



NBPM
CDP 4/2.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 February 1985

Dear Charles,

Review of BBC External Services ← attached

I wrote to you on 1 February about the Report of the Review of the BBC External Services.

/ I now enclose a copy of the revised version, including the exchange of letters between the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Foreign Secretary, which has just been printed. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of the House this afternoon.

I am copying this letter, with a copy of the Report, to Janet Lewis-Jones (Lord President), David Peretz (HM Treasury), Hugh Taylor (Home Office) and Mary Brown (Arts).

Yours,
Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

1 February, 1985

Dear Charles,

Review of BBC External Services

I wrote to you on 26 November about the Report of the Review of the BBC External Services and undertook to let you know how the BBC responded to it. In your reply of 27 November you said the Prime Minister looked forward to seeing recommendations on how the Government should react. I am now writing to bring you up to date with subsequent developments.

Publication and implementation of the Review Report have been delayed because of reservations expressed by the BBC about the possible infringement of their constitutional position arising from the recommendations contained in Chapter 7 of the Report - "Determination of the Prescription". After discussion with the BBC, the author of the Report made a number of amendments, agreed with the FCO, to the wording of Chapter 7 to meet the BBC's concerns: in particular making it clear that the recommended procedures are designed to improve value for money and not to compromise the BBC's editorial independence.

Before agreeing to publication, the BBC also made a last-minute request that their Chairman and the Foreign Secretary should make a joint statement confirming the BBC's editorial independence which should be bound into the printed Report. The Foreign Secretary had reservations about a joint statement, and after discussion we agreed that an exchange of letters should be attached at the back of the Report (copies enclosed).

Mr Cyril Townsend, MP, has an adjournment debate on the BBC's External Services on 4 February. This provides a timely opportunity to draw Parliament's attention to the Report. We propose to place it in the libraries of the House that afternoon. Mr Renton, who will be taking the debate, then proposes to welcome the report and express our determination to implement those proposals which are intended to improve the efficiency and economy with which the External Services are run. A further statement could be made in due course after Members had had a chance to study the report.



The FCO and the BBC will make a simultaneous announcement to the media on Tuesday morning 5 February.

Some of the recommendations in the Report are already being implemented. Interdepartmental discussion at official level has begun. We shall also be going through the recommendations in detail with the BBC. We shall keep you informed of progress.

I am copying this letter to Janet Lewis-Jones (Lord President), David Peretz (HM Treasury), Hugh Taylor (Home Office) and Mary Brown (Arts).

Yours,

Peter Ricketts

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Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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