

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1970)
Heft: 1596

Artikel: Professor Jean Philippe Inebnit -80
Autor: P.M.B.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689278>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 03.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

ments of the children of Hebden Bridge we took our seats at the ready-laid tables and Prof. Inebnit, President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club, stood up to open this 22nd Landsgemeinde, welcoming us and thanking the people of Hebden Bridge for their hospitality. The Chairman of the Urban Council, Mr. Fred Barker, welcomed us all cheerily with northern accent and invited us all to a good time. Mr. Inebnit then recalled how Switzerland was founded, and the Pact on the Grütli concluded, "in the name of God". This brought Pastor Nicod, who conducted a short service, to centre his message on the presence of God at the foundation of the motherland. His presence, if only it were received, was there to continue to guide her destiny.

We next set out in our cars for the short journey to the parking place some two miles out of town at the start of the walk to Castle Craggs. Castle Craggs is a delightful and lush valley which has made the headlines at the end of last year when the people of the region and their MP, Douglas Houghton (also president of the Parliamentary Labour Party) fought a stiff battle to prevent a reservoir from being sited there as had been planned.

Half an hour of leisurely walk brought us to Hebden Hay, a green glade on which we were to spend the best part of the afternoon together. Every family settled down for the picnic, some retired into the shade of the woods, some preferred to roast in the sun.

There had been ample time for everybody to talk to every friend present, to digest and to have a siesta by the time Prof. Inebnit asked us to gather nearer to the lawn so that we could all take part in the symbolic and traditional rebuilding of Switzerland that he was now to conduct.

He embarked upon the 679 years of glorious history which separate us from the Federal Pact of 1291. It was a long yarn, but Professor Inebnit, standing under the blazing sun and speaking loudly for all to hear, spun it in its whole length, for all his 80 years of age. As he ticked off each canton in their order of entry into the Confederation, the representatives among us from each of these cantons gathered on the lawn until a fair-sized crowd had gathered around Prof. Inebnit. I believe that every canton had a deputy on Hebden Way except Fribourg, but I may have been inattentive!

When this traditional presentation was over, the time had come for us to return to Hebden Bridge for tea. A relaxed walk down valley and we were all at the car park and minutes away from a copious tea in which the Civic Trust youth and the dignitaries of the Calder Valley were to honour us with their presence.

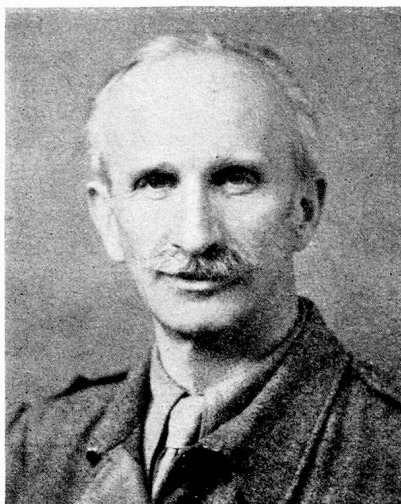
There were just one or two cakes left on the trays when Prof. Inebnit rose to communicate the regrets of those who had not been able to join us

at this 22nd Landsgemeinde. The Embassy in London, Mr. Otto Hartmann from Edinburgh, Dr. Bolliger and Mr. E. Berner, the last two on holidays with their families, counted among the most noticed absentees.

Prof. Inebnit made no mention of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad but when he later returned to his home in Leeds, he found a telegram waiting for him from Mr. Toni Rihs, head of the Youth Department at the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, in which he expressed his regrets at not being able to attend the Landsgemeinde. (Professor Inebnit has asked me to acknowledge this telegram in the present report). Then Mr. B. Simon, President of the Manchester Swiss Club, who had managed to join us for tea, thanked the organisers of the Landsgemeinde and the Swiss Week for all they had done, and thanked the Chairmen of the Hebden Bridge Rural and Urban Councils and their ladies, the other members of these Councils, the presidents, chairmen or commissioners from the Rotary Club of Hebden Bridge, the Ladies Circle, the Round Table, the Inner

Wheel, the Halifax District Scout Council and the Business and Professional Calder Valley Club for their presence. This array not only showed courteous intention of honouring us Swiss, but also proved that the Calder Valley Community is well organised. Mr. Waring, speaking on behalf of the Halifax District Scout Council, expressed his satisfaction at our regular use of Hebden Hay, which is a Scout property and looked forward to seeing us again. Then Mr. David Fletcher said a few words on the history of the Hebden Bridge Swiss Society and its aims. His was the last address. Mr. B. Simon reminded us that the traditional Landsgemeinde of the Swiss of the North would again be taking place next year again on the third Sunday of the month of June. He closed the meeting officially. The handshaking and the adieux lasted out a long time after the gathering had been ended. The meeting slowly disbanded and the Landsleute said au revoir to Hebden Bridge until the Summer of another year.

