They never found the culprits, but the trick was never tried again. Those batteries carried a hefty kick.

Next to the General himself the two most famous characters in the Division were also of high rank—Sir Howard Kippenberger and Sir Stephen Weir they became after the war—but they owed their distinction to their own qualities rather than to their ranks.

'Kip', as he was universally known, was the most respected man in the New Zealand Army. General Freyberg was a legend. He was, no matter how many times you saw him, the remote expression of authority. But 'Kip' was what almost every New Zealander would have liked his son to grow up to resemble. He had a phenomenal memory for names and faces, he was no man to insist on rank, and his very manner of speech seemed to the Kiwis to be absolutely right. It was one of the most moving ceremonies in New Zealand Army history when, near the end of the war, after he had had his artificial feet fitted in London, he came back to Northern Italy to say goodbye to the Division he had served so well and so long.

One major in the New Zealand Army probably doesn't know to this day how lucky he was with 'Kip'. The day before, General Kippenberger, back from a trip to New Zealand and carrying only New Zealand currency, arrived by civilian taxi at a base camp, and, perfectly naturally, borrowed the equivalent of the fare in local

currency from a sergeant he saw who was then working in headquarters.

Next morning he came to return it. While standing in the sergeant's office he was discussing with the sergeant and two or three others, all privates, what things were like in New Zealand. And, being 'Kip', he had either forgotten, or simply not bothered, to put up any badges of rank at all. The major, hearing too much talk when he wanted work done, came into the room, saw, as he thought, a strange private wasting the time of his staff, and roundly abused everybody.

With a raised eyebrow and a grin, 'Kip' took it, never said a word and gravely walked out. He was probably much closer to the ordinary soldier than General Freyberg because he was, and everyone knew it, a temporary soldier and General Freyberg was regarded as a professional—a very good one, but a professional in a game in which most of the players were amateurs.

And the General, of course, was a legend, while 'Kip' was down to earth. It was hard to imagine General Freyberg as a civilian. It was the easiest thing in the world to picture 'Kip' as just what he had been—a prosperous, well respected lawyer in a conventional New Zealand town.

Two of the other famous leaders, Weir (Steve, not Norman) and Inglis, were also typical New Zealanders, with a Kiwi way of looking at things, of speaking, and with the Kiwi dislike of red-tape and Army regulations which didn't suit them. Every unit had its own crop of stories about its own senior officers. Some were scandalous, some very funny—and a few of them might even have been true.

The officers of one battalion could not, for instance, have imagined the night they had a very senior officer (no one mentioned in this book) as a guest for dinner. It was a quiet spell in the war, the guest had had a heavy day visiting unit after unit in a rest area, while the Division was out of action, and the travelling and the hospitality had been a bit much. He had to leave early, and was anxious to get away at a certain time.

He glanced down at his wrist watch. He frowned, lifted his hand, shook his wrist, listened to hear it tick. But he couldn't get the time. And no wonder. A large piece of mashed potato had somehow fallen right across the face of it completely obscuring the

dial. He couldn't see the time, and somehow (although everyone else could see it) he didn't recognise the presence of the mashed potato either. And not one of the other officers at the mess table so much as let a wisp of a smile appear.

One of the characters of the New Zealand Army in Italy—as he had been in Greece, Crete and Egypt before that—was the official artist, Peter McIntyre. He was a living proof that the Army could handle anything, even the artistic temperament. He must also have been one of the few majors in Army history who had a aptain as permanent boss, technically at any rate. The Army, which likes to pigeonhole everyone tidily, assigned McIntyre to the care of Public Relations. The permanent head of Public Relations in Italy had the rank of Captain—first Captain 'Ted' Webber, and later the cricketer G. L. Weir, both well fitted by temperament and ability to handle the frequent crises which occurred in a mixed and unorthodox Army unit. But one day the General approached McIntyre, tapped him on the shoulder, and said, 'You'd better put up a crown, Peter.' That meant that for the rest of the war Major McIntyre was under the command of Captain Weir—an arrangement which worked happily and well.

McIntyre's travelling caravan was a showpiece. It was a combination of studio and living quarters, and it popped up in the most unexpected places. As both a portraitist and a depictor of Army life in absolute reality he was one of the big successes among Commonwealth official war artists, but no one could say that he lacked the artistic temperament.

Another character in the same unit was Arch Curry, the broadcaster. His war broadcasts were very popular in Britain, and he could have gone on to greater heights with the B.B.C. But he, too, was a typical Kiwi (except that few Kiwis can talk as well as he can) and preferred to stay with the New Zealanders he knew. He could be almost as temperamental as McIntyre.

Not all the officer 'characters' were popular. There was the one who first had achieved fame at Maadi, in Egypt, on the famous 'hill', by being given, and thoroughly he deserved it, the nickname 'February'. The reason was obvious. The only punishment he knew to hand out to his unit was twenty-eight days. The nickname stuck throughout the war.

He went a little too far, however, when he tried to circumvent the legal system under which a soldier sentenced to twenty-eight days in a field punishment centre could get seven days off for good behaviour, thus making his effective sentence three weeks. Major 'February' got over this little concession (which meant a lot to anyone in the 'glasshouse', or its New Zealand equivalent) by making his sentences twenty-seven days, which meant that a man was not eligible for any good conduct lessening of sentence, actually served six days longer than if he had been given a day more.

This affronted the sense of fair play of the soldiery, upset public opinion in the Army—and was finally and heavily knocked back by the Army's legal department, which took a keen interest in all such matters.

One other officer had gained a name for himself in the Division —also in Cairo for a start—by keeping his drivers waiting up all hours of the night for him while he enjoyed the fleshpots of the Turf Club and other officers-only establishments. It would not have been so bad if he had allowed the driver to park the car in an Army park, go off and enjoy himself and then come back hours later when the officer was good and ready to go home. But, instead, he often insisted on the luckless driver sitting waiting in the car, never knowing when the boss would deign to come down and be driven home.

It was a sample of Army public opinion that although his activities had been confined to one small group of luckless Army drivers, every driver in the 2nd N.Z.E.F. seemed to know about it. And finally, as these things do, it caught up with the same officer after the war, when he was in public life and a whole group of civilian truck drivers in a major city—most of them former Army Service Corps drivers—threatened to refuse to shift his household goods. He may regret for the rest of his life the nights he spent in Cairo.

One very senior officer, who later became more senior still, and had a career which by any standards could only be called distinguished, had the habit of playing in his leave periods just as hard as he worked when he was on duty with his unit. His exploits in officers' clubs and hotels were known to every rank in the Army —and he was greatly admired for them. But they were not always approved of in the higher echelons of Army life.

It fell to his lot once to be put in the position of administering a very serious reprimand to himself. He had been on leave one night, and in some rather hectic goings-on, not unconnected with the New Zealand practice of putting down a scrum against the South Africans on every possible occasion, a chandelier fell. It was a costly business, and of course he had to pay for it; but on top of that a serious rebuke came in from Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt, through Cairo Command (which itself was run by a New Zealander and a Christ's College old boy, Brigadier Chrystall).

The difficulty was that in between the sending of the rebuke and the arrival of the letter at Maadi Camp, this New Zealand officer had been promoted to command the whole shooting match in the service to which he was attached. He had to discipline himself, so to speak, sending for himself, giving himself a thorough dressing down. He later confessed that he did it very well. But bush lawyers among the other ranks used to wonder what would have happened to a private who had behaved the same way.

Some of the greatest characters in the Army were cooks. Almost every unit had a cook about whom could be spun chapters of stories. Senior officers gossiping about their units could become as boring as mothers about their infants when they came to discuss their unit cooks. They nearly all drank.

Some budding psychiatrist will one day write a thesis which will gain him a doctorate with honours on what it is in Army cooking that makes a man want to drown his sorrows (for it only occurs in the Army; peace-time chefs and women who cook at home are not notable topers). The point was that a good cook was worth his weight in gold in unit morale, and cooks were excused for things that might have landed others into heavy trouble.

Drinking, of course, was not allowed to interfere with the job. Meals had to be ready when and where wanted, and they had, if possible, to be good meals, even with Army rations. A man could be untidy, addicted to the vino, lacking in discipline and respect, but if he could cook all was forgiven and the unit would fight furiously to prevent his being transferred to another unit—even a field punishment centre if he had transgressed a little too much.

Cooks never lacked money. They were paid 2s. 6d. a day extra —try cooking over a hot fire throughout an Italian summer's day and see if they didn't earn it—but like everyone else they seldom

drew pay. No one needed it less. Even their scraps were rushed by the Italians in some districts and their hoarded supplies of such luxuries as sugar and flour made them a natural target for every Italian trying to buy anything. The unforgivable sin, of course, was for a cook to sell so much that his unit suffered in the quantity of food available, but most cooks were far too shrewd, and far too loyal to their own, ever to let that happen.

In Italy, as they never could in Egypt, they could, too, to some extent supplement the rations with Italian produce—bought or 'liberated' from some garden.

More than any housewife they were masters of their own cookhouse. Intruders kept out. When the cook was working everyone kept out, and very wisely.

No less a dignitary than Sir William Jordan found that out. He was visiting Italy near the close of the war, one of a long line of V.I.P's calling on the troops—except that he was a very welcome visitor. He was very set in his ways, and even in the middle of the Army he refused to do what most V.I.P's did and clamber into uniform. He stayed in civilian clothes—a dark suit, with a heavy watch-chain strung across it, reminiscent of the days when he had been a New Zealand M.P.

He had a habit of getting up early. He was staying with a battalion, as guest of the officers' mess, in Central Italy when one morning the splendour of a spring morning got him out of bed at daybreak. The unit was out of the line, everyone else, especially the officers who had been at a party, were still fast asleep. Sir William Jordan, the High Commissioner from London, went on a tour of the unit.

He walked round, in and among the tents, until at last he saw signs of life. Someone else was up. It was the cook. Sir William strolled across to the cookhouse. If there was anyone who should have been anyone's friend in the services it was the High Commissioner. But the genial old man, the soul of friendliness, was met with a storm of threats and abuse—mostly in dog-Italian, though a few phrases like 'Get to hell out of here' seemed to carry some connotation of English. Altogether it was a long time since anyone had spoken to the High Commissioner that way.

The noise woke up everyone. The High Commissioner was

rescued and the cook made amends not only by apologising but by inviting the guest for breakfast in the cookhouse—a high honour and a pretty good breakfast. But he told his friends afterwards: 'How the hell was I to know the old boy was a Kiwi? The only people who come round here in civvy suits with a watch-chain are Ities on the make.'

CHAPTER 6

GLAMOUR GIRLS

It is a matter of no surprise to the man who served there to hear now that Italy has become a fashion and glamour centre. Italian girls are among the most colourful memories of Italy. They looked well, and in the cities many of them dressed glamorously, in spite of the shortage of fabrics, of stockings (nylons were tremendous currency on the black market) and even of leather for shoes. It was a remarkable sight to see how well Italian girls carried themselves even wearing shoes which, with their wooden soles, were only glorified clogs.

Nor was it only clothing. In hair styling—most wore hats only in the depth of winter, and seldom even then—Italian girls of good class combined good taste with good styling. It was sometimes remarkable to New Zealanders to see how well the science of dyeing hair was understood in Italy, especially in the bigger cities—notably Rome and especially Trieste. Blondes could sometimes blossom overnight.

There were inevitably some romances. Some New Zealanders married Italian girls and brought them home with them. Others had romantic attachments which ended only when they went aboard the troopship that was to take them home. But above all the New Zealanders, who were not so girl-shy as might have been supposed, found the Italian girls excellent company. They had been brought up to a standard of deference towards the male sex which many New Zealanders found as flattering as it was attractive. It was probably undeserved, too. If a New Zealander took an Italian girl to dinner, she would give him her undivided attention. There would be no glances at other, perhaps more attractive, males who might enter the room. Her attention was all for her escort.

But at the same time there were things about the relationship between the sexes which annoyed New Zealanders. One was the comprehensive system of chaperonage, under which it was often difficult to take a girl anywhere without some other and much less attractive member of her family being in attendance. What it conveyed was the tacit suggestion that neither party could be trusted out of parental sight. And even with the best class of Italian girls, their educational and home backgrounds had hardly qualified them to be very good conversationalists. In their own homes the girls kept quiet while the menfolk of the family did the serious talking on serious subjects.

They were good cooks, good home dressmakers, splendid dancers, and some of them had very fine singing voices, too. Many indeed were fine musicians and often the poorer families could surprisingly boast a very good piano, and a number who could play it. They liked films, liked live stage shows (especially vaudeville and opera) even more, and in theory should have been the best of female companions.

Because of the shortage of New Zealand girls, it was quite common at the war's end for units to hold their own dances at which all the guests would be Italians.

This is not a treatise on morality, and because the first casualty of war, especially in the beaten side, is usually morality it would be absurd to pretend that all Italian girls were pure. But the thing about it was that there was a clear-cut line. Either a girl was good or she was not, and the sad fact, which all members of the Allied forces realised, was that most of the girls on the streets were there for strictly economic reasons. Jobs were hard enough for men to find, let alone girls, in the big cities in the inflationary and unsettling months just before and just after the end of the war, and it would have been surprising if there had not been some prostitution. There were many broken families, separated with half the family in the north (and under German occupation until they very last few weeks) and the other half in the south, and there must have been cases, and many of them, of actual starvation. The miracle in some of the cities was probably that so many girls in tremendous economic stress did manage to remain good. It was a tribute to religion and to tradition.

'Me big sister claimed me.'

'I'll tell you. That girl and her mother are waiting to see the old man, to get permission to marry. What sort of a show do you think they've got now? How can he think she really would make a good wife to a Kiwi if she's been out with you?'

He went on and told the story. A private, not long with the battalion, had really fallen for this girl. She was a really good girl, of good family, excellent name.

'And how the hell do you think you're going to get out of this? It isn't fun to ruin the lives of a couple of people.'

The subaltern was genuinely sorry, and he had courage.

'I'll fix it,' he said. 'I'll go and tell the old man I made the whole story up, like the mouth almighty I am.'

'You don't know the old man, then,' said the captain grimly. 'You can try. But he's just as likely to think that you were telling the truth the first time. Do you think he'd want to believe that one of his officers would deliberately say something like that about a girl he didn't know? Try it, but you'll see, that marriage won't come off.'

And it didn't.

There were, of course, a fair number, several hundred at least, of New Zealand girls in Italy. Some were in the hospitals—base and field—as nursing sisters and hospital aides, others in the various forces clubs and a few were typists. They probably enjoyed Italy far less than they did Egypt.

The hospital girls worked hard—perhaps they were worked too hard, which seems to be the fate of all New Zealand nurses—and those not in the hospitals also earned their Army pay. General Freyberg had rightly insisted on every girl having officer status (which caused some heartburnings among British V.A.D's and W.A.A.C's), which meant that most of their recreation hours were spent in uniform—and Italy is not really a country for women in uniform.

And it must be said that many of the New Zealand girls were not tremendously popular with the other ranks. This was probably an unexpected result of their having been granted officer status. Because they could go to officers' clubs, they naturally went there, and if they had escorts the escorts had to be officers or they could not enter the precincts. Which meant that many other ranks felt that the New Zealand girls were deliberately choosing to go out

'Gee, Sis, it was only platonic!'

with officers, and as a matter of principle and democracy this was resented more than a little.

It had been probably resented in the Middle East far more than in Italy, and mainly for economic reasons. The places in Cairo where a private, corporal or sergeant could take a girl for dinner were beyond the means of most soldiers, and must sometimes have strained the paybooks of officers. Some of the international restaurants would cost, for a dinner for two, a month's whole spending money for a private. What was more, in Egypt a New Zealand girl would probably have a dozen officers waving invitations to go out, could probably choose between majors and colonels if she was interested in rank. It was unfortunately true that a few girls did deserve to be regarded as snobs.

