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AN official Swiss enquiry into an alleged nationwide advertising boycott of Switzerland's top-selling quality daily newspaper has ended with a 68-report – and an inconclusive verdict.

The controversy dates back to 1979 when, with few exceptions, the Swiss importers of major West German, British, American, Japanese, French and Italian cars cancelled advertising in the 250,000-circulation Tages-Anzeiger of Zurich.

Their move was in retaliation for the newspaper's alleged "uncompromising editorial discrimination against the motor car" and support for environmentalist groups.

The importers insisted that their move was a "non-concerted and spontaneous action." But press circles described the cancellation measure as an advertising boycott in violation of Switzerland's cartel law.

The advertising withdrawal – which some leading companies have since continued – has cost the newspaper monthly revenue losses of up to half a million Swiss francs (or about £130,000).

And a spokesman for the London-based International Press Institute said at the time that IPI records revealed no similar case of comparable magnitude in newspaper publishing history.

In its report the Swiss Cartel Commission – a branch of the economics ministry – said advertisers "should not misuse their power by severing commercial ties with a newspaper with the aim of influencing the editorial line."

However, it added, a company or group of companies could not be expected to continue advertising in a particular medium "if a threshold is crossed in the editorial position of a newspaper." But the commission refrained from examining whether the Tages-Anzeiger had crossed that threshold.

★ ★ ★

Charter violated

THE Swiss Broadcasting Corporation violated its charter twice



Switzerland's press, radio and television not only report the news – they sometimes make it as well. This round-up by Colin Farmer spotlights some of the recent happenings back home in which the media made their own headlines.

during last year's coverage of the Zurich youth riots, a Swiss government complaints commission has ruled.

The commission – which has been reviewing more than 150 radio and television programmes broadcast on the youth unrest by the monopoly SBC network – reported that two radio programmes did not comply with the corporation's obligation to inform the public fairly and objectively.

One of the offending broadcasts included comments by a local member of parliament critical of Zurich police.

★ ★ ★

Dearer newspapers

SWISS newspaper and magazine prices are likely to be increased soon by about 10 per cent, the country's publishers' association has announced.

Advertising rates are also expected to rise.

The increases are inevitable, say publishers, because of extraordinarily high newsprint prices, rising personnel costs, and the high level of interest rates.

★ ★ ★

Freedom demo

JOURNALISTS' and printing unions in Switzerland have staged a joint day of protest against increasing threats to press freedom in the country.

A peaceful demonstration was staged in Zurich, where 20,000 copies of a special "freedom newspaper" were distributed. An editorial in the newspaper claimed: "Here in Switzerland it is no longer possible for us to report the complete truth."

"Anything which fails to please the despots and dictators of the mass media and the powerful

Spotlight on sport

THE Swiss Broadcasting Corporation is launching international sales to the public of video-cassette recordings of major sporting events in Switzerland. And it is planned to extend the service in early 1982 to cover non-sporting Swiss news and current affairs.

SBC is currently producing a colour cassette every two weeks containing an up-to-date summary of selected national and international sporting highlights in Switzerland. Within Switzerland the cassettes are already available from specialist dealers.

The experimental new service will enable Swiss companies, clubs and communities abroad and other interested sectors to keep informed of developments of the Swiss sporting scene.

More than 350,000 Swiss citizens live outside their own country – including some 17,000 in Britain and Ireland alone.

The "Spotlight on Sport" cassettes – which are also available directly to individual members of the public – are currently being produced with a German commentary only. The production of cassettes in French and Italian is under consideration.

Details are available from the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (Programme Sales), 3000 Berne 15.

men behind them in the Swiss economy is doomed to be censured and silenced. That is why we are fighting – also for you as consumer and citizen – for press freedom."

The unions cited recent police action against Swiss journalists, including the detention of a television news team covering youth riots in the city and the arrest of a newspaper reporter who allegedly threatened a police officer with a knife.