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Radio enters a new era

A NEW era in broadcasting has begun in Switzerland with the opening of commercial radio stations.

Until now, radio and television broadcasting has been the monopoly of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. But the government recently granted permission for the opening of more than 30 independent local radio stations, and some have already begun operating.

The new stations will operate initially on an experimental five-year basis. They are allowed to carry up to 15 minutes of daily advertising or a maximum of two per cent of broadcasting time.

But Sunday commercials are not permitted, and there is also a ban on the advertising of alcohol, tobacco, banks and some other products and services.

Working for one of the bigger stations is British-born broadcaster Peter Miles of Radio Extra BE, which covers the Swiss capital Berne.

Aged 29, he was born in Coventry but educated in Switzerland, graduating from Berne University where he read German and English. Before joining Radio Extra BE, he was a programme presenter with the rival Swiss Broadcasting Corporation.

His father, John Miles, worked for many years on provincial newspapers in Britain, including the Western Morning News and Coventry Evening Telegraph.

He moved to Switzerland in



British born broadcaster Peter Miles

1960, becoming head of the news department of Swiss Radio International in Berne. His mother, Greti Miles-Jost, comes from Attiswil (Canton Berne) and for most of the fifties lived in Exeter, Nottingham and Coventry.

THE SBC has been accused of censorship following cancellation of a satirical TV programme on conscientious objection in Switzerland.

The Swiss Media Workers Union has expressed its "horror" at the cancellation which, it said, was a step towards creation of government-controlled media in Switzerland.

The programme was one of a weekly satirical series by leading Swiss cabaret artist Franz Hohler.

A SBC statement said the programme had been withdrawn because it conflicted with a mandate to provide the public with "objective and comprehensive information".

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.

Military service is compulsory in neutral Switzerland, and many conscientious objectors face imprisonment.

A controversial campaign has been launched for an alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors, and the issue was being submitted to a nationwide vote as this month's *Swiss Observer* went to press.

THE Swiss Printers' Union has warned that it will take strike action if employers do not meet its demands for a new general contract.

The Union - which represents 17,000 workers throughout the country - has received backing for its strike threat by a majority of almost three to one.

Printing workers are demanding an improved contract to replace the previous agreement, which the Union terminated nearly a year ago.

Several rounds of talks have since been held between the two sides, but negotiations have now reached deadlock.

THE stationing of US missiles in western Europe has been voted by Swiss journalists as the most important international news event of 1983.

Some of the missiles are stationed in neighbouring West Germany, not far from the frontier with neutral Switzerland.

Second major news development, in the view of Swiss journalists polled recently, was the shooting down of a South Korean airliner by Soviet air force jets.

Third was Lebanon, followed by the US intervention in Grenada.

The poll was conducted by the Associated Press news agency among 28 daily newspapers and five radio and television stations in Switzerland.