

A man in pursuit of a vision

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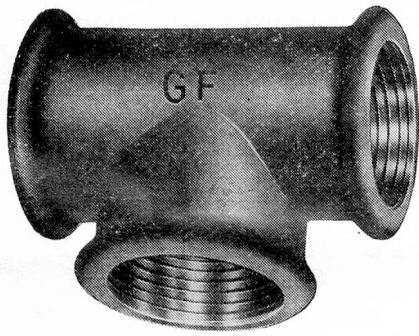
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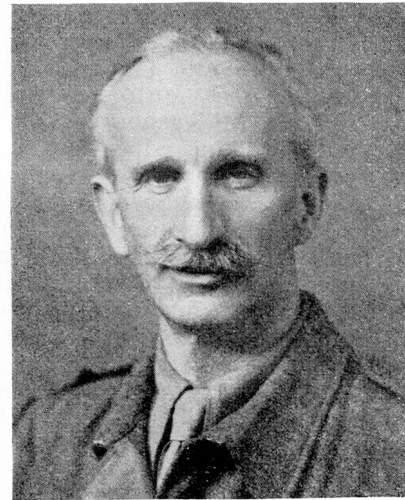
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A MAN IN PURSUIT OF A VISION

By BERNARD INGHAM



PROFESSOR JEAN P. INEBNIT

(The following article is reproduced from a March issue of the "Yorkshire Post" with due acknowledgment).

Five years ago, when Mr. Jean P. Inebnit retired as senior lecturer in the Department of French at the University of Leeds, he told a University gathering that his retirement was "not an end but a beginning". He also said he would have one foot in Leeds, one foot in his native Switzerland and "many feet somewhere else".

Mr. Inebnit has been a man of his word. His permanent home is at Adel, on the outskirts of Leeds. His second home is near Lausanne from which he came to Leeds nearly 40 years ago. He also has many feet elsewhere for his retirement was, indeed, a beginning and not an end.

The first five years have been spent in the free-lance service of refugees in Europe. The £500 which was subscribed to "The Inebnit Testimonial Fund" in appreciation of his 34 years' work at the University has gone on the planning and carrying out of refugee projects in Austria and Central France.

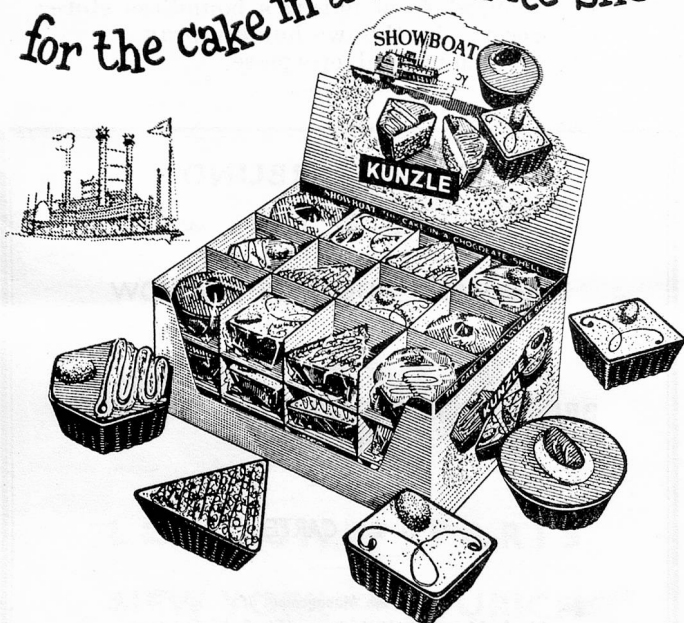
Now World Refugee Year and the 40th anniversary of International Voluntary Service, an organisation he pioneered in this country, appropriately enough find Mr. Inebnit at an important point in the pursuit of a vision.

This lean, grey-haired man, who is a very lively 69, left in March for France and Switzerland for meetings with the United Nations Associations of each country.

