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English language programme is going on the air

SWISS Radio International, whose editorial team includes a dozen British journalists, is to launch a daily English-language programme in the Geneva area this spring.

The Swiss government has granted SRI permission to broadcast for a three-month trial period starting on March 1.

The aim of the new service is to determine if such a programme can contribute to increased integration of local English-speaking residents into the Geneva community.

The city is the European headquarters of the United Nations and also hosts many other international organisations and companies.

Swiss Radio International already broadcasts worldwide in English and eight other languages.

The Week that was

SWITZERLAND'S newest weekly, Die Woche, has ceased publication after only 43 issues.

The Zurich-based Ringier concern – the country's largest magazine publishers – said the closure had been forced by Switzerland's deteriorating economic situation which had seriously hit sales and advertising.

Die Woche (The Week) was similar in style and format to Britain's Economist and was aimed at "opinion makers".

When it was launched last

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.

year, a Ringier spokesman said the company expected the magazine to lose money for the first six years and to start recovering the invested capital after nine years.

The Lausanne-based French language version of the magazine, L'Hebdo, has proved more successful and is to continue publication.

Appeal to Argentina

MEDIA unions in Switzerland have made a joint appeal to Argentina for the release of a journalist of Swiss origin who has been in prison since 1976.

The journalist, 59-year-old Plutarco Antonio Schaller, a senior member of the editorial staff of the daily El Independiente, was arrested soon after the military takeover in Argentina six years ago.

After two years' detention he was charged with involvement in the kidnapping of a businessman, but another two years later a court acquitted him of the charges and ordered his release.

Despite the acquittal, however, the authorities ruled that Mr

Schaller should remain in jail "at the disposal of the National Executive."

El Independiente, which has frequently been accused by the authorities of "subversion", has been campaigning unsuccessfully for Mr Schaller's release.

Swiss journalists' unions claim that Mr Schaller, who holds Argentine nationality and is the father of five, is being detained in harsh conditions nearly 1,000 miles from where his family lives. The Swiss appeal also alleges that he has been tortured and is in poor health.

Television programme "one-sided"

A SWISS Broadcasting Corporation TV programme on youth demonstrations in Zurich was excessively critical of police and lacking in objectivity, a government-appointed complaints commission has ruled.

The three-and-a-half hour programme – a debate on confrontation between youth and the state – included filmed reports from Switzerland, Britain

and Berlin comparing police action in the three trouble spots.

The complaints commission has found that the programme "showed a one-sided picture of a complex situation," violating the SBC charter and not complying with the corporation's obligation to inform the public fairly and objectively.

Shortly before the programme Zurich police minister Hans Frick withdrew from the debate, accusing Swiss television of adopting "a clearly hostile attitude" towards the police.

He said he was prepared to answer questions on police action during the Zurich demonstrations "but not for a medium which grossly contravenes the basic principles of fair and objective reporting."

Yorkshire TV wins award

A YORKSHIRE Television programme, "Another Bloody Sunday," has won the annual international Golden Ring award for sports television documentaries.

At the contest in Lausanne the film, which showed the effects on the Doncaster Rugby League team of 19 consecutive losing matches was voted the winner from 18 entries.

In the live reporting category, the BBC finished second to Norwegian Television for its coverage of the London Marathon.

Licence fees up

RADIO and television licence fees in Switzerland went up in November by 26.5 per cent. The monopoly Swiss Broadcasting Corporation had sought government permission for a 29.5 per cent increase from this month.

SBC had also requested that any future licence fee increases be indexed to inflation but this has been rejected by the government.

As a result of the latest increase, a joint annual radio and television licence fee will now cost Sfr. 270 – the equivalent of about £75.

SBC has been forecasting a deficit of Sfr. 70 million (£20 million) for the current year and has also expressed concern at falling revenue from TV advertising. But a recent public opinion poll revealed that 62 per cent of the Swiss public were opposed to the increase in licence fees while only 26 per cent were in favour.

Independent TV and radio?

INDEPENDENT local radio and television stations will be allowed to operate in Switzerland this year, the Swiss government has announced.

Until now all radio and TV programming has been a monopoly of the Swiss Broad-

casting Corporation.

Independent broadcasting will be permitted on an experimental five-year basis, and radio stations will be allowed up to 15 minutes of advertising a day or a maximum of two per cent of broadcasting time.

But Sunday commercials will not be permitted, and there will be a ban on the advertising of alcohol, tobacco, banks and some other products and services. These restrictions are intended to safeguard the interests of the Swiss newspaper industry, which fears the loss of advertising revenue.

The Swiss Communication Ministry has already received more than 100 applications for permission to set up local radio stations and about a dozen for TV stations.

Swiss praise for BBC

THE Swiss Broadcasting Corporation has congratulated BBC Educational Television on its 25th anniversary, praising its "professional perfection."

In its silver jubilee message, the SBC said: "The BBC's accomplishments in this field are exemplary. You fulfil not only a most essential function within the UK itself, but – as with other BBC activities – you serve as a model for all broadcasting organisations throughout the world.

"Ever willing to contribute to international co-operation, the BBC has not hesitated to place all its resources, its knowledge and experience – and its professional perfection at the service of other educational broadcasting operations and activities."

The Swiss message expressed "grateful thanks and recognition of your most generous, most effective and most enriching contribution to this common cause."

Euro honour for Carl

MR Domenic Carl of Switzerland has been elected honorary president of the European Group of Television Advertising (EGTA) in recognition of his services to the organisation.

Mr Carl was president of

EGTA for four years until his recent retirement from the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. EGTA was established in the early 1970s as "an informal association" of commercial television companies in Europe, with the aim of promoting contacts and co-operation between member-companies.

Mr Carl served the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation for 31 years, the last eight as SBC's director of finance and deputy to the director general.

More place for Press

PRESS facilities at the Swiss Houses of Parliament in Berne are to be improved under a planned extension scheme costing about £600,000.

The Swiss government is seeking parliamentary approval for the credit, which will also provide improved conditions for members of parliament and administrative personnel.

It is planned to offer working space for 89 journalists, compared with 62 at present.



"We've decided to cut our viewing by half."

– from the Berner Zeitung