(PMB)



PROFESSOR JEAN PHILIPPE INEBNIT—80

We have the greatest pleasure in congratulating Professor Inebnit for his 80th birthday, which fell on July 5th. We can also say that this celebration came on a fitting date, since it dovetailed nicely with the Yorkshire Landsgemeinde. It is then most convenient to talk about the man, having just reported on the day which he contributed so much to make a success.

I met Prof. Inebnit for the first time on that same week-end. He had made the very kind suggestion of boarding my train at Leeds and making the journey to Bradford with me so as to exchange ideas and get to know each

other. The many social activities of the morrow, he feared, would not give us a chance to do that.

So it happened that in the course of our conversation on the train to Bradford and in the buffet at Bradford station, we talked of world affairs and I got to learn more in detail of Prof. Inebnit's ideas on the destiny of our country and world peace, ideas which he had often expressed in Swiss gatherings in Great Britain and for which his reputation had reached down to the London Colony a long time ago.

Prof. Inebnit, the only Swiss resident with such an academic title, is a pacifist and renowned as such among Swiss Circles. He may indeed have been the first Swiss officer ever to have been thrown in jail as a conscientious objector! It was some time after having served this term of imprisonment that he left for Leeds, where he became a professor of French History, and where he has lived for 50 years.

The "pacifist" label naturally requires some further qualification. Prof. Inebnit is basically opposed to the concept of wars as *necessary* and *accepted* means of settling differences between nations, even though they are usually adopted as a last resort. Nations will continue to be torn by wars as long as this irresponsible and complacent tolerance is adopted by the powerful of the world. As wars are still accepted as a "normal" (one could almost say "legal" possibility) every country finds it equally "normal" to spend vast sums of sterile money in creating instruments of destruction and in squandering billions of man-hours by making their national servicemen practice for a war which, if it came, would destroy the

countries involved anyway. By upkeeping armies those countries are keeping alive the idea that wars are actually possible in our thermonuclear age and by the same token they are making them possible. The first step towards destroying war is then to destroy the armies which make it a possibility, or, as a first and more practical transformation, to convert them from instruments of destruction into positive tools of construction. An army represents a tremendous potential of energy — an energy which can work both ways. If only the efforts expended in a single battle were diverted towards a constructive purpose! Armies could therefore be used for the improvement of the human condition, and this at a diminutive cost compared to actual defence budgets. They could be pooled among nations and serve to help the poorer parts of the world in a far more efficient way than national efforts like the "Peace Corps" ever could. But this scheme would have to rely on World Authority. Prof. Inebnit is a strong supporter of the United Nations. He is naturally aware of the shortcomings of this organisation but says that they are not a sufficient reason for letting the UN fall into disrepute. It is all we have and the best chance left to mankind. Prof. Inebnit supports Swiss Neutrality as a peace-fostering principle, but, I believe, is opposed to her present stand versus the U.N. But quite apart Switzerland's place in the concert of nations, there is something she can do right away to back the World Organisation and enhance its effectiveness, and that is to create a "Voluntary Constructive Service", a new Force in the Swiss Army in which Swiss servicemen could serve unarmed as an alternative to the customary recruit schools and repetition courses of our militia system. This Force "should be offered by Switzerland to the United Nations and its specified agencies, as our contribution to the strengthening of the world institution which must solve world problems by World Law and mutual agreement" (the words are Professor Inebnit's) Without denying in so many words the necessity of a Swiss National Service, Prof. Inebnit strongly believes that a neutral country like Switzerland cannot possibly rely on her military defences, however well prepared they may be, against a powerful aggressor. The only lasting guarantee for her safety will reside in a "World Law applied by a World Authority". Only such an authority, backed by a World Police Force, will be in a position to make war illegal. Prof. Inebnit likes to compare the world of today with the Switzerland before the Sonderbund War. In fact, Switzerland was larger then than the planet today since it took longer in those days to travel from Geneva to Berne than it does today to go from London to Sydney. What Switzerland managed in 1848 and confirmed in 1874, the world should now try to attempt to achieve. We are moving to-

wards a United World, a World Government and a World Law. All the auguries point to this. Therefore why not admit the evidence and be open to its accomplishment, rather than be curled up in a narrow nationalism and prepare for war, a thing which should be considered as belonging to the past for the simple sake of the planet's future?

