

From: Dan Gunn  
Sent: 13 December 2003 10:11  
To: BBC Charter Review  
Subject: REview

Madam,

Perhaps it is necessary to live abroad fully to appreciate the BBC. For those who spend their lives in the UK almost inevitably assume that something similar is to be found elsewhere; holiday time abroad is not sufficient to sample foreign media.

Being Scottish by birth and upbringing, but having spent the greater part of my life abroad (in Japan, Italy, France, and Greece), and being able to understand the media in several foreign countries and languages, I feel I can bring a somewhat comparative approach. Despite the downgrading of certain of the television programmes and the invasion of the dread reality television, the BBC remains in a class of its own, and this I can still assert with confidence: unique for its quality of broadcasting, for coverage, for professionalism, for scrupulousness, for rigour.

If one travels a lot, for example in countries which have until recently struggled under oppressive regimes (the examples of Bulgaria and Vietnam spring to my mind), then one will speak to people regularly for whom the BBC Foreign Service was the sole lifeline. Mrs Thatcher's attempt to downgrade this service was not the least of her vulgarities.

Now, with BBC World and with BBC radio available over the net, the influence is rather different, but still as pervasive and important. And the contrast with, for example, France where I currently reside, is flagrant. Here I pay a licence fee, but I constantly ask myself: for what? The national programmes are poor, the quality of reporting inferior, and all the public channels carry heavy advertising. Please let the BBC not go this way but continue to be a flagship for so much that is excellent about the UK.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Dan Gunn