Already he has had the co-operation of these Associations in building a village on a hillside near Lyons, France, for 82 refugee children and their families who were living in shacks. Now he intends to plan, in conjunction with the Associations and the British UNA whose support he again has, further housing projects for refugees in Europe.

Why has Mr. Inebnit chosen UNA as his working partners when he might equally have put his plans into operation through International Voluntary Service, the World Council of Churches or the Society of Friends?

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The answer is to be found in a visit he made last autumn to the United States with his daughter, Dr. Colette Inebnit, who has forsaken medical practice to help her father in his mission of goodwill.

The trip was made possible by a group of international jurists and the Society of Friends, who each subscribed towards air fares and living costs for the 9½-week visit, which included a lecture tour through 15 States.

Mr. Inebnit explained: "Throughout the world there are now 163 organisations engaged on international voluntary service, tackling about 2,000 projects with a host of 300,000 volunteers. Yet none of the work has the assistance of one organisation responsible for providing them with equipment and other facilities.

"For example, when an army is ordered to move across a country it is provided with transport and equipment by its Government. It is not expected to hitch-hike from one point to another, but that is what we have to tell our volunteers to do because we have no money for fares.

"I had hoped that UNESCO would act as this specialised agency, but this has not materialised, for it is already operating over a wide field on a limited budget. But I am convinced that the agency must be under the aegis of the United Nations Organisation simply because the UN is not suspected of political bias as are national Governments.

"In our experience three things are required urgently of the UN — trade training centres for volunteers; existing specialised agencies to select projects within the powers of serious voluntary service organisations, and experts in various trades and industries, accompanied by small, carefully selected teams of volunteers.

"We put these points to members of the UN Secretariat and were told that as the UN is at present constituted our ideas could be implemented only on a small scale. Our reply was: 'Institutions are not the masters of men'."

Mr. Inebnit believes his prospecting made a lasting impression on officials of several permanent missions to the UN and he feels that by working successfully with the UNA, the Assembly will eventually be moved to action.

Getting him to talk about what he has already achieved is much more difficult than getting him to speak of his vision of a world agency for co-ordinating and assisting voluntary service. He tends to brush his part aside with remarks like: "It is quite wrong to say I built a village; I merely worked with several hundred volunteers and the refugees."

The fact remains that he was responsible for building homes in Linz, Austria, in 1956, for 74 refugee families, as well as the village among the apricot trees near Lyons, completed last summer.

His work for those stricken by disaster and tragedy goes back to 1924. In 1944-1945 he secured a year's leave from Leeds University to help in relief work in liberated France.

Now, as he looks to the future with hope that one day his vision will become a reality, Mr. Inebnit also looks back to 1944. That year a Cleckheaton girl's

suggestion started an organisation responsible for sending more than 120,000 gift parcels from the children of Britain to the children of France.

The first three parcels gave Mr. Inebnit an introduction to several ministries in the post-war French Government. Others resulted in a touching message to King George VI from a French schoolgirl which Mr. Inebnit passed on and to which he received a reply.

If a schoolgirl's suggestion can move Buckingham Palace might not a retired university lecturer move the UN? That is Mr. Inebnit's faith.

He is also a realist. While he considers it only humane to help today's refugees, he feels it is equally important to prevent the creation of more of them tomorrow. He says that after Hungary he felt like a man who is baling out a flooded bathroom with the tap still full on. He sees the UN as the only arm capable of reaching the tap.


PERSONAL.

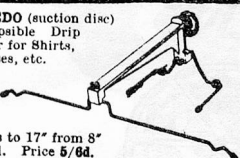
We deeply regret to announce the passing away on the 27th of April, at the Queen Victoria Cottage Hospital, of Mrs. Ruth Sommer, of Old Farm, Westwood, Weald, near Sevenoaks, widow of Ernest Frederick Sommer, and dearly loved mother of Peggy and John.

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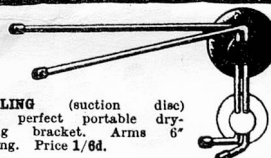
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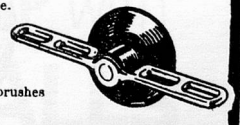
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