These ideas may not appear new today, but Prof. Inebnit was thinking along those lines before the war already. The ideas may even have existed before his time. They were probably formulated for the first time when men began to reflect seriously on wars and nations. But originality is immaterial here because ideas of this nature cannot be compared to the solution of a problem or the spark which will lead to a new gadget. As ideas applied to the practical problems of putting an end to war, they are simple enough. But they are more than mere *ideas*, they are *ideals*, and the difference between ideas and ideals is that the latter are *lived* whereas the former never really mean more than an intellectual and uninvolved way of solving a problem. Ideals are a particular way of seeing things. In propagating his ideals, Prof. Inebnit's aim is to share his vision of the world and the way it should be governed with his audience. This new world must be organised in such a way that it will stop to be ravaged by futile and foolish wars. But partaking in a vision of the world necessarily goes with a *way of being* and a stand which rejects nationalism as an end and the egoism which is the germ of war. Peace cannot rest on ideas, it will rest on the *ideals* of men who have understood that war has got to stop. These ideals will be put into practice the day when our leaders will accept to drop the barriers of national egoism. Prof. Inebnit therefore doesn't really teach political ideas: he "preaches" them. We can be sure that his involvement with the fate of the world and the future of peace is as sincere and alive as a religious faith.

The ideas for designing a lasting peace are easy enough to formulate. Their effectiveness will be assured when a fertile soil is found in the heart of a majority of men. But the only way in which this can be achieved is from above. Peace depends on the mighty of the world. They are where the ideals have got to reach out first, and as a result Prof. Inebnit has had contacts with an impressive array of statesmen. He knows Max Petitpierre very well and through him has come to have relations with Mr. Spuehler, Mr. Gnaegi, and more recently with Mr. Pierre Graber, the new Head of the Political Department. In the course of the campaign of a life-time he has discussed with Maurice Schumann, Nehru, Mrs. Roosevelt, Lord Caradon, Denis Healey and many others. Sponsored by a wealthy Geneva family, he has made a two-month trip to the

United Nations in New York where he has attempted to put through recommendations for an addition to the U.N. Charter providing for a U.N. and multi-national "Peace Corps". He was also involved with the foundation of UNESCO and has many friends in Paris. Prof. Inebnit clearly realises that he can hardly have any influence by taking direct action from his retired position in Leeds, and that his easiest way and his surest platform lie with the men who are in a position to alter the course of history.

In 50 years of life in England one may be surprised that Prof. Inebnit has not applied for British nationality. If he had, he may well have, upon his own admission, entered into politics (Labour politics). The road was indeed wide open for him for such ventures before the war. But Prof. Inebnit intentionally remained Swiss, and not just out of patriotism, but also because it was the best way for him to embody his ideas. In remaining a citizen of a neutral country, in keeping out of political squabbles and staying free from interested alliances he could retain a position entitling him to proclaim his ideals. All told, Prof. Inebnit just wished to remain a citizen of the world before anything else however thrilled he may have been with British politics. He has never regretted having kept his Swiss nationality, even though this may have closed him a few doors. Remaining Swiss in a foreign land, he told me, has had a tonic influence throughout his life and encouraged him to action.

Even though it was primarily through men in positions of responsibility that Prof. Inebnit has attempted to get his ideas through, he has often pressed his ideas in the course of Swiss gatherings in the U.K. They have understandably not been accepted every time. But this does not mean that these ideas were not respected and admired. Our compatriots in this country may only have had other more immediate worries or perhaps refused to put in doubt the established order of things

SWISS SPECIALITIES

SAUSAGES
CHEESE
CHOCOLATES
HERO CONSERVES
BISCUITS
ROCO CONSERVES

go to

BARTHOLDI'S

4 Charlotte Street, London W1
Telephone: MUS (636) 3762/3

ALSO FIRST CLASS MEAT

at home. And Prof. Inebnit has never merely considered the Swiss Colony as a sounding board for his ideas! On the contrary, he is one of the most devoted contributors to the organised life of the Swiss of Yorkshire and nobody over there denies that without his tireless efforts, the Yorkshire Swiss Club and Swiss activities in the North would probably not survive for long. The furthering of the life of the Colony is indeed a major interest of his life of retirement.

In the course of our conversation, Prof. Inebnit said to me that life had a meaning only if there remained something of value to strive for. This became especially true in old age. Taking part in the fight of all men of good will in search of a better world by using the means afforded to him in the time and the place in which he was called to live, this is Prof. Inebnit's living embodiment of that confession. If only there were more men of Prof. Inebnit's calibre militating for the same cause and exercising their influence in the right places, then we could look forward to a cloudless future! We wish him many more long and fruitful years and remain with the certainty that his action has, and will help to build the foundations of a better world.

(PMB)

THE CITY SWISS CLUB SUMMER DINNER AND DANCE

Great Fosters, the vast Surrey manor in which the City Swiss Club holds its annual Summer Dance, would make an ideal setting for a romantic film—or even a horror film. But Frankenstein and the ghosts had been chased away by the oncoming members of the City Swiss Club on that Friday night. The evening air was tender, the light was mellow, and we enjoyed a prolonged gathering in the garden before dinner. These garden reunions are the traditional charm of the Summer Dinner and Dance.