One New Zealand private (he was later commissioned) will never forget his first day on leave in Cairo. He was lonely, a brand new reinforcement that day in the middle of a crowd of 'old digs'. Then, to his delight, he saw one of the girls serving at a counter was from his home town, an old schoolmate and workmate. At last, here was someone he knew.

He walked over, hand outstretched, smiling. She turned her back. It was a deliberate cut, he knew it and she knew it—and by that evening back in camp scores of new reinforcements from the same home town knew about it. It only needed a few incidents like that (and there were a few, worse luck) to produce a chain reaction.

In Italy finance did not matter to many a private. He had money, or could get it, and there was much more fraternising among all ranks. But even there, there was the undeniable fact that the New Zealand girl had an officer's privileges, and the private did not.

The most popular of all the girls were, naturally, the nursing sisters. They were the ones the soldier knew in hospital, and the ones he liked. They worked long hours and were under strict discipline and earned every hour of leave, every bit of relaxation they could get. In retrospect it seemed that the nurses were sometimes worked unnecessarily hard. In one general hospital which the New Zealanders took over the nurses personally scrubbed every inch of the place before the first patient came in. It would have been easy and cheap (had the Army ever bothered about the taxpayer's money) to have engaged scores of unemployed Italian women to do it and they could have been adequately supervised.

There were problems for New Zealand women all over Italy. The plumbing looked good, but seldom worked. Nurses who took over one hospital and had had plumbers at work found that for days they could not get a hot bath, but the toilets were flushing boiling water. When that was fixed something else would go wrong. Italian bathrooms looked good, with all sorts of unaccustomed luxuries, but, probably because of war shortages and the general confusion at the breakdown of fascism, maintenance seemed just about impossible.

The New Zealand girls, far from home, had romances, too, but they were strictly within the New Zealand Army. They never had the chance to meet many Italian men, probably would not have liked them anyway (and few could blame them for that). But their recollections of Italy must include some remarkable sightseeing, that could not be accomplished now for hundreds of pounds, and also many opportunities to pick up dress, hair styling and fashion hints that would be extremely valuable.

For nurses the recollection of life in Italy will be mainly of hard work, in often difficult circumstances.

By masculine standards, some of the girls were thin-skinned. Neville Colvin, main cartoonist of the *N.Z.E.F. Times*, had a favourite character, Private Clueless. He was extremely popular. But even more popular with the troops were the drawings which brought his sister into the picture. She was a big girl, domineering, and no beauty. The first cartoon showed Clueless standing beside his sister in a parade of New Zealand girls.

'ME BIG SISTER CLAIMED ME' was the caption, and the Army (male) roared. There was an insane sort of logic about it. A brother could 'claim' another brother in the Army, have him transferred to the same unit—and it happened often, by Army regulation. Why should not a sister have the same right?

The girls did not like the drawing.

A week or so later Colvin brought Clueless and his Big Sister into the picture again. Big Sister was hauling him, by the scruff of his neck, from the very edge of an out-of-bounds area, where he had been talking to a luscious signorina. 'GEE, SIS, IT WAS ONLY PLATONIC' was the caption.

Everyone laughed except the girls. They made a strong complaint. Private Clueless continued in the pages of the *N.Z.E.F. Times*; his sister disappeared, never to appear again. A pity.

A SELECTION FROM THE WARTIME PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN IN ITALY BY GEORGE F. KAYE

(Official Photographer, 2nd N.Z.E.F.)

CLOSE-UP. The desert days were gone. Italy was a new adventure. In Taranto the chaps found many things to interest them. Some lined up for a street photographer.

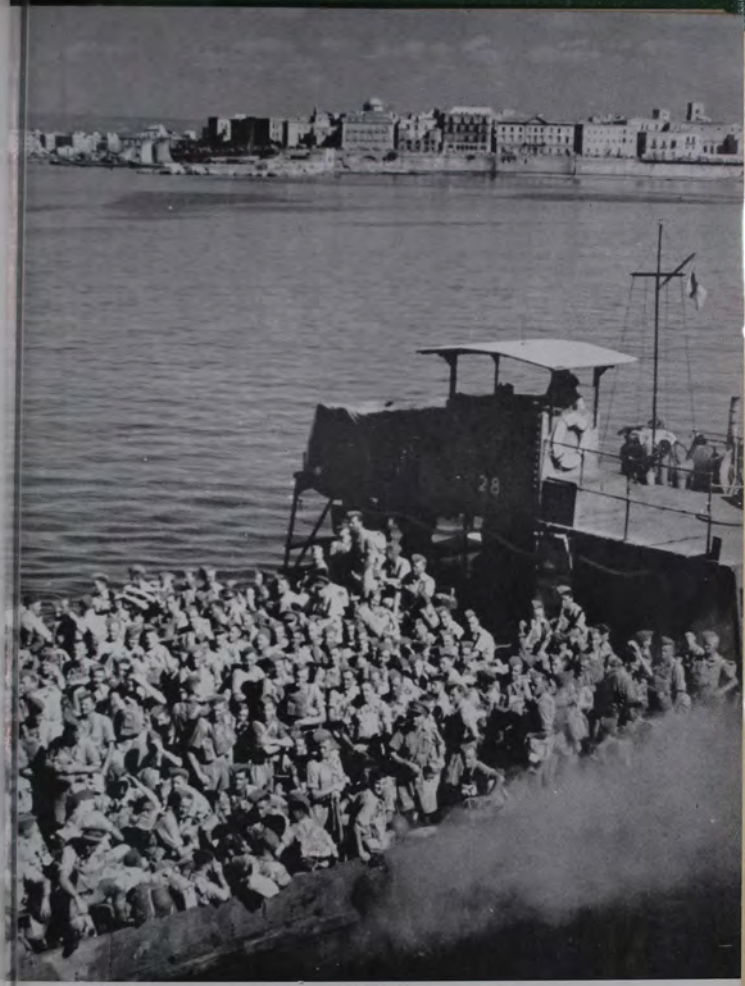
GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE TO THE WAR HISTORIES BRANCH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS FOR PERMISSION TO SEARCH OFFICIAL FILES AND HAVE ACCESS TO NEGATIVES

This collection of wartime photographs is dedicated to all soldiers of the 2nd N.Z.E.F. who served in Italy. It represents a broad cross-section of the scenes they saw and the life they lived. Naturally its scope is limited, but if a place or a face, an incident or a friend is recalled, if a smile is raised or a tear let fall, then the collection will have served its purpose.

Where names are included in the captions a reference is given to the soldier's home town at the time the pictures were taken.

—*G.F.K.*

The end-paper photograph shows a group of Kiwi sightseers in St Peter's Square, Rome. *From left:* F. T. A. Hunter (Invercargill) D. C. Anderson (Invercargill), T. Smallridge (Timaru), H. R. Lomas (Dunedin), E. Hamilton (Invercargill), J. Milne (Lower Hutt), J. Hastie (Dunedin).



THE BEGINNING. A lighter pulls away from the troopship at Taranto.

NOT FOR THE 'SOLDATI'. Italian peasant women keep a tight rein on their livestock as they move them to 'safer' areas.

'QUANTA COSTA?' R. H. Pope (Auckland) discovers that four and one still make five when he uses sign language to bargain with a Taranto grape-seller.

'MOLTO LAVAGGIO, MOLTO LAVORO.' A wartime wash-day scene at Alifie in the Volturno Valley.

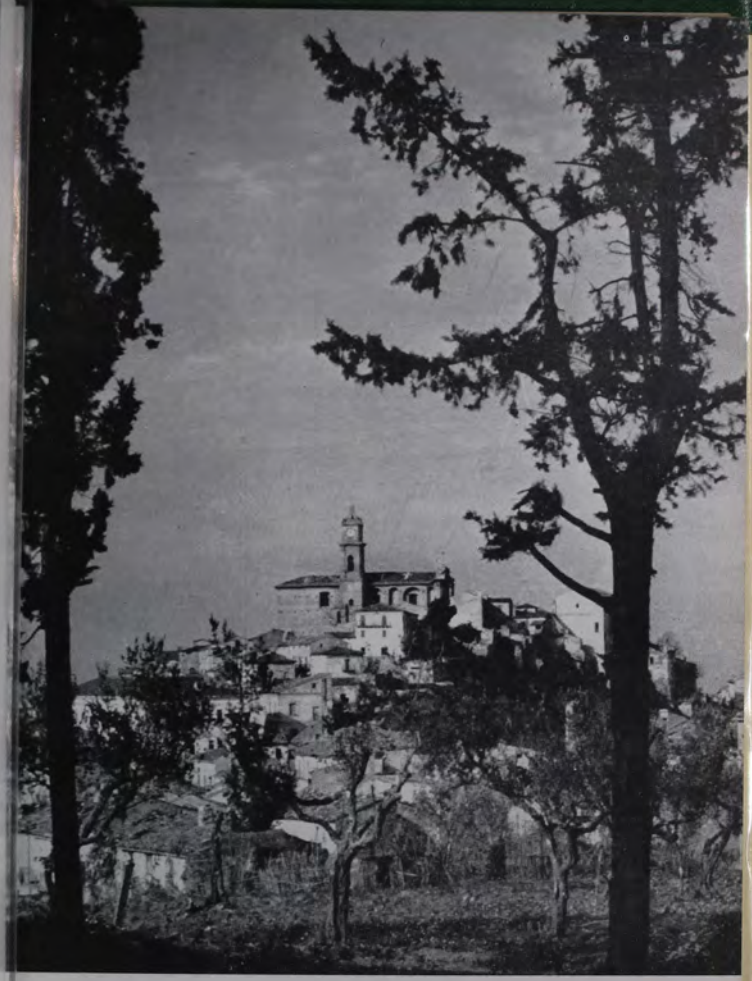
'BUONO MANGIARE STA SERA!' The cooks are J. L. Harvey (Stratford), D. Fleming (Dunedin) and P. Beach (Waihi). But what's cooking?

TYPES. Typical of the peasant women seen during the Sangro River days.

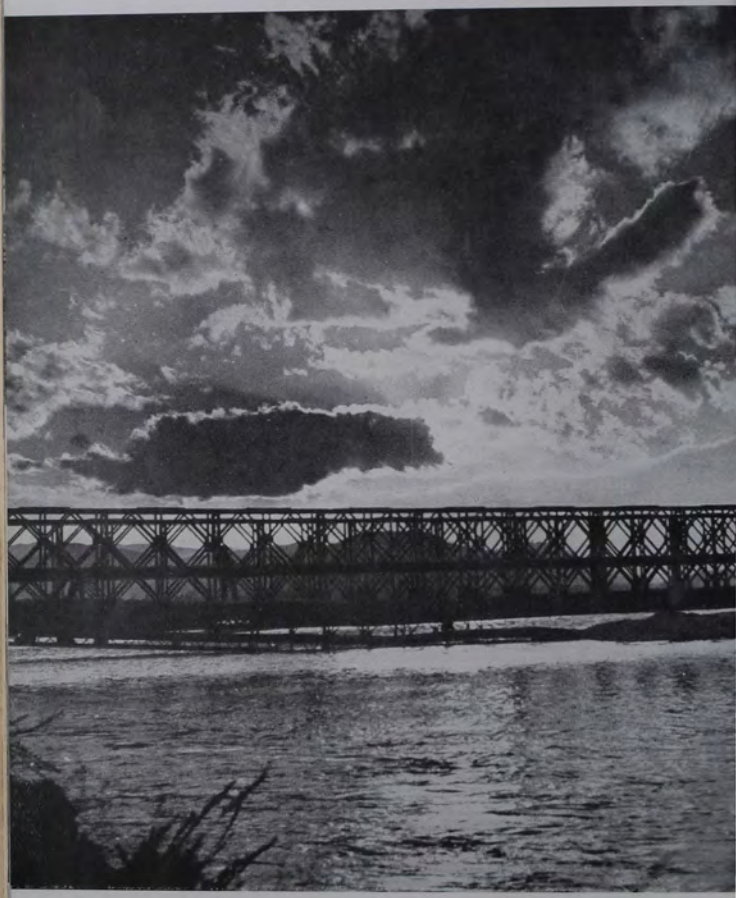
GOOD HOUSEKEEPING. Some of the *casas* used by the troops were ideal for airing blankets.

THE BRICKWORKS. Any Sangro Kiwi will tell you the story of this famous locality near Castelfrentano. It was Jerry's favourite target. Here two of our vehicles wait for things to quieten down before making a dash round the celebrated 'corner' and along the 'mad mile'.

REMEMBER THIS? A wartime scene thousands of Kiwi soldiers will never forget. Cassino is blanketed in haze, while smoke billows from the famous monastery as shells from our artillery find their target.



CASTELFRENTANO. Our winter line, 1943-4. While we lived and moved here, Jerry lived and moved in Orsogna.



EVERYBODY KNEW IT. Tiki Bridge, the famous New Zealand-built Bailey bridge, is silhouetted against the evening sky as the sun sets over the Sangro.

'TUTTI DISTRUTTI.' Remember Gessopalena, the little village near the Sangro? It was almost completely demolished by enemy mines. Wartime ruins became a familiar sight, but these were among the first seen in Italy.

NEW YEAR'S DAY 1944. Remember the snow—lines down, bivvies caved in, guns and trucks half buried?

RIDE, KIWIS, RIDE! D. W. Smith (Thames) performs in Sora, while for another Kiwi, travelling too fast to give his name, it's fun on the *strada* astride a parachutist's motor-scooter.

HATS. Here's a sample of what brought about publication of an order prohibiting the wearing of non-regulation headgear. (N.B. The blokes still wore them.)

OPERATION HAIRCUT. D. M. Segere (Ashburton) and R. H. Webster (Otago Central) in a behind-the-lines domestic scene near Cassino.

DOING IT THEMSELVES. A domestic scene on the dried-up bed of the Pesa River, during the Florence campaign.

DRIVERS' WASH-DAY. 'No hen ever nursed her chicks more carefully than a New Zealand driver-mechanic nursed his truck, or jeep, or car.'

VICTORY DRAUGHT. A drink from the Freyberg Cup for mud-spattered Rugby warriors after the final between 22 Battalion and Div. Amm. at Forli Stadium, December 1944.

PETROL POINT. W. Feather (Taranaki) among a sea of cans.

MUD, GLORIOUS MUD. Heavy going for H. Jackson (Wellington), W. T. Bartle (Auckland) and J. Mooney (Waihi).

IN AND OUT. While one of our Bren-carriers moves in, C. J. Cullen moves out. This picture was taken near Tiki Bridge, a few hours after the successful attack on the Sangro River.

FOR WARMTH AND COMFORT. During those cold Italian winters the blokes made their own charcoal braziers, whirling them round until they glowed a bright red. W. Robins (Dunedin) is making sure he won't be cold this winter's night.

FLORENCE LEAVE. Dining in style at the New Zealand Forces Club.

ME AND MY GIRL. T. K. Norman (Hastings) and friend. He found her in a wrecked house in San Casciano.

ROME. A truckload of Kiwi 'tourists' in front of the Colosseum.

OURS WAS A NICE HOUSE, OURS WAS. The most forward New Zealand-occupied *casa* on the Via Emilia during the winter spent at Faenza. Rations arrived by jeep and trailer. Enemy shells (and plenty of them) arrived in the routine way.

TANKS ON THE WARPATH. A welcome and a farewell wave from an Italian woman near Padua as a Sherman tank of the 4th N.Z. Armoured Brigade pushes northwards in full battle-cry. Tank crews who took part in these operations will probably recall that they were popularly known as 'Jerry hunts'.

