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Hot words send TV man out into the cold

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.

SWISS television has fired the presenter of a current affairs talk show who called President Reagan a rude word.

Dietmar Schönherr, 55 – an Austrian broadcaster who lives in Switzerland – made the offending remark while hosting the first of a series of live midnight talk shows, watched by viewers in Switzerland, Austria and West Germany. He was referring to the U.S. President's widely reported comments concerning the possibility of a limited nuclear war in Europe.

The Schönherr remark attracted extensive coverage in the Swiss press, which quoted the offending word in full. Schönherr said after the show: "Most people share my view, and I was merely expressing what many others are thinking. I may be a risk for television – but Reagan is a security risk for the entire world.

"As an Austrian I lived some of my early years under Nazism, and I have no desire to spend the rest of my life in fear. I'm a free man who can still speak his mind. And that means a lot to me."

Schönherr said public reaction to his programme had been largely positive, but that he has also received threatening calls urging him to leave Switzerland.

One anonymous caller had threatened that his house would be burned down, and another had called him a "Communist swine" who should take the first plane from Switzerland to Moscow.

An editorial in the authoritative *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* called for Schönherr's dismissal from the programme, accusing him of "misusing television as a

platform for his left-wing convictions". The newspaper said he had insulted a foreign head of state, offended the viewing public, and had thus proved himself unfit to host the programme.

The United States embassy in Berne described the incident as "unfortunate", and a Swiss TV statement said Schönherr had been guilty of "embarrassing and inexcusable" behaviour.

Easing tension

SWITZERLAND'S mass media could make a major contribution to the easing of tension between the country's youth and adult generations, a government-appointed commission has suggested.

The commission – reporting in the wake of youth unrest in Zurich and other Swiss cities – said the troubles would not have erupted "if we had not lost the habit of speaking with one another, between the generations and among the generations."

The commission has called on Swiss newspapers to publish regular youth columns aimed at a readership representative of all generations. And it has urged radio and television not to treat youth topics in "ghetto-style", but to address such programmes to the widest possible viewing and listening public.

Arab radio?

THE Swiss government is study-

ing a request from Jordanian interests for the setting up of an Arab-language local radio station in Geneva.

A government spokesman said the application had requested authority to broadcast a politically neutral programme, mainly for Arab diplomats in Switzerland. The spokesman said it was not clear from the application how the station would be financed.

Press problems

THE multilingual make-up of Switzerland is causing problems for the country's newspaper and printing industries, an official document has revealed.

According to a report by the Confederation of Swiss Employers, "the plurality of languages does have economic and technical repercussions. In particular, print runs are inevitably short ... and this, in most cases, leads to an increase in production costs.

"In addition, the geographical mobility of some personnel is hampered. The need to provide training in several languages – in what is a small country – makes the task both more burdensome and costly."

Switzerland 6.3 million population shares four national languages – German, French, Italian and Romansch.

Fewer tourists

SWISS media coverage of Britain's social unrest and economic problems is keeping

Swiss tourists away from the country, claims a leading representative of the British Tourist Authority.

Mr Vaughan James – Zurich-based BTA manager for Switzerland – reports an "unwelcome decline" in the number of Swiss tourists visiting Britain during 1981.

He adds: "It is easy to blame the pound, which cost a whole franc more in February, when people were planning their summer holidays, than it had 12 months previously. But the situation hasn't been helped by Britain's increasing reputation for inflationary price increases ... (and) extensive media coverage of our social and economic difficulties."

Children's news

A PRESS agency specialising in news about children – believed to be the first of its kind in the world – has been launched in Switzerland.

The Berne-based *Kinder- nachrichtenagentur* – Kinag – is being sponsored by Swiss youth and children's welfare organisations as a follow-up to the 1979 Year of the Child.

Aim of the agency, which is run by a qualified journalist, is to distribute news and feature material related to children in Switzerland and to promote public interest in children. The new agency will also operate as an information and advisory service to the Swiss media on child-related matters.

The free service will be supported by donations and membership fees from organisations and individuals.