



■ If they did nothing else, Johnny and the bloke perpetuated in the New Zealand soldier's vocabulary the Arabic word "Aiwa" (meaning "Yes"). This was the bloke's invariable affirmative, and "Aiwa," said the bloke, became an affirmative phrase in general use. Throughout the scores of scattered units comprising Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force "Yes" was never used where the Arabic "Aiwa" was understood; and "Aiwa" was seldom used without the addition of "said the bloke."

Johnny and the bloke reviewed a great variety of subjects as time went on. The Q.M. store, flies, bed bugs, the money-borrowing habit, debits in pay-books (invariably quoted, according to Army form, as the "AB64"), furlough drafts, sergeants, Arabic, base camp institutions, Egyptian customs, war developments, Italian habits, Army discipline and routine, New Zealand news, the pronouncements of politicians. All were discussed by Johnny Enzed and the bloke when such subjects were topical.

It is difficult to quote extracts from the column with any great degree of justice. It may be said, however, that the conversations of Johnny Enzed and his provocative partner were on the whole representative of average discussions in tents, slit trenches, and rubbled casas. If they were not fully representative it was only because average language and, more particularly, satire were both of necessity tempered for publication in the official journal. Thus, in part, the two discuss the General Election of 1943:—

"Well, there's Peter Fraser and Bob Semple and Walter Nash and Sid Holland," I said.

"Alright! Alright!" said the bloke. "Skip it. What are the party planks in this election?"

"I don't know," I said, "except that they all love returned soldiers."

"ALL returned soldiers?" said the bloke.

"Aiwa," I said.

"They haven't returned yet," said the bloke.

"In the sweet by-and-by they may," I said.

"But will they still love them then?" said the bloke.

Across the Mediterranean

Towards the end of 1943 characteristics of Egypt, campaigning in the desert, leave in Palestine, Syria, or Alexandria, with its attendant adventures, sidelights on the Division's advance through Tunisia, &c., gave way to as great a field for customary complaints in the shape of Italian mud, mud, mud and rain. To sand-dried soldiers meeting the beginning of Italy's winter and the first of the heavy rains was too much of a contrast.

The bloke almost altered his standard affirmative ("Si—I mean, aiwa," said the bloke) and gradually the whole influence of the change in scene was marked by the use of more and yet more Italian words and phrases, generally used ungrammatically as only an impatient soldier-linguist will use them, until the dialogue at times assumed the character of a difference of opinion at an Esperanto Convention. It remained intelligible to soldiers who themselves were finding