ALL THE FAMILY—and the dog—watch Div. Cav. Staghounds follow the retreating enemy in the Atina-Belmonte area.

ONWARD. New Zealand infantry pass through Barbiano close on the heels of the German rearguard.

WAR DAMAGE. N. A. Bell (Masterton) and J. Ninness (Petone) pass a few quiet moments in a house near San Casciano that has passed a few noisy ones.

THE CHURCH OF SAN MICHELE—in which D Company of 24 Battalion held out against a strong force of Panzer Grenadiers. After the battle, the elderly village priest stands where he had preached for 46 years.

BEFORE AND DURING. A peaceful spring setting behind the lines a few days before the all-out attack on the Senio River, and (*below*) the advance into the battle zone.

'TINY' AND SOME OF HIS BOYS. General Freyberg addresses spectators and competitors at Div. Arty. swimming sports.

FALL OF FAENZA. A front-line view as New Zealand infantry make their way cautiously through rubble on the banks of the Lamone River.

ADRIATIC FRONT. Men of the Maori Battalion in a forward area of the Rimini sector.

LEFT WHEN JERRY HURRIEDLY LEFT. D. Hammond (Wanganui) and P. T. Clayton (Wairoa) with a collection of well known objects.

COME AND GET IT. Christmas dinner, 1944, served to men of 21 Battalion.

'MOLTO VINO.' It was all ours, and stocks were replenished free of charge from this imposing line-up near San Casciano.

SUNSHINE, FLAGS AND SMILES. Happy, well dressed Italians watch three equally happy, well dressed New Zealanders in St Mark's Square on the day Venice was liberated.

BEDS IN THE STREET. In Trieste many New Zealanders lived either at the Albergo Grande or at the Excelsior. But during the uncertainty and tension of those days, when a minor 'incident' could have caused a major clash, crews bedded down in the streets beside their strategically placed tanks. It may be said, they slept with one eye open.

'PARTIZANI.' They hunted in packs during those last few weeks.

LIBERATORS. Kiwis made welcome by a bevy of happy, cheering *signorine* at Massa Lombarda. Div. Headquarters (always near the 'sharp end') was set up on the outskirts and was heavily shelled during this first day. Even the General had recourse to his tin hat—a most unusual state of affairs.

JOURNEY'S END. The New Zealand flag flies over Trieste and R. A. Giles (Invercargill) views the scene which marked the end of the *strada* for soldiers of the 2nd N.Z.E.F. in Italy.

CHAPTER 7

DEMOCRATS

Because of the rigid chain-of-command system and the whole weight of authority by rank, there is, as has been said, no such thing as a democratic army. But the New Zealand Division did achieve a kind of democracy of its own in that considerations of wealth, job, social prestige or status did not matter the slightest in the final analysis.

There were well educated, competent professional men who remained in the ranks right through a long and hard war. There were wealthy South Island runholders, and even wealthier Hawke's Bay ones, sons of important and wealthy families, who stayed in the ranks and liked it. Some could have applied for commissions but did not want them, others simply never bothered, the general idea being that war was a temporary affair, and they would soon be out of it—although for some of them 'soon' meant several years. On the other hand there were wharf labourers who were majors, farm labourers who were extremely good officers, and scores of others like them.

The granting of commissions worked pretty smoothly. And if any comparison is made between service in New Zealand and service overseas, it can be seen in the big number of men, from the 10th Reinforcements on, who had held commissions at home and reverted to sergeant when they went away. Some got their commissions back quickly, others took a long time, others never got them back at all, and a few finished the war as full privates. And, pay apart, most of them probably did not care very much one way or the other.

The Army would never have admitted it but it did take, unofficially, much store of what could be called public opinion—of what those who knew a man best, those from his own unit, thought about him. The one quality most likely to damn a man was a

'I waited a long time for this stripe, but they had to recognise brains some time in this unit.'

readiness to 'flap', both to get excited and to show that he was excited. The ideal quality was a type of calm passivity in the face of difficulty.

For those who early grasped the principle that most apparent administrative and organisation mix-ups in the Army were naturally self-adjusting, success was easier. Perhaps eight times out of ten, if there was no immediate call for personal interference in any apparent mix-up, the man who did nothing and waited for whatever was wrong to straighten itself out automatically did well.

This recognition may well be behind the widespread application of the 'she'll be right' principle in civilian New Zealand today. But it was a different thing in the Army, because there was always a higher authority with the power and the ability to fix things up on the occasion when they didn't adjust themselves under their own steam, so to speak, and also because the principle did not apply at its most important level—when troops were in action.

There were exceptions, of course, to the rule that civilian qualifications did not count. Doctors and dentists found they counted very much—in the line of pay. Soldiers of the permanent army, the Regular Force, had a very special position, too, and, of course, padres had to have had prewar experience in the ministry.

One exception in the padre category was a major in the infantry who had been a clergyman in peacetime, changed his profession to the infantry 'for the duration', and then went back to religion once the war was over. And no one meeting him as a major would ever have guessed his true vocation.

One man who obviously did not want a commission, and was hugely popular and much respected without it, was Ken Sleight. Older than the average, he had been before the war Chief Private Secretary to the New Zealand Prime Minister, and went back to perform the job with great distinction afterwards. When he first arrived in Maadi a dispatch rider arrived with a pouch from the Cairo Embassy. It was the mail for Sergeant Sleight, sent from New Zealand by diplomatic bag. But he stayed without a commission right through Italy, ending as a sergeant-major—with probably as much authority in reality as if he had been wearing a major's crown.

Most New Zealanders never took to saluting. They had not liked it in base camps in New Zealand, and all the lectures ever

read them about how it was the King's commission and not the man who was being honoured were mostly received with snorts, some inward, some outwardly derisive.

They had liked it even less in Cairo, full of British subalterns and even senior officers who seemed to the jaundiced Kiwi eye to be strolling up and down the street for the express reason of forcing the rude Colonial troops to salute them. (One patrol, New Zealanders knew, did just that. The officer was a Military Police Corps officer and only a few yards behind him walked two redcaps ready to pounce on anyone who fell into the trap.)

But by the time they got to Italy, saluting was almost a thing of the past except on ceremonial parades. No one was asked or expected to do it in the field, and no infantryman, or gunner, or anyone else on leave in a big city, could see any remote reason why he should salute the officer whom in the field he talked to on Christian-name terms—or, for that matter, salute any officer of any Allied unit.

General Freyberg sometimes commented on the failure of his troops to salute British officers. Once, when he had other things on his mind and was tackled by a regimentally-minded War Office type, the General replied: 'Well, if they won't salute, just try waving at them. They'll wave back.'

And so most of them would have. Probably more bad feeling was generated over saluting than any other Army regulation, and after a month or two in Italy the New Zealand Army quietly forgot about it—although it could still mean trouble with officers from other Commonwealth countries.

One New Zealander hopes still that he will never be caught up with. After a spell in Italy, he was in Egypt waiting for a ship home. In Cairo on leave he came out of a shop and came towards a major of the British Army, walking with a New Zealand W.A.A.C. The major's arms were full of parcels. To have returned a salute he would have had to have done a dreadful balancing act, switching assorted packages from one arm to the other. The New Zealander did not salute, even though the major had gone out of his way to catch his eye, in effect demanding a salute.

The New Zealander sauntered past. The major came rushing back, furious, and with the New Zealand girl standing a few feet away lectured the Kiwi on his duties, and on his enormity at failing to salute.

'But your arms were so full of parcels, it seemed a stupid thing to do,' said the Kiwi, in the reasonable sort of tones one might use to a half-wit.

'Never mind that. You salute,' the officer said.

The Kiwi did, and then insisted that the salute be returned, which the major had to do. And then, caution gone to the winds, and the resentment of months in uniform breaking out, the Kiwi (full private) drew the major aside and, speaking quietly so the girl could not hear, told the Englishman just what he could do.

The Englishman followed him down the street, waited till he found a redcap, and had the New Zealander's name taken.

The charge-sheet came back to Maadi Camp. The major had remembered every word of abuse that had been said and, according to the Kiwi, accused the non-saluter of a few additional expressions that would bleach the ink on a charge-sheet.

It could have been awkward for the Kiwi. Not a black mark against him through a long Army career, and this to happen on his way home—and against a major who obviously was determined to make the most of it.

But as it happened the Kiwi, not without resource, remembered a friend of his, also on the way home, who was filling in his time, and avoiding the fleshpots of Cairo by working in one of the august offices right on the top of the hill at Maadi headquarters. The friend was full of advice.

A letter went back to Headquarters, Cairo Command, British Troops in Egypt (the source from which all blessings in the way of charge-sheets flowed). It was on the proper notepaper, in proper terminology, even had a file number, and it said in so many words that the charge-sheet had been preferred and the New Zealander, pleading guilty, had been dealt with summarily.

The only thing wrong with that letter was that the officer whose name appeared at the foot of it had never read it, had never even seen the charge-sheet, knew nothing about the matter at all. The charge-sheet had been quietly abstracted from the morning mail, and the reply written with a forged signature. Very reprehensible, but at least showing that when it came to getting out of trouble on a saluting charge, one Kiwi was ready to help another, even to the point of suppressing letters and aiding and abetting in forgery.

It probably will never now catch up with the man concerned. It would be surprising if it did. But his failure to believe in the intrinsic merit of saluting as an aid to good Army discipline was shared by thousands of others who would have done exactly as he did.

It was not uncommon for New Zealand officers on a trip with their drivers to issue them with a spare set of pips when they got to cities where there were no New Zealand clubs, and so no accommodation recognised as suitable. One A.S.C. driver invariably wore a major's crown when he was eating with the boss, who was only a captain. He could hold his liquor beautifully and often gravely rebuked British subalterns for having a drop too much, or being a little too boisterous, and they always took it very well and respectfully.

One group of five New Zealand other ranks made a trip from Bari down to Naples after the war. A few miles from Bari they stopped and put up pips. Just lieutenants they were going to be, and it was their intention to spend a few ill-gotten lire in Naples in the officers' clubs.

They did, too. They returned sadder but wiser. They had been to all the clubs, dined and wined among the temporary officers and gentlemen and their sad—but true—report was that all the stories they had heard about superior accommodation for officers were so much hooey.

'Why, it wasn't as good as the worst of our clubs,' they said. And they particularly complained about the accommodation they were given in an officers' transit camp, high above Naples. They regarded it as poor compared with that in their own unit.

This 'impersonating of officers', as it was called in Army charge-sheets, was a serious offence. But very few were ever caught. It was made easier because the issue of American-type shirts made it easy for anyone to wear a khaki collar and tie—that was just as the war was ending—and there were so many officers about in Italy that so long as they behaved themselves no one really worried much about a few extra 'unofficials'.

Some New Zealand officers used to wax wrathful whenever they saw an ordinary soldier from one of their units wearing an officer's pips. One major from an artillery unit was nearly purple with rage one night when at a fashionable officers-only hotel he saw a gunner

from his regiment squiring, and doing it very well, the prettiest looking British W.A.A.C. officer he had seen in years of girl-watching.

He raged and fumed about it all night—until his teasing friends found out that he had been trying to take the same girl out for weeks, with no success. He gave the Kiwi gunner (captain for the night) the blackest of black looks and once when he passed his chair whispered something obviously derogatory in his ear.

A British major in the group of genuine officers was horrified.

'Why don't you call a provost and have him arrested? Caught fair in the bloody act; you can't miss convicting him.'

'I wouldn't do that. Let him have his night, I suppose, and I'll fix him when I get him back in the unit,' the New Zealander replied, and the others agreed.

The British officer almost had to be restrained from calling a provost himself. And then shrugging his shoulders he said: 'I suppose it's because you don't want a scene in the club involving a New Zealander.'

They let him think so, the other New Zealanders, but that was not the reason. If, and it was a big 'if', the major had had him arrested, he would have been a laughing stock among his men, for the word would have leaked out that the prosecution was taken, the court martial brought, because the gunner had beaten him for his date for the evening.

Tactful inquiries weeks afterwards showed that no official action was taken within the unit, when both the major and the bogus captain were back in their regular surroundings. A few hard words may have been spoken, but that was all.

One of the big reasons for the independence of the New Zealander in Italy—especially for those who had more or less come there direct from New Zealand in one of the later reinforcements, with only a brief stay in Egypt—was the changed attitude in the Army itself, from the Army he had known in New Zealand camps.

No one doubts that the training camps in New Zealand were doing their best; but to many men brought into the Army from comfortable homes—men of more or less mature years, at least in their thirties—the New Zealand set-up had seemed frustrating, time-wasting and sometimes downright stupid. Army regulations seemed, and sometimes were, absurd in themselves and stupidly interpreted. Discipline seemed sometimes as pointless as it was rigid, punishments unfair.

Some of the married men conscripted into the later reinforcements faced big financial losses by Army service, and the knowledge of that was made no easier by the thought that those who did not enter the Army, through conscription or otherwise, were much better off financially. In Burnham at one time, when the 10th Reinforcements were waiting to go overseas, carpenters and others from the building trade were on their seven shillings a day while their former workmates, many working at Burnham on civilian construction work—there were always new buildings going up—were employed by contractors on a cost-plus basis and were quite eager to tell their uniformed friends how much worse off they were in the Army. It was bad for morale, but there was probably no way out of it.

Overseas, that feeling on unjust comparisons diminished. Everyone was in the same boat, and apart from the danger of being killed or wounded, no one was much worse off.

Moreover, the harshness of discipline, especially the scale of punishments, was different overseas. It was common to hear men nurse a grievance right through their Army career at fines imposed on them for trifling offences in New Zealand reinforcement camps, for breaking regulations that they had scarcely known existed. Linton Camp, from what was said, was a bad example. Married men with families often were trying to make do in the first few months on as little as five shillings a week spending money—the rest was needed to tide over the wife and family in the transition period of Army service. But a typical fine was £2 for a minor offence. For a man in his thirties to wander round for weeks on end with no money in his pocket, without even a smoke because he could not afford it, was a bitter experience. Many a senior officer of those days in the New Zealand reinforcement camps must have been quite out of touch with the economic circumstances of the men temporarily under his command—and most of those officers, too, did not have to go overseas, either through age or medical grading.

Time spent on fatigues, on one-stop-two in the parade ground or mooching round an uncomfortable camp—often a racecourse never designed to be a camp—seemed to many men to be time completely wasted, especially as many of them had been doing hard and useful work in civilian life.

They regarded marching to meals, cleaning up the C.O.'s garden, and many another Army job as not only wasting time, but wasting a fund of energy that could have been put to better use. And the resentment that they felt was even stronger when Army decisions seemed at times blatantly stupid or unfair, or both. Other ranks on leave from Christchurch, for instance, had to get a leave train back to Burnham. There was no other way of getting there. Yet there was never enough room on the train for them, and those who could not get aboard faced, and often paid, the penalty for being absent without leave.

And they hated most of all the time just spent hanging about. Anyone who was in the Army before the 10th Reinforcements went away remembers the spontaneous 'baa-aa-ing' that used to come from the men as they were herded like sheep from one part of a railway station to another. They resented, too, the loss of political freedom. New Zealanders are not really politically minded, but in the first few years after the Labour Government came to power many had come to the conclusion that the easiest way to get anything they wanted was to do it through their local M.P. (It worked, too, although it must have been hard on the time of an M.P.) In the Army this was forbidden. If you had had no leave for months, through someone's bungling, you could not take it up with your M.P. After a while the married men in the Army found there was a way of getting round this. No law could stop a soldier's wife writing to her elected representative and saying what she thought, and the torrent of letters must have been enormous. It was probably a major factor in the Army's big change in leave arrangements, culminating in a week's furlough every eight weeks, which was better than any man ever got in civil life.

