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Darius Rochebin



Last summer, RTS's star journalist, Darius Rochebin announced that he was leaving Switzerland and heading for Paris. After 20 years presenting the "Téléjournal" news programme, Geneva's media darling was to enter the fierce world of French broadcasting. It was an occasion for everyone to express their appreciation for this elegant gent, able to fire out tough questions without provoking his interlocutor. How did he manage it? With a dose of the East: Darius' Iranian origins combine to create a smooth yet pugnacious character. The Swiss public mourned his transfer to France, however flattering it may have been for him. They accused RTS of failing to retain its best people, or worse, of having pushed their hero off the Swiss airwaves. But Rochebin himself explained that he did not leave under a cloud; quite the contrary.

The presenter is now working for the channel LCI. Every evening, from Monday to Thursday, he rolls out his sense of rhetoric, interviewing French politicians and stars. In the first episode of "20H de Darius Rochebin", the Genevese journalist asked the Minister of the Economy, Bruno Le Maire, if his astounding lack of charisma, as noted by former President Sarkozy, had changed at all. All without angering the minister. Quite an achievement. He also surprised Professor Didier Raoult, expert in infectious diseases, by asking him if he kept busts of himself in his garden. A guaranteed buzz! Off the air, Darius keeps going. He notably ruffled the feathers of French cinema icon Catherine Deneuve, accusing her of being completely disagreeable after an interview. A gift for social media. Now in Paris, Darius Rochebin poses any question he wants to VIPs, from his distant Swiss cultural roots, this politically moderate land that was unable to keep him.

STEPHANE HERZOG

From plane to train

Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) needs train drivers. The airline Swiss hasn't enough work for its pilots in the current climate and is ready to let staff go. SBB and Swiss are now evaluating whether airline pilots could also be employed as train drivers. Both professional associations (pilots and train drivers) are strongly in favour of the idea. (MUL)

Sanctions against Belarus

Switzerland has voiced its criticism of the repressive measures taken against the people in Belarus since President Alexander Lukashenko's dubious election victory. Switzerland has also increased the pressure on the Belarus government by approving sanctions, mainly in the form of financial and travel restrictions for former and current office holders. A number of Swiss companies operate in Belarus, such as train manufacturer Stadler Rail. (MUL)

Changes at SRF

Swiss Radio and Television (SRF) is under pressure to cut costs. It also wants to appeal more to the younger demographic. Hence the idea to shed jobs and increase the broadcaster's online presence. At the same time, a number of long-standing radio and television programmes are to be axed. The modernisation drive initiated by SRF boss Nathalie Wappler is proving controversial. By stepping up its online presence, the taxpayer-funded SRF wants to compete with private broadcasters. Politicians across the spectrum have reacted with dismay. (MUL)

Slight increase in pensions

Given that wages and prices are rising, pensioners are to receive a modest pension increase from 2021. The minimum pension will rise by 10 Swiss francs to 1,195 francs per month, the maximum pension by 20 francs to 2,390 francs per month. Supplementary benefits will also go up. The Federal Council approved these measures in October. The total annual cost of this increase is 441 million francs. (MUL)

Bombs under a farming village

Thousands of tonnes of munitions lie in an underground depot buried under rocks beneath the mountain village of Mitholz (canton of Berne). The army now want to clear the ageing ordnance, because they believe it poses a serious danger to the people living there. However, the complicated nature of the operation will turn Mitholz into a ghost town for an entire generation. A ten-year evacuation will be necessary. swissinfo has further information (in English): ogy.de/mitholz (MUL)