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EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

Dear Mr. Stauffer,

I wonder how many of your readers outside Scotland listened to " Our Friends the Swiss " broadcast on the Scottish Home Service a few days' ago and felt as disappointed as myself at the way in which the subject had been treated?

Whoever was responsible for the programme missed an excellent opportunity of giving listeners a sympathetic and human picture of Switzerland and the Swiss. Instead it was nothing more than a 60-minute lecture — and an amateurish one at that.

The title of the programme must have interested many Scots who have either been to Switzerland (and consequently switched on in order to have nostalgic memories revived) or who are prospective visitors to the country. I have no doubt that after the first five minutes the majority of them switched off.

I have every admiration for Federal Councillor Weber, who prepared a very interesting speech to suit the occasion, but I fail to see why his talk should be used right at the very beginning, before any attempt had been made to get all listeners in a receptive frame of mind.

But schoolmasterish as it was, the programme had some bright spots. One was Théo Haller's brief yet graphic description of the Swiss Army, and it was a good touch to introduce him as a captain of artillery in his own right. To this Mr. Haller added an explanation of Switzerland's policy of neutrality and pointed out the determination of the Swiss to defend their frontiers against all aggressors.

Another was the journey up to the Jungfraujoch and an interview with a London cosmic ray scientist (although a little more description would have helped to give people a clearer picture of the scene).

Then there was that friendly character, Mr. Florian Niederer, the assistant manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office in Zurich, who, in the limited time at his disposal, won over listeners in his first few words by making a light-hearted reference to " delicious " Scotch whiskey and asking what Swiss winter sports would be without " your skilful Scotch curlers ".

Knowing the BBC's abhorrence of advertising, what surprised me more than anything else were the commercial plugs which the programme was peppered. Considerable mention was made of Crédit Suisse and the firms Sulzer Brothers and Escher-Wyss, while the Scots were not only advised to fly Swissair but were also told that Swissair planes were waiting for them at both Manchester and London.

Not to be outdone, Mr. Niederer — probably having been told the joke about the man from Aberdeen — put them at ease by saying Swiss hotels were not solely reserved for millionaires. In fact, out of the 2,000 hotels in the Swiss Hoteliers' Association, only about 50 were in the top price class, and the great majority offered full pension rates of between 18s. and 25s. a day.

" Everyone can spend his holiday in Switzerland the way he likes and can afford ", was the slogan Mr. Niederer broadcast by courtesy of the BBC.

Of course I shall be highly delighted if the programme has succeeded in persuading any of those canny folk north of the border to venture Swisswards. But I cannot help feeling that, with all the facilities placed at the Scottish Region's disposal in Switzerland, it could have been done much, much better.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Meakin.

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Cricklewood,
London, N.W.2.

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