But overseas, and the nearer to the forward units of the Division the more marked it was, there was a much more sensible attitude to the problems of the ordinary soldier. Red tape could be slashed to a minimum, the Army, while it could still be annoying and frustrating, seemed at least much more efficient than the other Commonwealth and American units in the same area. (New Zealanders could always compare their lot for the better with what the Englishmen got.)

This contrast, with the sense of all being in it together, made for a better morale in Italy than there had been home in New

Zealand. Quartermasters were more approachable, and officers, too.

A regimentally-minded sergeant-major, dropped to a corporal to go overseas, will never forget a day or two after he joined a new outfit in Italy. A few of the older hands were going on leave and wanted leave passes. The passes were made out in the 'orderly room', a little and dirty room in the back of a vino-smelling, shell-scarred casa, but to sign them they had to take them to an officer enjoying the morning sunshine, sitting in state in a latrine. He signed the passes, wished everyone a good leave, and no one except the new arrival saw anything amiss. But it wouldn't have done for Papakura, sir!

Even among officers, who might have been thought relatively well off, there was some bitterness about pay—especially about the extra rate of fifteen shillings a day for doctors and dentists. Other professional men—the Army was full of good lawyers and some brilliant schoolteachers and university lecturers—felt that many of the younger doctors were getting tremendous overseas experience in their profession plus the added advantage of a lot more money than anyone else, and occasionally when the vino was flowing freely there would be loud and noisy arguments.

Neither did other ranks like the Army's practice of allowing an officer to charge against losses in action some very expensive items, while the ordinary soldier was assumed to have nothing of value to carry with him. Technically the other ranks should not have known much about this practice, but they did. There was no bitterness with the officers for claiming and taking it, but a fairly strong feeling that the same privilege might occasionally have been extended to the other ranks.

One specimen of the human male soldier who seemed extremely rare in the Kiwi Army was the bush lawyer. One reason for that may have been that few Kiwis ever really bothered to read, or even had the chance to read, King's Regulations. But bush lawyers did flourish in some other armies, and King's Regulations were so constructed as to give them opportunity. In fact, a really clever bush lawyer, with a bit of advice from older men who had been in the Army for many years, could blind many an officer with science when it came to a soldier's rights and privileges, as laid down in what was supposed to be the Army's Bible.

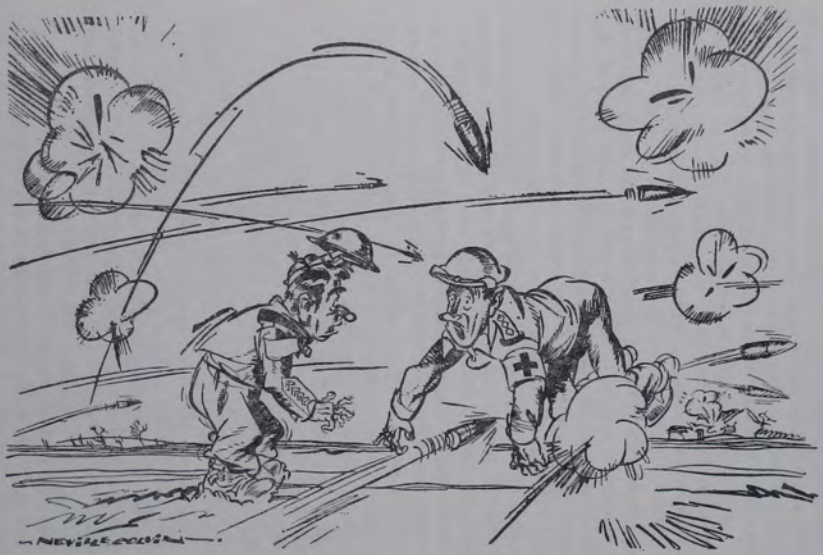
Occasionally there were stories of bush lawyers who had succeeded in putting something over very smartly indeed; but it was very difficult to find an actual example. There were frequent stories, for instance, of privates with chips on their shoulders who intensely disliked (as who didn't?) their personal mail to people back home being censored by some officer they disliked.

According to the story, there was a clause in the regulations which allowed a soldier to show half a page at once to an officer—with the other half obscured—so that while words could be read, they made no sense. And, again according to the story, the officer had to accept it that way, and then read the other half with the first half obscured. But it was never possible to hear of anyone who had really insisted on that bush lawyer's right—if it even existed.

In the British Army there was a regulation, worked out by some well meaning psychiatrist, that if a man went along to his unit medical officer and confessed that he had latent homosexual tendencies that were just beginning to make themselves manifest, he was to be sent home forthwith and as of right, probably get a discharge. In theory it was a good way of safeguarding the Army, but in practice, according to some frank-spoken British doctors, it was a feast for the bush lawyers. Any number of bad types and bad soldiers—big he-men, with never a tendency to anything but orthodoxy in their sex lives—used to come along and use the regulation to be shipped home and out of a unit they disliked.

The New Zealand Army did not run to many psychiatrists, and such a ruse would have stood very little chance of succeeding, no matter what the regulations said, with any unit medical officer. A few New Zealanders made second-hand use of the ruse in another way at times—not as bush lawyers, but to save themselves from gaol, when a charge of assaulting an inhabitant of the country in which you were serving was laid. It was a serious charge, but a sure-fire defence, it was reported, was to claim that the man assaulted had made an improper suggestion.

One reason, perhaps, for the lack of bush lawyers was that they were not really necessary. Any soldier in trouble could get real counsel to defend him. He was entitled to demand one, and he would get one. Almost any New Zealander would be game to bet that more guilty Kiwis were acquitted by New Zealand courts



"Scuse me, D-D-Doc, I think I'm getting anxiety neurosis.'

martial than innocent men were wrongly convicted. The system gave the accused every chance.

There were always exceptions. One New Zealand soldier of undoubted honesty and integrity once found himself haled up on a charge of breaking and entering, not theft. It was dealt with summarily by a small fine, and of course it was never afterwards referred to—and the offence never happened and hundreds knew it.

He was in a party of troops in a N.A.A.F.I. It was a night of a liberal beer issue. Everyone was rowdy and a little happy. The place was supposed to close at 10 p.m. and the riotous goings-on much nearer midnight had led to a complaint from a senior officer and a raid by the regimental police.

The charge of breaking and entering arose this way. The orderly corporal, an optimist who had thought things would be all right, had shirked the job of officially closing the N.A.A.F.I., as was his duty. But he had signed the book saying that he had done so. The raiding party knew this perfectly well, but with Army logic it seemed better to assume that the place had been closed and everyone had got in again afterwards than to have caught out the orderly corporal, and with him the orderly officer, for a wrong entry in the duty book. It was one of those things that can happen in an Army, and no real harm was done—except that the man who was fined by his C.O. would have hated it to be known back home that he had faced a charge of breaking and entering, especially in the job he holds now.

One regulation that on the surface looked bush lawyerish really was not, and was sometimes invoked by a private in base camp. It happened, infrequently but occasionally, that someone of a naturally dirty temperament would shirk essential cleanliness, and never take a shower. It was uncomfortable and awkward for those with whom he shared a tent. There was power to complain, and the offender could be taken by the regimental police to the showers, and made to have one. It happened at least once.

Bush lawyers in the British Army really evolved as a defence mechanism among private soldiers against Army red-tape, which can be the worst form of red-tape anywhere in the world. That it never really flourished in the New Zealand Army was probably a secret tribute to the way in which, wherever possible, the New Zea-

landers managed to avoid whatever red-tape could be avoided —a practice in which they were much more successful overseas than at home. One New Zealand officer was famous for his notation in the many forms which he had to fill in about Army equipment held by the unit. If the unit held none of the stores enumerated, his return read 'Sweet Fanny Adams'.

CHAPTER 8

ARMY PRESS

By the time the New Zealand Army newspaper, the *N.Z.E.F. Times*, arrived, after many vicissitudes and several editors, in Italy, it had begun to take on a typically New Zealand look, and as the Italian campaign drew on and until its final issue it developed more and more of a Kiwi image. It was like no other newspaper published for the Forces, which is not of course to say it was better; but it had found out by trial and error what the New Zealand soldier wanted to read about in his own paper, and what he did not want to read about.

He did not want to be lectured. There were no leading articles—except for a very occasional one written not by anyone on the staff but by someone very high up the Army scale. It did not publish letters to the editor—except occasionally on sport, and they were mostly queries—for the very good reason that the outspoken New Zealander, given the chance to get a letter in print saying what he thought, might have caused all sorts of trouble. That was one of the reasons why there were no leading articles, for the editors held that if the soldier could not write in and have his view published it was hardly fair to write articles of opinion which he could not answer back.

It carried yards of sport—always at least two pages per issue. There were reports of inter-unit fixtures and every sporting activity any outfit wanted publicised in Italy, but mostly it was of sport back home. Everyone wanted to know how his school, or his country district, or city club Rugby team had got on, who was scoring the tries. A remarkable number of men in all units and of all ranks tried to keep up with horse-race results, probably trying to assemble a background of form knowledge for that far-off

day when they would be home on furlough with a few shillings in their pockets and the chance of breaking the totalisator.

Some of the news from New Zealand came by air mail clippings, some by cable. The material came from the information section, then attached to the Director of Information, Mr J. T. Paul. Once, after the war, the *N.Z.E.F. Times* got into heavy trouble over what it had thought an excellent idea.

An air mail clipping had contained the final acceptors for the New Zealand Trotting Cup. They were published a full week before the race was run. Every unit, it seemed, ran a sweepstake, and there was a lot of money at stake.

But what the Information Section forgot to do was to send the result. The Army could do a lot of things in Italy, but one thing it could not do was find from any intelligence source the winner of the Trotting Cup—and no one would believe the number of abusive letters which came in. Finally the result was obtained privately from a soldier who had been told it casually in a letter from home.

Surprisingly the New Zealanders who had been longest out of New Zealand were the keenest on racing and trotting. Some of them had whiled away long hours in the front line reciting the breeding of horses, and it was a very unwise man who would take a bet with any strange New Zealander on such apparently remote topics as the winner of the Auckland Cup in, say, 1936.

In fact, in one unit where there was a closely-knit group of friends, all of them ardent Catholics, there was some discussion among a group of new arrivals waiting for the arrival of the padre, and confession, as to how long it had been since they had last confessed. One broke up the gathering by saying in perfect sincerity that he had no worries about the date. He was a man of good memory. 'It was in Christchurch,' he said. 'The day that Serenata won the Cup.' He didn't know the date, but he was very sure of the day.

The *N.Z.E.F. Times* was most proud, and so apparently were most of the troops, of its contributors' page—for which it paid well, much better as a rule than the ordinary civilian newspaper back home in New Zealand would pay. It had always had good cartoonists—Nevile Lodge (before he was in the bag) and Neville Colvin were outstanding examples—but there were a number of amateurs who were just about in professional class.

Humour was of high standard. It had to be, to get in, for far more was rejected than ever appeared. And until he went home the prize contributor was Ted Webber, now a daily paper editor, whose column 'Johnny Enzed' captured the flavour of the Kiwi's speech had the trend of his thinking better than anyone else could hope to do. His dialogue, meaningless to anyone who wasn't in the Army, could raise chuckles in any unit. The combination of Webber's column and Neville Colvin's drawings of Clueless (and his sister until the authorities stepped in) were the best-selling features.

In Italy the *N.Z.E.F. Times* was New Zealand right through. The type was set—in a commandeered printing works in Bari—by New Zealand linotype operators gathered in from many units as the war neared its end, with New Zealand publishing and distributing staff, its own process engraver to make the blocks and its own literary staff. The whole unit was self-contained—so small that everyone had meals in the same mess, much to the surprise of visiting senior officers who occasionally dropped in for lunch—and it was probably as informal as any Army unit ever assembled under one roof. It is a safe bet that no one will ever write its full history.

Every week it was distributed to wherever there were New Zealanders in Italy, and, of course, back at the base in Egypt. In Italy distribution was all by truck and as the division got further and further away—finally up to Trieste—distribution was a tougher and tougher assignment for the unit's drivers, taking a packed truck on a non-stop run from one end of the country to the other. There were occasional suggestions that the paper should go by air, but that idea was tried only once and then abandoned. That time the issue for the Division had all been handed to a certain Air Force—and had disappeared entirely, several thousand copies.

There was a reprint, and an inquiry into what had happened. The whole issue had been landed on the island of Corsica, where so far as was known there was not one New Zealander.

Every now and then the *N.Z.E.F. Times* ran into censorship trouble. The worst was when the Division made its celebrated switch from one side of Italy to the other, emerging up near Ravenna way on the Adriatic coast. The move, for security reasons, had been carried out with the greatest secrecy. The Kiwis took down those precious shoulder flashes, which most of them hated to take

'You know, I've never seen any type in the Kiwi Div. that looks like this Clueless bloke.'

off even while they were having a bath, unit signs had been painted off the trucks, no one had said a word to the Italians. It was done mostly at night, with every security precaution.

The Division had barely reached where it was going when the *N.Z.E.F. Times* was delivered. There on the front page was a story detailing the whole of the move. Officers and other ranks alike, who had been doing much extra work to ensure the secrecy of the whole move, were rightly incensed. But it was not—that time—the fault of the newspaper. A British (not a New Zealand) censor in Rome had stamped the story as cleared by the censor, and what more could an editor want? But there was a howl of rage and anguish from the whole Division.

Contrary to the belief of some New Zealanders, the *N.Z.E.F. Times* underwent no political censorship at all. There were no riding orders from New Zealand—except that at times when there was a by-election columns of valuable space had to be taken up with statements from candidates, each party getting equal length.

Once there were the most detailed instructions from Wellington about how it was all to be printed in the most technical terms. But it was impossible, since the instructions stipulated setting everything in two-column measure. The paper was five columns wide, two into five won't go, and the instructions were cheerfully disregarded.

Some of the technical problems of printing a newspaper in a foreign language country were tough to overcome. Some Italian linotype machines lacked altogether the letter 'k'. That was rectified at some expense, but until the day it closed up in Italy the paper never possessed a '£' sign. And when the pages were made up—most of the time by two first-class tradesmen who learnt their trade in the Government Printing Office back in Wellington—the formes had to be handled with the greatest care on to the tray of a truck and driven through chaotic traffic from near the Bari railway station to a printing plant with a suitable flatbed press.

Editors and printers kept their fingers crossed, but never once did the unforgivable happen, and a page of precious type get broken up—'pied' as the printers call it. That would have been the ultimate tragedy after a week's work.

It was a job in which editors and sub-editors had to keep the most watchful eye on news that came in. There was always the possibility of a breach of censorship, but, what was more worrying,

there was usually someone trying to put over quietly in disguise some ribaldly obscene reference to those higher up. Some of these were very cunningly designed indeed, but scarcely any got past. But how they tried!

Care was also needed in publishing reports of the Division's actions. War correspondents were limited to three or four in the field at a time, and they could not be with every unit, but woe betide the *N.Z.E.F. Times* if it gave one outfit praise which the outfit on its left or right thought was undue or over-emphasised. There was also the grim duty of publishing, after the most careful checking, casualty lists—which were read with the closest attention by everyone in the whole Army. In a big list everyone was sure to know someone.

Depending on how you looked at the books, the *N.Z.E.F. Times* was a fairly profitable publication, in spite of the money it spent on paper and contributors and the like. That was accomplished—in Italy—without much in the way of advertising. But lest anyone should point to it as a model of how to make a newspaper pay without advertisements, it ought to be added that it had no wages to pay. The Army took care of that, and someone must have had great fun in working out an establishment for an Army newspaper, with appropriate ranks for editor, a bench of sub-editors, sports writers, linotypists, process engravers and the rest.