We moved for dinner in the vast manorial hall in which we were to enjoy our evening. Massive cast iron chandeliers were looming from its ancient beams. The hundred or so guests glided to their tables, all set to enjoy a fairly unsophisticated menu, plenty of gay conversation and all the

other prandial pleasures. The prawns which we had to overcome as an entrée were huge and scaly. They required the patience and skill of everybody. The meal ended with a creamy, multi-layered gateau that left very few cavities inside.

The Summer Dinner is not followed by any speech. Neither are the guests interrupted by the mandatory toast to the Queen and "La Suisse" and, oh marvel, they may proceed with their obnoxious smoking habits without having to wait for permission! The tables are long and rectangular. This geometry and the absence of excess seats condemns each guest to remain at the table assigned to him or her. It is therefore harder to communicate with one's friends scattered across the ballroom and could be disastrous in the event where one had landed at a boring table!

The music was arch conservative. A bar pianist, who had been smacking his gorgeous chords during the meal, was assisted by three companions at dance-time. They played soft, rill music. No beat, no twang and no jumping. No exertion on the dance floor either, just intimate middle-age and middle-class prancing. Oh yes, there were two cha-cha-chas.

At one o'clock, the Dance was still going strong and plenty of laughter rising from the tables.

(PMB)

THE REVISION OF THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION DEBATED AT THE NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE

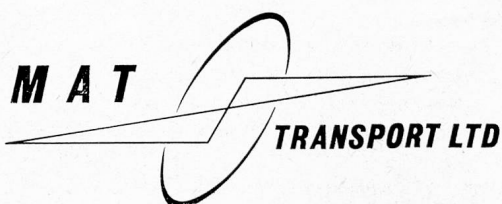
The last reunion of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique to take place before the summer holidays, originally scheduled for the 18th June but postponed for a week because of the elections, was devoted to the study of a questionnaire pertaining to the revision of the Constitution and specially drafted for us Swiss Abroad by the Secretariat that so devotedly looks after us in Berne. Mrs. Marianne Meier and Dr. Peter Hollenweger, from the Embassy, had painstakingly prepared the meeting but Dr. Hollenweger was unfortunately called on business to Berne at the last minute and it was for Mrs. Meier to handle the debate alone. She per-

formed this task remarkably well, introducing the subject by outlining the history of our Federal Constitution, the document on which rest the rules of our national life, and then moderating the discussion on each of the individual items raised in the questionnaire.

This Constitution, drafted in 1874 and constantly enlarged throughout the years, may eventually be totally revised. There have been a number of initiatives and efforts by various quarters (including the Nouvelle Société Helvétique) in the past, but they have been thwarted by a Swiss people and a Swiss parliament quite satisfied with the Constitution as it was. A national councillor and a councillor of state proposed together in 1965 to settle the matter by asking for the opinion of each individual canton, party and university. The Federal Council appointed a committee presided by Dr. F. T. Wahlen, former Federal Councillor, which drafted a questionnaire for the attention of the aforesaid cantons, parties and universities. The churches and economic groupements were eventually also asked to fill the questionnaire, although their positions were not to have any official value. For the Swiss Abroad, it was not possible to send the "Wahlen questionnaire" because it raised questions on which no one living outside Switzerland could be expected to have a definite opinion. The Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad therefore drafted a simplified questionnaire containing questions in which the 300,000 denizens of Fifth Switzerland could be concerned. This questionnaire was described in detail in these columns by MM in the last but one issue.

There is no escaping it, the "revision of the constitution" is an arid subject and rather academic too. In spite of this and the small attendance at the meeting (about 30 people turned up) we managed to have a prolonged and lively discussion on nearly all the points in the questionnaire. Each question had to be ticked by a "yes", "no" and "no opinion" answer and the meeting was useful to those who had patriotically decided to fill and send the questionnaire to Berne. It helped them not only to make up their minds, but gave them the opportunity to see the problems more in perspective by listening

M A T



"Arnold House", 36-41 Holywell Lane,
LONDON, E.C.2.

Tel. 01-247 6500

Telex. 28404/21453

PIONEERS of MODERN TRANSPORT

Specialists in **GROUPAGE** Services
to and from Switzerland and most
other Continental destinations.

Trainferry

TIR Trailers

I.S.O. containers

Lift-units, etc.

ALLIED HOUSES:

BASLE

MAT TRANSPORT A.G., Peter Merian Strasse 50
PHONE: 351800. TELEX BASLE 62216-MATTRANS

ZURICH

MAT TRANSPORT A.G., Sihlfeldstrasse 88, 8036 Zurich
PHONE: 258992/95 TELEX: ZURICH 52458-MATTRANS