The Army must secretly have been rather proud of its newspaper (although it never made the mistake of telling the staff that), for at the end of the war it became a visiting place with great regularity for visiting V.I.P.'s, from High Commissioners to Cabinet Ministers and Leaders of the Opposition. The British Army Printing Unit, which shared the same composing room (around which were also scattered a number of Italians), was frequently aggrieved when visiting generals and V.I.P.'s solemnly called and inspected five linotypists and two stonehands. The New Zealanders were quite blasé about it, but the British complained bitterly each time that they were not notified in advance.

'We would have called out the guard,' they used to say. But they never had the opportunity, and the *N.Z.E.F. Times* continued to function as a civil newspaper might, and with much the same disrespect for Army forms.

CHAPTER 9

THE DARKER SIDE

Although the Maoris were only one battalion in a very big Division (excepting the very few who joined other specialist units), they seemed to be everywhere in Italy and always in the news. They took to the country, and its inhabitants, with a ready friendship that surprised most people.

What was more, and this has seldom been adequately explained, the Maoris mastered Italian quickly and brilliantly. It was not a question of picking up enough Italian to get by. Many Maoris became extremely good Italian linguists—perhaps the best in all the Division—and many of them could read and write Italian as fluently as they could speak it.

At one time, in the course of one of the innumerable by-elections (this time for a Maori seat), a special election manifesto, written in Maori, was printed in the *N.Z.E.F. Times* (sub-edited and proof-read for accuracy by one of the Bennett family). One Maori officer, with some Italian friends who were interested in the Maori political angle, performed in a hotel bar the brilliant feat of translating the whole thing verbatim from Maori to Italian; and the few present who knew both Italian and Maori, regarded it as a completely accurate record.

Maoris seemed to have an affinity with Italians—and not only through the ease with which they managed the language problem. Most Italians (especially in the south) cared little or nothing about colour differences, but even in the north the Maoris were accepted always as New Zealanders and sometimes, to the envy of their pakeha friends, as the best class of New Zealanders. They were generous, of course, but they didn't buy their friendship with Italian families.

Italian women, of all ages, liked Maoris and it was not just a matter of sex. They seemed to think the same way. Maoris have a directness of approach that appealed to the Italians, and their independence, physique and geniality made a big impression.

There was quite a problem at the end of the war, when the Maori Battalion came back to the staging area before catching their ship home, because more than a few girls from Trieste hitch-hiked all the way down from the far north to the far south of Italy (near Goia) just to say goodbye.

The Maoris were experts at 'liberation'. They could almost live off the country, if they wanted to. Their love of vegetables and of fish, especially shellfish, matched a similar Italian love. And although they pretended otherwise, the Maoris were the most generous of all units towards Italians in distress. Maori Battalion medical officers (only one there at a time, but the principle applied right through) spent much time and used up many Army medical supplies in attending to the needs of Italian civilians, especially children. They had been known to handle childbirth in liberated villages and Italian children, who seem to know from their first walking days just who is generous and who is not, could get anything they wanted from tough Maori soldiers.

The Maori sense of humour flowered in Italy more than anywhere else. Perhaps it was because they had an always sympathetic audience.

There was the time, for instance, near Ravenna, after the battalion with many new reinforcements was thought by some of the higher-ups to be in need of a little more discipline. Their clothing was getting untidy—it was wintry and cold in the late autumn—and some visiting pakeha had made a rather cutting comment on the dress of the men (out of the line in a rest area) as they lined up for a mess parade for the evening meal.

The order went out: 'Members of the battalion will be properly dressed for dinner.'

And so they were. Among the places liberated had been a warehouse for a firm which specialised in high-class, high-priced clothing for wealthy Italians, and doubled on the side as the retailer for theatrical companies.

On a darkening autumn afternoon, just before 5 p.m., the Maoris lined up for the evening meal. No one could have complained that

they were improperly dressed. In fact, some of them could have gone to the best hotels anywhere in the world.

There they were—in thick Italian mud—in full evening wear, white tie and tails. One even had a monocle. They were properly dressed by any standards except those of the Army.

They were at once the pride and the despair of the Divisional Headquarters. Before one advance, when the Maori Battalion was moving into the line, a Maori sergeant with a gallantry decoration, an experienced and old soldier, was steadily going along an Italian road, an example to his men. Except that he had discovered a beautiful labour-saving method for carrying his Bren gun and ammunition. He had liberated from some deserted Italian home a perambulator—and the pram carried all his gear, plus the Bren, plus the boxes of ammunition. It served its purpose admirably.

One military acquisition which had to be officially discouraged —cavalry being a little out of date—was a very fine white stallion, acquired by one platoon on its triumphant march northwards. On the same excursion up the line two other Maoris conserved their physical energy by going in, one behind the other, on the back of the horse. Disapproval was official.

Italians, perhaps because they themselves lack the same qualities, have a tremendous respect for good fighting men, and especially for those who not only are good fighting men, but look as if they are. They have been known, an Italian crowd, to clap and cheer the Black Watch on a ceremonial march, and the Maoris with their tremendous sense of pride and rhythm in drill and marching affected them the same way. Women found good-looking Maoris especially attractive.

Moreover, the Italians, who knew a surprising lot about individual units, certainly respected the performances in battle of the Maoris. Scores of Italians knew, for instance, about the Maori officer who, when his section was beleagured at night in grim Cassino, used to go out on expeditions of his own looking for trouble, finding it and overcoming it in one of the worst pieces of no-man's-land in the whole of Italy.

The ruthless streak in the Maori, once aroused, attracted the Italians, too. Many of them had the same thing. It was an Italian who once grimly related the story of how a truck-load of Maori men dealt with a situation that in itself seemed likely to get them

into dire trouble. A disturbing amount of gear was being stolen from their truck while it went through Naples streets, by boys who jumped aboard when the truck slowed for intersections and then threw the loot out on to the street. So one of the Maoris crouched waiting in the back of the truck. When a hand suddenly came over the tailboard, flash went an axe, off went the hand. No more thefts from Maori trucks in that area.

The Maori sense of humour, always present, can be grim at times. And they were no respecters of persons. Once, when General Freyberg was visiting a field hospital near Ancona, several Maoris, all with head wounds, were among the patients in one ward.

Apparently a shell had burst close to a window, and Maoris, sheltering inside the thick walls of a casa, with only their heads showing, had been hit by shrapnel. The first Maori spoken to explained all this to the General—a patient, a sympathetic and an always welcome hospital visitor. The General took in the circumstances, moved to the next bed and said to another bandaged Maori: 'Shrap, soldier?'

'Yes Sir,' beamed the Maori in response, and after a few kind words the General moved on to the next bed. Another Maori with his head bandaged.

'Shrap?' inquired the General kindly.

'No Sir. Plonk,' replied the Maori.

The General, who knew when he was beaten, moved on.

Indeed it *was* plonk—the universal term for cheap red wine. The Maori had had a little too much, fallen and struck his head. And he was quite prepared to admit it.

The Maori sense of humour was always shown at its best when dealing with the high and the mighty. There was the time when a New Zealand Cabinet Minister visited the Division, then in winter quarters. The Maoris were very near the line, but it was a quiet sector. They had been warned that a visitor was coming to headquarters.

The big Army car moved along a quiet Italian road in the wintry countryside. At that stage in the campaign this road, some miles behind the front, was perhaps as safe as Cathedral Square, Christchurch. But suddenly out of a ditch appeared a Maori sergeant and some other ranks, armed to the teeth. They stopped the car. The sergeant saluted respectfully: 'Colonel's compliments, Sir. He

thought you ought to be told that if you go beyond this point, it's at your own risk.'

Thoughtfully the Minister drove on. It was as quiet as a churchyard, and just as safe all the way to headquarters, but the Maoris had at least given him something to think about for the journey.

With Army visitors from other units, it is rumoured and never admitted, the Maoris had an even grimmer humour. Occasionally, just to make things interesting, they would alter temporarily the unit destination boards at crossroads and the like and send the visitors on a not very pleasant wild-goose chase for an hour or two.

The Maoris developed a tremendous unit pride. And they could set other units an example in the way in which they welcomed new reinforcements. Often they would hold a welcome dinner for them, at which would be consumed vast quantities of mutton birds all the way from Stewart Island and canned oysters all the way from Bluff. Some pakeha units did exactly the opposite, were tough on new reinforcements, with such loaded questions as, 'What held you back?', but that was not the Maori way.

With their contacts among the Italians and their knowledge of the language, Maoris might have been brilliant black market operators—except for one failing. Most of them were singularly uninterested in money as money, and only used, and needed, enough for immediate purchases. With a group of Maoris on leave in Rome, say, or Venice, it was the normal thing for everyone in the group to pool available money in the morning, and divide it equally.

And occasionally, when Maori funds needed replenishing, the crown-and-anchor boys of the Division (there were always plenty of them) would, to their sorrow, come up against the Maori financial system. Once again the Maoris would pool all their money, and with a tremendous sum thus acquired to start with and only one man to do the betting for the lot, set out with malice aforethought to break the bank. With sufficient capital and a reasonable amount of luck, that was usually possible—and reprisals from the operator of the board would have been received only with a Maori hostility no one was game to arouse.

CHAPTER 10

SOFT HEARTS

One aspect of the Kiwi character was that no matter how hard-boiled he was, he was easy prey for Italian kids. It became quite a problem in the north of Italy near the end of the war to keep medical units fully stocked. A unit would move into a war-torn area, just vacated by the Germans, probably after some hard fighting. The R.A.P. sergeant and the doctor, if the unit had one, would have to be harder hearted than most Kiwis knew how to be to resist answering the appeals for help from mothers with sick, sometimes even wounded, children who would come for help. There were cases of New Zealand medical units acting as midwives, or surreptitiously supplying little Italian hospitals with medical necessaries, and, this time with no thought of black-marketing, the amount of chocolate, tinned milk and food which the New Zealanders gave must have eaten grievously into canteen supplies.

Before the last and victorious push which began at the Senio, when the Kiwis were quartered in the area around Matelica, every unit sooner or later turned on a field day for the local children—lolly scrambles and all, just as they remembered picnics at home. Some of these occasions made laughable the claim that some Kiwis liked to make out that war had made them completely unsentimental.

It was rather different in the cities. New Zealanders on leave were tired of and disgusted with small boys who, probably through economic circumstances, were touts for vice. It was easy enough to find without children showing the way. And in some places—Naples and Old Bari were two of the worst examples—there were vicious gangs of unbelievable eight-to-ten-year-olds who preyed on soldiers. The way they worked was to set on a soldier on his own, if there was no one else in sight. Any man could beat off an attack by six or eight little kids, but thirty or forty, tripping him up,

intent on theft, were a tough proposition. Ships' officers who took the wrong way home in both Naples and Bari were often robbed, and a few incidents such as this made small boys from the slum areas much less popular than they might otherwise have been.

Italy, of course, is a children's country. The birthrate is high, and children are everywhere. How they managed to live in the grim aftermath of war in a defeated country was a miracle, and perhaps thousands did die. The plight of the poorer children was a reminder to many New Zealanders of the differing conditions back home. But even when they were ill-clothed and ill-fed they were, by and large, a happy and a sunny-natured crowd of children everywhere. Italians grow up light-heartedly and often spoil their children outrageously. And some of the younger children are remarkably beautiful, almost with the faces of angels.

One result of the war of which the Army took no official notice was that far more than any other social mixing it made the average New Zealander know much more than he would otherwise have known of people in other occupations. The ardent trade unionist and Labour supporter, with all the keenness in politics (now nearly forgotten) which had sprung up in New Zealand from the depression and lasted till the start of the war, could easily find himself sharing a bivvy tent with the manager of a big company. They learnt each other's viewpoint, and years of prejudices were broken down.

It has happened often since the war that a bank manager somewhere or other (for some reason or other the Army seemed full of banking types) has found himself in the position of being asked for an overdraft by some man who had been in the same platoon. In fact it has happened to magistrates—may even have happened to judges, although no one would ever know—that some of the 'clients' who appear before them in the dock were once in the same unit. The Army was a greater leveller than ever the socialism of the thirties had been, and the general effects through the country on the whole have been good.

Sometimes the high and the mighty from civil life were unmercifully teased by their fellows (as, for instance, happened to one newspaper proprietor whose friends in the mess used to complain bitterly, tongues in their cheeks, about the articles in his newspapers which were posted over); but the important thing was that they

were accepted as just someone else caught up in the family of the Army. And it was difficult, if not impossible, to be a snob in the Army. There is too little privacy, and far too much sharing of intimate details of life for class consciousness to remain. Whatever snobbery existed was to be found among a very few officers, and they were not snobbish about their background at home but about their Army rank.

There was, however, a snobbishness of unit. Some units tended to look down on others. The infantry, by virtue of its high casualty rate, its tougher life, and the greater sacrifices it was called on to make, was the king of the outfit. This unit snobbishness existed only among New Zealanders. When they were with men of other armies, Kiwis tended to present a common front.

There was a jealously guarded unofficial system of seniority, based on length of service with a unit. It was a bold newcomer to a unit who, told to join a group in a casa, would throw down his bed-roll without first inquiring whether he was taking a 'senior' man's place. And if he was very wise he would let the older hands do the talking for a week or two until he was finally accepted, when the platoon to which he belonged became his complete home, as of right.

New Zealanders used to laugh at Americans who talked (as their war correspondents wrote) about belonging to a division. The New Zealander's home was a very small unit indeed, and while he was proud of the Division it was far too big and impersonal ever to represent home.

Army psychologists ought to work out the tremendous importance for soldiers to feel they have a set, fixed home of their own. The first feeling that the ordinary civilian had on entering the Army back home in New Zealand—no matter how tough he was—was one of semi-helplessness. He was caught up in a rigid system he did not understand. But by the time he was overseas he found a home somewhere—a place he could call his own, in which he knew everyone and everyone knew him, and it made a world of difference to his outlook.

Bad tempers were surprisingly rare in the Army, considering the number of men thrown together in small groups for long and trying periods on end. It may have been that group public opinion frowned on the bad-tempered man, or even sometimes that steps

would be taken to make a perpetual moaner stay silent, but the probable cause was that there was a general realisation that bad temper was a useless luxury.

There was one thing which would provoke bad temper in a group, and that, surprisingly enough, was carelessness with firearms. Most Kiwis took the not unnatural view that risks in the line from enemy actions were bad enough without being accidentally shot through carelessness from the home team, so to speak, and some of the biggest fights in the history of some units resulted from the action of someone who left a loaded rifle where it could go off accidentally in a crowded casa, with the bullet ricocheting round the room. That was one mistake few Kiwis made twice.

Many New Zealanders, even including many of the Catholics, were surprised at the attitude of the Italians towards religion. The interiors of the churches were beautiful, but sometimes the impression was more like being in a railway station. Children were playing everywhere; in some of them there were no seats and everyone stood. In one a regular churchgoer used to wheel his bicycle inside the front door. He was afraid of having it stolen if he left it outside, he explained.

The congregations were predominantly feminine, and the male worshippers were mostly the very young and the very old. On the steps of many of the churches there would be assembled the halt and the lame—the beggars, to whom the Italians were normally charitable but whom most of the visiting soldiery regarded with suspicion.

And the Italians themselves, especially the peasants, could not understand that all Kiwis were not Catholics. Many of them genuinely felt that there was no other religion in the world. Even in quite big cities, it was extremely hard sometimes for units to find a hall for a non-Catholic church service.

The Americans found Italian religious practices hard to understand—especially the American Catholics. One bluff Irish-descended Air Force American padre once complained bitterly that the Italians were not really Catholics at all, a statement a little hard to understand in the country which had Rome as its centre and its pride. He was thoroughly discomfited when a New Zealander dryly remarked that he had heard Italians say the same thing about American Catholics, too, so that honours were even.

Funerals seemed to be everywhere, always with the horse-drawn, glassed-in and plumed hearse, and the hired mourners (often children from the nearest orphanage) walking in front. No matter where you went in Italy the influence of the Church was inescapable. Even the Communist Party, which around about 1946 mistakenly thought it would take all Italy easily after the war, used to issue posters, designed to catch the eyes of the women, saying what nonsense it was that the communists would ever interfere with the Church.

Once the war was over, the New Zealanders were extremely bad haters. They regarded the hundreds of German prisoners who had surrendered as a nuisance—especially when, as happened to a few units, they were ordered to take care of them—but at the same time as an amiable nuisance, and as human beings.

One New Zealand detachment, unwillingly saddled for a few days with the task of looking after a group of surrendered Germans, made history and almost gave an English Town Major apoplexy. In this unit the officers, both of them, had gone off 'swanning' for a few days—making a tour of Lake Como and Lake Garda. The sergeants and most of the others knew that it would be their turn when the officers came back. In the meantime they made the best of a bad job. The Germans sat behind the barbed wire, did all the fatigues, and everyone was happy. But one night the unit was invited to a party—everyone—given by a neighbouring bunch of Kiwis. The problem was what to do about the Germans.

The Kiwi sergeant sent for the German sergeant-major, or whatever the rank of the senior prisoner was, and in the Italian argot they both had picked up, the Kiwi carefully explained to the German how stupid it would be to try to escape since they might well fall into worse hands. The German, who knew when his men were well off, and who could answer for their discipline, agreed. Left unattended, the Germans promised not to escape.

Then just before they went to the party, after they had a few drinks, the Kiwis became all soft-hearted. There they were going to a party, and these other Jerry blokes left behind with nothing to do. The New Zealanders had nothing to offer in the way of entertainment. But a mile or two down the road was a soldiers' picture show. So all the Germans were driven down the road and taken to the pictures—left there unescorted, and told to make their own way back to 'prison'.

It all worked out well, except that the British Town Major was furious to the point of taking action. Next morning he telephoned the unit, abruptly demanding an official explanation, threatening dire punishment for those responsible.

The orderly room clerk, who after long practice could talk over the telephone more like an officer than most officers, assured his caller that he indeed was the O.C. of the unit, that what had happened was entirely wrong, that those responsible would be punished. Then he promptly forgot all about it.

Other Germans came down to bases in southern Italy in the few months before the New Zealanders finally caught those ships home, and generally they were treated well—and responded well. In fact, many New Zealanders preferred them to male Italians and there was no doubt, especially in the few tense days just after the war stopped in Trieste, that they preferred them to Yugoslavs, who had threatened to disrupt the long-awaited victory celebrations by launching a private war of their own to see who controlled Trieste—long before the Allies had made any suggestion about it.

Now there were lots of ways of persuading General Freyberg to do anything—but a threat was the one least to be recommended. He responded to Yugoslav threats and their show of force by a show of force in which the genuine attacking might of a division that had fought its way from Greece to Trieste, and was in no mood to be trifled with, was deployed where every little Yugoslav could see it. There was no trouble. There could have been plenty, but it had been made crystal-clear that if there was trouble the New Zealanders were in no mood for diplomatic niceties, and while some of the Yugoslavs sulked, and others plotted with Trieste's communists, the realists at the top called off the threat. After that, Yugoslavs were not quite so popular as the folks back home might have judged from reading the newspapers.

Kiwis also developed a considerable degree of self-reliance. They could look after themselves, without sergeants or officers to do their thinking for them, when they had to. And that characteristic was at all levels.

Consider the case of a captain well known in the Division. In the job he held at this time, he slept in his truck, which had two beds made up in the back of it, one for the driver, one for himself,

the whole enclosed in a shed-like edifice built on the tray of the truck.

There had been a party the night before. The officer, before entering too much into the spirit of the party, made it plain to the driver that no matter what happened they were to get away at the crack of dawn in the morning.

Came the dawn. The driver got up, washed, shaved, made his cup of tea, tried to rouse the boss, but couldn't. So, mindful of instructions, he walked from the sleeping part of the truck to the driving cab, and moved off.

They had gone some forty or fifty kilometres and were on a lonely, country road when the officer woke up. He may have been a little hung over, but for some reason it failed to register that the truck was moving. He opened the door, stepped out, and fell on to the road.

There he was, in pyjamas (he admitted afterwards it was lucky he was wearing them), miles from anywhere in strange country on a road little used by the Army. And the truck drove on, round the bend out of sight. The driver, conscious that he was doing what he was told, never stopped till he got to Caserta, and was understandably puzzled to find the tray empty.

That is a fair test of self-reliance and *savoir faire* for any fairly elderly (as the Army goes) officer.

When the driver went back to search for him, he missed him. The next day, dressed as a private in the British Army, the officer turned up at his unit headquarters, and refused to tell any of his wondering friends how he had managed. But obviously he had coped with great skill and presence of mind with an unexpected emergency, although he never told his friends just what happened. Nor did he ever hold any grudge against the driver, who stayed with him until the unit was disbanded.

There were several other authenticated cases of other ranks who for some reason or other had fallen among thieves and, accepting hospitality and a little too much vino, perhaps awoke in the morning with all their clothes stolen. They all managed with self-possession and without much loss of dignity to get back to their units, decently, if not regimentally, dressed. And several of them, with a few friends to help them, went back to the scene of the theft and took their reprisals.

One of the traps for the unwary was the number of Italians who, taking advantage of the known preference of the Kiwis to meet families, used to offer entertainment of the 'bottle in house' variety. The Kiwi bought the vino, or rather gave the money to the young son of the house who promptly went and bought it (probably making a big profit), and drank it on the premises. Nine times out of ten the practice was perfectly safe and rather enjoyable. The tenth could lead to real trouble, particularly since if the soldier was on his own—and many New Zealanders preferred to stay on their own—it was almost impossible for friends or provosts to track him.

Some sociologist can determine whether it was because of racial pride, pride in their own Army, or from a sense of being an isolated community greatly outnumbered in a foreign country, but the fact remains that New Zealanders in Italy tended ever and always to be a self-contained group. Any Kiwi unit would go miles to help any other Kiwi unit.

Such outfits as light aid detachments, repairing trucks and keeping them on the road, would work long hours cheerfully to do things for New Zealand trucks they would not think of doing for anyone else. A New Zealand driver steadfastly passing soldiers from other armies along a long road would stop automatically for anyone with New Zealand shoulder flashes. And, of course, on leave any New Zealander in trouble could rely on any other Kiwi to help him out.

Some other Allied armies were a little jealous at this united front presented by New Zealanders—especially in the occasional results of courts martial. In one famous assault case, in which two well respected New Zealanders had not really behaved very well, but were acquitted nevertheless by a New Zealand court martial, one of the New Zealand officers who served on the court was asked how on the evidence he could have concurred in a verdict of not guilty.

'Hell's teeth, the man was from my own company,' he said. And that settled it.

Other armies were at times openly incredulous at the officer-other rank relationship in the forward units—and some of the die-hards back home in New Zealand might have been just as upset. And nearly everyone else in another Army resented the

superior accommodation which General Freyberg managed invariably to secure for New Zealanders as they moved into a new town.

For instance, the New Zealand Forces Club in Venice was 'taken over' just as the city fell, by a New Zealand detachment especially detailed for the job. It was probably the most luxurious building ever commandeered for a private soldiers' club.

Although the Army turned a blind eye to a number of minor crimes—black and grey marketing often among them—it could come down with tremendous severity on anything really serious. Naturally, the New Zealanders overseas had some genuine criminals in their ranks. Some were spectacular. Temptation was always there, for parts of Italy, especially in the south, were infested with criminal gangs, many of them containing American deserters who had every motive for being tough since they knew what awaited them if they were caught, and these gangs were always on the alert for new recruits, especially those who might know where the pickings were good.

One really tough New Zealander made history of a sort by his escape from the custody of British military police. He was regarded by the British as needing special vigilance—and they were not far wrong at that. He was being taken in a specially built military police truck, the back of which featured a steel cage. The prisoner sat in the cage. Outside him, in the rest of the space at the back of the truck, sat two military police. Chances of escape seemed nil. The prisoner eased a hand through the bars of the cage while the attention of the escorting provosts was elsewhere, probably watching some passing signorina along the road. He snatched an Army pistol from a policeman's holster. He demanded the key to his cage—or else he would shoot. They thought he meant it—and he might have. He eased himself out of the cage, eased the two provosts in, locked them up, and jumped off when the truck slowed down. What they said at the receiving end when the truck arrived with the two policemen locked in the cage and no prisoner, was not reported at the time, but it must have been good.

Another Kiwi in a big city made a name for himself in a new unit one day by suddenly going berserk—in a jeep. He chased a British major down a narrow street—there were no footpaths—and finally ran him down. Justice caught up with him, too. Another, believe it or not, who was playing softball with a group of soldiers,

substituted for some reason best known to himself a live grenade for the ball, with grave consequences for the man at the batting end.

No expense was too great, no trouble too much for the Army to undertake in its chase of a criminal. The New Zealanders knew well the story of how men had been hauled back from furlough in New Zealand and driven way up to around Tripoli to stand trial on a months-old rape charge which had come to light.

Most of this work was not done by a military police detachment, but by a special bureau the ordinary soldier never saw or wanted to see, although he knew all about it. The British called it the 'S.I.B.', the Americans called theirs the 'C.I.B.', and they worked together at times. They were reinforced by Scotland Yard men, and occasionally worked with Italian detectives who—especially in Rome—were very tough and efficient characters indeed. They had such crimes to deal with as counterfeiting, banditry, murder and the like, and their casebooks must have been enthralling documents.

Towards the end of the war they were concentrating on one of the world's big rackets at the time. Aircraft were coming in and out of Italy all the time. Gold from South Africa—and diamonds, too—were tremendously valuable. The Italians were frightened, with good reason, of the future of their currency and would pay almost any price for international assets, including precious metals and stones. Reputedly some huge fortunes were made, and some big catches were made too.

CHAPTER 11

THE FOG AND THE GROG

New Zealanders were often called strange names. Some envious Englishmen used to call the division 'Freyberg's Forty Thousand Thieves'. Some Americans called them the K-one-W-ones—they thought KIWI was not a word but a combination of letters and numbers. But it can safely be said that no one ever called them 'Freyberg's Forty Thousand Teetotallers'. In short they liked their grog, and they did not care who knew it.

For that reason Italy, where strong drink was plentiful and cheap, provided a special problem. In the first place, there was never enough of what they really liked—beer. There was a monthly beer issue, haggled about and guarded like treasure, and for sergeants, officers and anyone else who had friends in the right places there was good Scotch and good English gin—but never enough of that either.

And so it had to be what there was always plenty of—wine. Some New Zealanders became genuine connoisseurs of wine. They had drunk it from the bottom of the peninsula to the top; they could discuss vintages and brands. But for the majority it was a matter of taking what they could when they could get it. It differed —the wine of the country—in every area they went to. In Central Italy the cheap white wine which the locals drank as New Zealanders drink tea at home was sometimes magnificent, always palatable. In the south it was stronger and bitter, and there, too, was also the bitter red wine which in some areas was so hard to take that even a Kiwi had to be pretty thirsty to stomach much of it.

It was often a difficulty when eating out with Italians to remember that they were more used to wine than Kiwis were to tea. Nothing was more embarrassing than to find that the ten-year-old son of the family could remain perfectly sober—perhaps a little cheekier

than usual—after knocking back enough to put an able-bodied, physically fit Kiwi almost under the table if he were not used to it.

If an Italian family really liked a guest they would sometimes show it by giving him a glass of the pure spirit called 'grappa', calculated, if enough of it were drunk, to qualify an elephant for being intoxicated in charge of his trunk.

There were dozens of varieties of grog, nearly all wine, which most Kiwis sampled at one time or another—marsala, muscata, rooster's blood, Lacrima Christi, spumante (a cheap champagne, the cure for a hangover), chianti (the Rome drink, not so popular with Kiwis because there was usually beer at the Club). Some were good, some indifferent, some poor and only to be drunk when there was nothing else in sight. There was always vermouth, too, and plenty of it.

It is a pity the official artist, Peter McIntyre, did not paint—for he was in the area at the time—the scene when the New Zealanders 'liberated' a vermouth factory. Staff, management, everyone had walked out and left the vats full as the war came near and the Kiwis moved in. Battalion water-carts were hurriedly emptied and filled with vermouth (until the C.O. found out and had them emptied), buckets, barrels, jerry-cans (who minds the taste of petrol?) were all filled in one huge swoop. Vermouth was spilling and dripping everywhere.

In the middle of the scene came two apologetic Italian soldiers, each with the tiniest Italian Army issue water-bottle that could be imagined. Walking through spilled vermouth to the nearest vat, with tap, from which barrels were being filled they waited humbly, then with a quavering '*permesso*' asked permission to take about a cupful each. Generous, these Kiwis. They let them have it.

In spite of all the elaborate clubs set up for his benefit the Kiwi was never happier than when he was invited to someone's home.

Usually he was the more welcome because he could bring with him a few tins of food to augment the ration, which could be pretty light. But with or without food he was often a welcome guest and he enjoyed the experience. Hospitality varied in inverse ratio, as a rule, to the wealth of the host. The poor people were the best hosts.

It took the New Zealand country boy some time to realise that there was no place for him (or any man) in the kitchen. Offers to

'Swonderful how much of thish shtuff you can drink and shtay sober!'

help dry the dishes were received with a puzzled frown and a definite 'no'. The Italian husband was all against it, too. He never thought of helping round the house, and why should any man?

Cooking took some time to get used to. And in spite of the many who boasted that they could, there were really very few who could manage spaghetti as an Italian could, with just a fork, and no droopy bits hanging down as he lifted a mouthful. The size of an Italian dinner was sometimes an embarrassment, too. They lived to a different pattern of eating—scarcely any lunch after the scantiest of breakfasts—but did they make up for it at the evening meal! Sometimes it would last two hours, and as, of course, it was impossible to go straight to bed after a meal as heavy as that, Kiwis became accustomed to staying up late—very late.

They were shocked at the way little boys in most families were spoiled, and girls made to work. Eleven, twelve and thirteen-year-old Italian boys were too cheeky and precocious by half in the eyes of New Zealanders, but the Italians seemed to take it for granted.

'It's a man's world,' said one shocked Napier boy, obviously very fond of his mother, after visiting one Italian home. 'But it's a funny sort of man's world when all the nicest people in it—and the hardest-working—are women.'

'We'll get back to civilised drinking in New Zealand after the Army gets home,' was an opinion frequently expressed by New Zealanders who thought about the matter at all, and saw how the Kiwis welcomed the chance to get a drink at intervals at the pictures or a theatre, or after 6 p.m.—in fact, whenever they felt like it. Many in the Army thought licensing reform was one of the effects which would automatically follow the experiences of the New Zealanders in a country where drinking was completely civilised.

Why it didn't happen—or at least not nearly to the extent anticipated—can be argued. But it is a fact that if you want to find a gathering of former Kiwis now, where will they be when they are drinking? Nowhere but in the same sort of public bar that they frequented before the war.

Certain words and phrases became a part of the Army life in Italy. Officers who lost their heads, or even gave the impression of being a little bit hot and bothered about things that did not really matter, were accused of 'flapping'—and it was a damning charge.

You had only to hear an indignant major replying to a scornful colonel, 'But I am not flapping, Jack,' to realise just how seriously the charge was taken. In worse cases an officer or an n.c.o. who was really excited would be described as 'galloping all round the area'. It was the complete successor to the earlier phrase 'doing his scone' or 'getting off his bike'.

The real charm of Army language in Italy was not slang, nor picturesque profanity or obscenity, but the fantastic mixture of Italian and English in the one vocabulary. It became such a habit with some soldiers that they persisted in it for months after they came home, until at long last they gave in to the uncomprehending stares of the stay-at-homes and dropped it.

It was not only other ranks who used this argot. Officers were just as bad. Even now anyone who served in Italy would see nothing strange at all in such a remark as 'he took to his scarpas and took off down the strada'. It must have been almost incomprehensible to people—such as politicians from New Zealand, visiting Italy—this strange combination of English, soldier-style, and Italian, any-style, into a heady, purely Kiwi language.

The best portrayer of this special brand of New Zealand speech was the famous 'Johnny Enzed' of the *N.Z.E.F. Times*. The popular columnist's 'Johnny Enzed' dialogue, reprinted now, would still be perfectly understandable to anyone from Italy.

This peculiar style of Army speech, part New Zealand, part Italian, with the odd Egyptian word creeping in because it fitted the sense, was kept for the Army. When they were with Italians most New Zealanders tried to speak as good Italian as they could —and many managed very well indeed. It all depended, of course, on what part of Italy a man had been in for the first formative weeks. If he had been in Bari, or Goia, or anywhere in the south, he picked up an accent which made the people in the fastidious north shudder as if he had been a barbarian.

Some New Zealanders became masters even at dialects, and there were more than a few A.S.C. drivers, who pretty well travelled the length and breadth of Italy, who could vary their mode of speech according to where they were.

Even if the pronunciation was suspect, the grammar worse, it was a poor Kiwi who after a few months could not order a meal, or a drink, or a haircut, or talk to a girl in fluent Italian, without

pausing for a word. Back in the unit they would relapse into the Kiwi-Italian mixture which became their trademark. In the Maori units it was sometimes even worse. The Maoris, or some of them, would drop in a few Maori words as well, and the resulting dialogue would have puzzled even one of those ultra-clever linguists from Headquarters Intelligence.

For a time New Zealanders developed a rhyming slang of their own—probably based on the Cockney model used by some British units with which they were in contact. Some of it was quite unprintable, but perfectly effective. Other selections, such as the famous 'In you go, says Bob Munro', were harmless. It swept the Army for a month or two and then disappeared.

A special brand of slang existed for reinforcements, who were always regarded as fair game. It was a hard blow for a member of the 10th Reinforcements to win a housie game, have his number called, and hear most of the room's 'grim old digs' shout out in unison: 'That's not a number, that's a map reference.' Five-figure numbers were something, but four-figure ones were the badge of the real 'old dig'—and he never let a reinforcement forget it. But when the reinforcement numbers themselves got near double figures, nearly everyone's number was on the six-figure mark.

Over the closing days in Italy, when there were far more six-figure numbers than smaller ones, and the reinforcements themselves had had more than two years overseas, a kind of revenge was worked and the 'old digs', especially when they were in a minority, were teased mercilessly whenever they dared mention Egypt.

Particular targets for months, till the joke wore off, were the men who were shifted from the Pacific to the Middle East. 'Coconut bombers' they were called, there were ribald songs about the dangers of being hit by a coconut falling from a tree on some luxuriant atoll, and often tempers became heated about the whole thing.

In their acquisition of more vehicles than ever showed on equipment tables the New Zealanders showed themselves extremely able pickers-up of unconsidered trifles. The Public Relations Section, for instance, had the use for years of a pre-war, civilian-model Ford truck. Originally it had belonged to a South African unit. It stopped running in the desert and was abandoned. The New Zealanders restored it, painted (obviously through a technical error) a New

Zealand sign on it, and had thousands of fast and trouble-free miles with it. Officially it did not exist, and there were no spares for it anyway, but the unit always managed to keep it in first-class order. The only trouble with such vehicles was handing them back at the war's end. Who wanted a vehicle that did not exist? It had been a difficult enough job to bring it from Egypt to Italy, but they managed that, and everyone finally hated to see the end of it.

No hen ever nursed her chicks more carefully than a New Zealand driver-mechanic nursed his truck, jeep or car. It gave him mobility, independence—an officer might sometimes have been a passenger, but it was the driver's car really—and to make sure he did not lose those advantages he would painstakingly check the running and fix faults before they started to cause trouble. A unit driver, assigned to a particular truck, regarded it as his home. He slept in it or near it, he ate most of his meals in it, it contained his bed-roll and all his possessions, and if you were careful about using a truck, you could go almost anywhere unhindered in one. You could keep your meals hot in winter, by putting tins of Army food by the exhaust pipe. Some drivers even rigged up their own very efficient heating systems for the Italian winter.

Such was the affection many drivers acquired for their utility vehicles that scores of Kiwis, who had been in office jobs or in shops before the war, turned to driving as an occupation when they came home. The New Zealander, in fact, had and still has a close affinity with the petrol engine.

In Italy there was a perpetual war between those drivers who had occasion to go, usually on leave, to the big cities and the Italian gangs of car and equipment thieves, who were daring and brilliant. For a while New Zealanders defeated the thieves by taking out the rotor of the motor—small enough to be easily carried round. Then the Italian thieves managed to procure an apparently unlimited supply of spare rotors for Chevrolet, Dodge and Ford models. You would leave your vehicle apparently safely immobilised, go back an hour later to find a vacant parking lot.

Americans used to chain their jeeps to lamp posts, but the Italians, given enough time, would dismantle the part chained, slip off the chain, reassemble the bits they had fiddled with and drive off, leaving the chain as a memento. They were also experts, the Italian thieves, at siphoning petrol, and to run out of petrol

on a back road in Italy, especially if you were where you shouldn't be, was no joke.

Guarded car parks were the technical answer, but cars also disappeared from these with regularity. The New Zealand Army, perhaps with more logic than justice, decided that the way to stop vehicle losses by theft was to put on charge if it disappeared the senior man who had been in the vehicle at the time of its being left somewhere. No matter what precautions were taken, there was no excuse if a truck disappeared. When the Army had made its meaning plain enough the thefts ceased. It was better to stay with your truck than take the risk of leaving it and going to the 'glass-house'.

In the more rugged and isolated parts of Central and Southern Italy there were at the war's end more than a few bandits, usually reinforced with a few Allied deserters, and they were desperately tough. Drivers of trucks who made long runs on their own at night knew all the hazards; if they could help it they stopped for nothing or nobody, and if they had to stop they were ready for trouble.

The arduous, always trying, conditions of driving in Italy, on war-crowded roads, many of which were narrow and winding once you were off the main highways, were a challenge that seemed to bring out a special quality among New Zealanders. The best of their transport drivers were superb—fast, safe, and not hard on their vehicles. Some genius in Divisional Headquarters had thought out the brilliant idea of making drivers eligible for extra pay as 'driver-mechanics' if they looked after the servicing and maintenance of their vehicles. The proof, of course, was in performance. Many New Zealand trucks and cars, under the hardest conditions, racked up a trouble-free mileage which the Americans found impossible to believe and which the British found extremely difficult to match.

One reason was that New Zealanders are a race of 'driver-mechanics'. If you live in a country district, where the one garage is miles away and always busy at that, you learn to keep your vehicle on the road and in running order; the same principle applied, only to a greater degree, in Italy. Americans who sometimes reckoned the useful life of a truck engine at 15,000 miles were staggered to the point of disbelief at the running sheets which

'What do you mean, I can't drive this, Dig? Haven't you ever heard of Groppi's Light Horse?'

covered the history of some New Zealand unit vehicles. The British suffered, among thousands of their men, one big disadvantage. So many drivers in the British Army had never driven until they entered the Army. In fact their driving manuals started with basic principles that most New Zealanders had known almost from their cradles.

A driver needed to be good in Italy. If he drove at night he needed to be as sharp-eyed as a lynx, for in spite of all efforts at prevention by the Allied troops Italian peasants were always on the road at night with unlit horsedrawn wagons. It was a terrible experience to come round a corner fast on a narrow road and meet one of these coming towards you, with no room to pass because another one was in front of you going the same way as you were. Nor could you drive into the ditch, if there was a ditch, because that could easily mean a broken axle.

Headquarters, 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force, as opposed to Divisional Headquarters, which was in charge of the fighting units, had as its unit symbol not the silver fern, but the southern cross. A feature of the symbol was the number of stars on it, and as a result cars from Base Headquarters always received a general's welcome in army traffic jams, especially with American provosts, who from long experience knew all about cars with three or more stars on them.

A full private in the New Zealand Army once travelled in the back seat of one of those cars through a traffic jam somewhere in southern Italy. He was hatless, but a large, impressive type, with a genuinely heart-warming smile. As the car shot through, priority plus, Private Worn beamed benevolently at the troops, most of whom gave him a full salute—they were not New Zealanders. Afterwards one heard remarks about how genial the big-shot New Zealanders were. Not many weeks afterwards there was a polite question as to whether New Zealand could change its headquarters symbol, alleged to be causing too much confusion among both British and American provosts.

They might have known he was not a real American general, all of whom travelled with motor cycle outriders. One cavalcade, of which the central figure was General Mark Clark, once produced, within the hearing of an American senior officer, the comment

from a New Zealand passer-by that he thought it must have been a circus. And in some ways it resembled one.

The New Zealand Division in Italy was Rugby mad. The General was extremely keen on it, and for everybody from colonels down to privates Rugby fixtures were the best form of recreation. The excitement before the Kiwi team was picked to go to Britain at the war's end was intense. The Army had its own commentator at the trial matches (this was before Winston McCarthy arrived to do the official commentary in England) and units were as keen to get a representative in the Army side as the New Zealand provinces are now to get a man in the All Blacks. (As the records show, the Kiwi team turned out to be well up to All Black standard.)

Unit games, sometimes between company and company, sometimes between officers and other ranks—always willing, those, for there was a chance to express rank consciousness in the scrums—could keep any Kiwi from the distractions of the nearest vino bar. Games with the South Africans were played at every possible opportunity, and amid great rivalry.

The New Zealanders' love of Rugby sometimes manifested itself in a way that would make them socially unacceptable in some officers' clubs. Almost every night, somewhere or other in Italy, some ardent Rugby lovers would challenge a group of South Africans or any other likely types to a set scrum in the middle of the dance floor. Pukka English subalterns, handkerchiefs tucked in their cuffs, would shudder with distaste, and the performance was seldom well received either by the other people at the dance or by the orchestra, which could never quite find a tune that went with a man-sized scrum. It was all great fun while it lasted, but many club managers complained bitterly whenever they saw a group of New Zealanders come in. But it was a habit they never broke, and the writer has seen even a general—not *the* General, but a New Zealand general for all that—acting as lock in a particularly hard scrum with the South African Air Force on a ballroom floor.

New Zealand trotting drivers, of whom there were several in the infantry, had their big day in Trieste when the famous New Zealand trotting meeting was held. From some of the names on the drivers' board, a man might have thought he was at Addington for Cup Day. The Army printed a special souvenir programme for

that Trieste meeting, which was a tremendous success, with the New Zealand drivers more than holding their own against the Italian ones, who might have been expected to know the horses (all from Italian stables) slightly better.

For those who went on leave in Rome the trotting meetings there were full of excitement. And if you had the right information there was much money to be made—although, of course, a day at the trots was always one of the excuses, if you needed one, for not drawing any pay.

Cricket was popular enough in the summer, for those who liked it, and some units, especially in the artillery, could field some pretty good sides. Some of New Zealand's best cricketers—including G. L. Weir and H. G. Vivian—played in Army teams at times, but somehow cricket in Italy never quite achieved the same polish it had in Cairo, where it was played with almost fanatical enthusiasm on some quite spectacular cricket grounds, notably Gezira.

There was little golf—although Bryan Silk did very well in an Army tournament near Rome—and less tennis, but in the summer there was always swimming. Italian beaches on the Adriatic coast were better than most readily accessible beaches in New Zealand.

And for the winter nights there was another sport, of which the top brass highly approved—boxing. When the Division rested in its last winter in Italy, a tremendous divisional tournament was held. To take up boxing in the New Zealand Army could be discouraging, for there were so many champions and near-champions. One Kiwi, with a pretty good record back home, gave up boxing in Army tournaments for what seemed to his friends to be adequate reason. In every tournament he entered he found himself drawn in the first round with one of the members of the Leckie family.

In theory all a soldier carried was what he needed to be self-contained, and for the infantry that was little enough. But there were many men who carried crib-boards with them from the Sangro up to Trieste, plus packs of cards and other comforts which they regarded as necessities. Some even carried guitars or liberated accordions.

No one in a forward area was supposed to keep a diary—for fear that if he were captured the enemy might secure vital information. But scores did keep them and many of them have since been of the greatest value in compiling unit histories.

Officers apparently carried much more. The word 'apparently' is used, because the claims which an officer could make—another rank could not—for the replacement of personal gear lost in action were, all in all, a remarkable feature of Army life, and a few of them represented the sort of exercise in ingenuity which a commercial traveller can now profitably indulge in on an expenses sheet.

Gambling within units was not very heavy, but in base camps and leave camps and on troopships it was sometimes very heavy indeed. In the sand dunes near Taranto, when one big group was waiting to catch a ship home, the two-up school seemed to go on for ever. Crown and anchor had lost its savour for most men by the end of the war, it being one of the generally accepted facts of Army life that—unless his client started off with a huge pooled bank roll—the operator was sure to win.

One pair of infantrymen played crib from the desert days till it was time to go home, when one owed the other £113 9s 7d. They both agreed to scrub payment, but until the final game they had kept accounts as carefully as a Queen Street lawyer.

Cheating was rare, but there was one well authenticated case. A group of soldiers in a base camp played poker every night for months. One player consistently won. He was regularly raking in several pounds a week, and others in the school became suspicious.

They played in a tent. Light came from a kerosene lamp in the centre. The outer rays of the lamp penetrated about as far as the players' faces and no more. A close watch was kept and the suspect was finally caught. He was consistently keeping six cards in his hands. He would discard one, buy two, and in the semi-darkness he was getting away with it. After his exposure he left the unit under a cloud, out of it for good, to be followed for the rest of his Army career by the nickname 'Six-Card George'—except that it wasn't George. The losers never received a refund, but some of them seemed to think they had got satisfaction.

CHAPTER 12

THE TOURISTS

In these postwar days of prosperity and ease of travel, many young New Zealanders of both sexes make a practice of seeing the world on a working holiday—or at least seeing as much of England and the Continent as they can manage. It can be doubted, however, if many of them will do as much touring as their fathers did in Italy with the 2nd N.Z.E.F.

Some of it was quite official. To fill in time while waiting for ships which could bring men home at the end of hostilities (and especially after Japan slipped out of the war), the Army ran a series of highly popular, well organised and altogether successful leave trips to England. All manner and means of transport were used and many hundreds of New Zealanders whose private resources would never have let them make the trip had several weeks in Britain.

It was a brilliant and a generous move on the part of the Army, and it was not abused. It also was a good opportunity for the Army to show, now that peace had returned, just how it could organise things when it wanted to—which, in effect, was showing how much the 2nd N.Z.E.F. had learnt in experience and the management of men in six years of war.

Across Italy and even in France transit camps were set up for men on this 'English leave' arrangement—one well known camp having a huge sign outside (often photographed) which described it by the unofficial name of 'Barbara's Borstal'. 'Barbara' was, of course, the name of a very distinguished lady indeed, and the name was officially frowned on, but it may have been a commentary on the peculiar unity of the New Zealand Army in the closing stages of life overseas that the name should have been used at all, let alone so universally.

The Air Forces—both the Royal Air Force and the United States Air Force—were equally good at helping the tourist, but taking advantage of their unscheduled services was a chancy business, since, while it was easy enough to wangle a trip perhaps thousands of miles away, it was sometimes next to impossible to get a lift in a plane coming back. One New Zealander got a wholly unauthorised trip to New York from Foggia in Italy, enjoyed himself, was lucky enough to get a trip back—and found out when he returned that few would believe he had ever been to the United States, and the few who did believe him hardly thought it worth mentioning.

One soldier, now a respected company manager in Christchurch, through a simple miscalculation in his plans for a world tour, did a hard twenty-eight days in gaol.

He had been in the infantry but after a wound had been seconded to some sort of a job at the hospital at Caserta behind Cassino. An Air Force crew offered him a trip home to England, a three-day stay there, and a trip back. He managed to wangle a leave pass for a trip to Bari, all perfectly legal, and took off for England. He was duly and safely landed at an Air Force station, smuggled past the guard and was soon in London. But he was picked up by military police within thirty minutes. Why?

When he left Italy it was turning into spring, and he had switched into summer uniform. It was technically spring in Britain, too, but in fact it was as cold and wet as midwinter. A Kiwi in summer uniform and without even a greatcoat stood out in shivering London like a sore thumb. What was more, he complained, even the Army gaol was cold. He refused to say how he had come across, and although the Air Force was suspected, none of the people who had given him the lift over were caught.

His only complaint was that he had had too little time in London. Half an hour there, nearly shivering to death, was scarcely worth twenty-eight days. His colleagues always maintained he got the twenty-eight days for his foolishness in wearing the wrong clothes, not for being in another country.

Americans, whose attitude to transport and Army property as a whole was unorthodox by British, or even New Zealand, Army standards, were often a big help to the Kiwi tourist—quite apart from giving lifts in trucks. Two New Zealand subalterns, in Naples

at the end of the war and regretfully about to return to their unit, which didn't really need them, had a few drinks at the Officers' Club with two United States infantry officers, about to catch their ship home. The New Zealanders at this stage had weeks at best, and probably months to wait. They accepted an invitation to go down and see the ship off. They all drove down by jeep as near as they could to the wharves. Then as the officers prepared to embark for the States one of the Americans casually said: 'You can take that jeep if it's any good to you.'

Privately the New Zealanders had been wondering what the score was about the jeep, which would have to be driverless after the Americans left it.

'Do you mean we can borrow it and then take it back to the unit?' one of them asked.

'Hell, no, just take it and do what you like with it. There isn't any unit to take it back to. We were the rear party and we weren't going to hitch-hike to Naples, so we kept this for ourselves.'

The Americans wanted no money. If they had not met the New Zealanders they would simply have left the jeep on the wharf. By their account, it was written off anyway; no one would want it.

The two New Zealanders used it for a trip to Rome, for a later trip to France (after carefully painting a New Zealand number on it) and finally won some popularity when, just before they went home, they handed it in to the transport officer, who had reckoned that he was short of a jeep on the establishment anyway.

As well as the official trips sponsored by the Army there were as many more unofficial ones—at which the Army blinked. Men would apply for a fortnight's leave from their unit, get a leave pass —and then take off for wherever they felt like, and usually get there.

New Zealanders tried to break the bank at Monte Carlo. New Zealanders went to the Folies Bergère in Paris; New Zealanders cruised through Germany. It was all known as 'swanning'. Hitch-hiking was easy. Transport at the end of the war was going and coming in all directions. Soldiers of any Allied country would pick up other Allied soldiers, take them a few hundred kilometres and drop them—and there would always be a few other trucks coming along. Military police had enough on their plate without interfering too much with Kiwis who were keeping out of trouble, and seemed well able to look after themselves.

No one will ever know just all the places New Zealanders got to. Commanding officers of nearly every unit in Italy could tell stories of fabulous trips through Europe made by both officers and men. The New Zealanders had learnt to make the best of loopholes in the Army system of orderly traffic, and could usually manage to get wherever they fancied.

The luckier ones, of course, were those who had transport. Nor were these all officers, and their drivers. Many n.c.o.'s and many ordinary privates did not find it hard to borrow trucks or jeeps. Petrol was the problem, but if you knew how to handle the complicated system of 'running instructions', the signed form which entitled a man to draw petrol from petrol points—which were everywhere—it could be overcome almost anywhere with some ingenuity. And even when 'running instructions' obviously were out of order it was a hard-hearted man who turned a couple of deserving New Zealanders away without petrol, especially after having heard a carefully prepared story (which after all just might have been true) of how they managed to be on the Riviera when their Army orders and leave passes said they should have been in Naples.

New Zealanders got everywhere—or nearly everywhere. They went everywhere in Italy, into remote little villages no one had ever heard of, into areas the war had passed by, where scarcely a soldier had ever been seen. They had been doing this even before the war ended, whenever they could wangle leave, and probably there is not one village in all Italy today which does not remember at least one New Zealand visit. Some visited gaols, just for the fun of it, a schoolteacher made an exhaustive examination of schools everywhere, and men interested in music and singing hung round the stage doors of Italian vaudeville theatres.

With or without benefit of guidebook, they explored Rome, Venice, Florence, Milan—and even the millionaire hide-outs around Lake Como where the common soldiery was not supposed to go, and where there had existed throughout the war a colony of wealthy internationalists who in spite of petrol rationing, German occupation and all the rest of the so-called hardships had managed to live in comfort, and in some cases absolute luxury, in villas of a grandeur that the average New Zealander would never even dream about.

They made a specialty of visiting and spending as much time as they could (especially in the North) in cities which were out of bounds and off-limits to all Allied soldiers—not to protect the morality of the soldiery but because they were cities which had an excellent partisan record against the German Army and which did not wish to experience the inflationary and unsettling effects of hundreds of soldiers on leave.

Out-of-bounds signs anywhere—except in some of the barbed-wire areas in some cities, which were eyesores anyway and as unattractive as the worst slums anywhere—attracted New Zealanders, and in Italy very few were ever charged with ignoring them. A restaurant with an out-of-bounds sign was a sure attraction. The cooking was usually good, and the meals cheaper.

Included in the tourist section among the Kiwis ought to be the private who officially never got there. He went to Egypt with the 10th Reinforcements, almost all of whom went to Italy very shortly thereafter. But he did not really give the Army a chance. He had done fairly well on the voyage over with crown and anchor. And he was a very self-reliant man. The ship landed at Port Tewfik, the reinforcements were loaded into trucks and driven into Cairo, thence out to Mena camp, near the Pyramids, where they were to stay until they were assigned to regular units.

But as the truck rolled through, in a mercifully cool midsummer evening in the suburbs of Cairo, he slipped off the back of the truck—a deserter on his first day in Egypt. He could not speak a word of Arabic but apparently he had a touching faith in the ability of money to speak all languages. He was picked up months afterwards looking up at the totalisator on a New Zealand racecourse. How he had done it was his own business, but, quite independent of the Army and despite wartime travel restrictions, he had made his own way all the way home to New Zealand.

'We thought that bloke would go far—and so he did,' was the comment of most of his shipmates who knew him.

Another New Zealander apparently had a private ambition and carried it out, too. He was believed by the Army to have joined a Greek Orthodox monastery, and he may still be there.

Others on temporary absences from the Army made highly unofficial trips—there and back, both times by courtesy of the United States Air Force—to New York, saw the sights and came

home to talk about it. A Maori with twenty lire in his pocket went on leave from Florence and had a very fine holiday (of which his superiors knew nothing) in Tel Aviv, Palestine. If you were game to take a risk, the Army could be a magic carpet. You might find yourself spending a leave in luxury, and if things went wrong you might come to a detention centre.

Much of the resentment felt within units at soldiers who went absent without leave, or even deserted, was not on moral but on personal grounds. A unit might be in a rest area, with everyone swanning round the countryside. A good time was had by all, except the unfortunate privates who would be assigned to take a truck and make an official trip to some part of Italy hundreds of miles back which they had no desire to visit again, simply to take over from the provosts some absent member who had been picked up and arrested.

He had to be picked up and closely guarded all the way back to his unit to stand trial, and that was the annoying part of the recovery operation. How many valuable leave-hours that might have been spent in much more enjoyable pursuits were devoted to picking up unit members has probably never been estimated—but it must have been far too many.

On one famous occasion, two members of an infantry battalion went off to pick up an A.W.O.L. friend. They had a truck and a movement order. They picked him up. They detoured home—prisoner and all, by way of Rome and Florence—arriving back nearly two weeks later after a magnificent holiday in which the 'prisoner' had shared equally with the escort. There were grumbles from on high in the battalion. The unit was, it was said, preparing to class the escort as A.W.O.L., too, but the escorts were well known and well liked, and, by that sixth sense which a soldier develops in time, they had managed to arrive back just a few hours before the unit was to move back into the line—when their absence would have been really serious. Nothing was done about the unofficial holiday for the escorts, and even the prisoner got off pretty lightly.

A sharp distinction was made, of course, between desertion, especially when action was in the offing, and merely going absent without leave. It is a safe bet that the Army never really knew the extent, especially when the war was over, of the travels of some of its men, probably the same men who grumble now when the children suggest a six-hundred-mile motoring holiday.

Technically there should have been no New Zealanders in Paris. A surprisingly big number did get there. Many New Zealanders tried to break the bank at casinos along the Riviera, others went through Austria. To get to Switzerland was an achievement, not because of any travel difficulties—there it was not far from Lake Como—but because the frontier guards were really strict.

But some New Zealanders, keen on climbing, got to Switzerland, climbed some high peaks, and did a fair share of mountaineering, too, from the French side of the Alps.

One quality which did help the New Zealand soldier on his travels—with or without the blessing of the Army—was the ability of the average Kiwi driver to find his way to where he wanted to go without getting lost. They had had a fair amount of training in the war. Once you are off the main routes, Italian roads take some working out from village to village, but many developed an instinct which took them without delay just where they wanted to go. The other essential was the ability to keep a vehicle running without breakdown, and the careful maintenance which had been so conspicuous during the war itself was a big factor after it was over in the capacity of trucks to make such long journeys. And even if things did go wrong with a truck, most Kiwi drivers seemed to have the ability to charm spare parts out of American or British ordnance outfits.

Even in their tours New Zealanders tried to preserve their identity. If possible, they travelled only with other New Zealanders. Some British troops thought it was a sign of a New Zealand inferiority complex that they managed wherever they could to remain New Zealanders, but the Kiwis themselves did not see it that way —and they were probably right. Still it was a little hard, perhaps, to explain the motives of a party which included New Zealand nurses who took the primus stove with them and made a brew of tea on the steps of St Peter's. The Italians took no notice at all, but an English officer who saw it commented: 'They're just doing that so they can write home about it and send a photograph.'

The key to this wish of New Zealanders to preserve their identity in all circumstances might have been, as some psychologists think, an inferiority complex bred of coming from such an isolated country; but most New Zealanders themselves, including this one, would prefer to believe that the reason is that they thought a New Zealand

identity, from what they saw of other people, was well worth preserving. And from all this arose a set of characteristics which pretty well made a New Zealander stand out anywhere, whether he was wearing shoulder titles or not.

The envious British used to say they could tell the New Zealander by his false teeth, which is an argument most Kiwis preferred not to enter; but there was indeed a distinctive bearing. Kiwis passing each other in the street developed a mannerism of a grave nod. Their slang was their own. Their air of independence, of minding their own business was their own, and so was their complete indifference to officers from other Commonwealth and American armies.

New Zealanders on leave often made full use of their time to see some of the world's gems of architecture. In Rome they had a Roman holiday, taking in as many sights, most of them, as could be managed in the time. Tours by day, entertainment by night, was the routine and the New Zealand Club arranged some splendid tours, greatly assisted some of the time by New Zealand students and priests who had been in the neutrality of the Vatican during German occupation of Rome—and some of whom had rendered signal aid to British prisoners and others. Tons of printed souvenirs of Rome, the Vatican City, of the Doge's Palace and St Mark's in Venice, and of Florence, were shipped home to New Zealand and must serve as reminders to very many men of the trips they managed on leave.

Among some New Zealanders, from a country with a new tradition, there was occasional criticism that the Italians, with so much poverty evident, had spent so much money on their churches—even in the smallest villages. But many knew, too, that the parish priests lived in extreme poverty, and that the churches represented the savings and accumulation of centuries, which was sometimes a little hard for people from a country with history bridging scarcely a century to understand.

An officer, at the end of the war, who ventured to raise this criticism at a mixed gathering was heavily rebuked by an Italian partisan officer—a lad who had been educated at a public school in England and who in his day had visited New Zealand. In his curiously precise English the Italian said: 'I am not sure, but I am almost willing to bet that per head of population you have

spent more on racecourses in New Zealand in the last hundred years than we have spent on new churches.'

The bet was not accepted.

One high-ranking British officer, of aristocratic lineage, was frankly appalled when he heard New Zealanders had taken over the Hotel Daniele.

'Not the ordinary troops,' he said, aghast. 'Why, man, that's where I spent my honeymoon.'

It was a fact, and every man in the Division knew it, that club accommodation and facilities for the New Zealanders were superior to most officer accommodation in the British Army. The only exception—and there was probably a sound reason for it—was that base camps, especially the one near Bari, transit camps and convalescent depots seemed almost to have been designed for the maximum of discomfort and inconvenience. The generally accepted theory was that this was to make men anxious to get to a regular unit.

The smaller the unit, as a rule, the better the accommodation it managed to secure for itself, usually under the occupation rule which enabled the Allied forces to commandeer such property as they needed for their purposes. One small outfit in Rome, in the fashionable Corso Trieste, had the whole top floor of a luxurious block of flats. When important visitors came, they used to close off half the building so that authority would not know just how luxurious a spot they had chosen for themselves. It was the sort of flat a man on ten thousand pounds a year might choose to live in—and the sort of flat, too, which aroused a great deal of grumbling from men in forward units about the way some people managed to make themselves comfortable.

A favourite joke among New Zealanders was to meet in the luxurious bar, or lounge, or dining room of one of the better clubs, such as the one in Venice, and say, with real feeling: 'Isn't war hell?' It was hell, of course, for the many who were only in such luxury for the odd few days' leave, and then had to go back to their front-line units.

The same spirit was behind the famous cartoon in the *N.Z.E.F. Times* which showed a New Zealand soldier writing home in magnificent surroundings of a baronial castle, in every conceivable luxury.

'I am writing this by the light of a flickering candle, in a dirty slit trench,' his letter read.

However, in spite of all the luxury, not many New Zealanders would have been prepared to trade a six-roomed New Zealand bungalow for most of the castles and hotels. For one thing the plumbing in New Zealand usually works. The bathrooms might be short of some of the Italian luxuries, such as bidets, hip-baths and the like, but the right water came out of the right taps, and you did not get a shock every time you touched an electric light fixture. Nor did they like the contrasts. It was not much fun to eat a meal in some luxurious leave outfit—and see just outside the window a group of ill-clad children, who might have been starving or might have been professional beggars. But many a good meal was ruined that way on leave.

It was also remarkable to see the way Kiwis 'camped' in apparently luxurious buildings, from which the fleeing Italians had removed the furniture. Bed rolls on the floor, a field kitchen in one room, the R.A.P. out the back. In winter Italian casas had a roof on them, but that was about all that could be said for them—in a remarkably cold climate. They were hard to warm (the best way was, if possible, to get warm internally), they were draughty and, no matter how picturesque they looked, farmhouses were always dirty and frequently lousy as well. What was more, a lot of those which had been deserted for some time had bats in them—and bats take a lot of getting used to.

The fact of the matter was that all Italian house architecture looks better in photographs than it does on the spot. There were far more slums, of indescribable shabbiness and poverty, than there were middle-class or upper-class places of some comfort; and what looked comfortable frequently wasn't.

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