



Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH

Telephone 01-

Sir R Hibbert
PARIS

Your reference

Our reference

Date 24 September 1979

Dear Ambassador,

① Peter Ewing

B/F 1 November please

② Circulate

1. Thank you for your letter of 12 September about a request from Antenne 2 for interview with the Prime Minister.

2. I wish I thought that this proposal might prosper but I must say at once that the prospects are not good. As you know - and indeed as you told Elkabbach (your para 4) - the Prime Minister has declined absolutely to give interviews to either British or foreign journalists since she took office. The Press Secretary at No 10 thinks that there is no chance of persuading her to agree to be interviewed by Antenne 2 at this stage.

3. It has occurred to me, however, that the Prime Minister just might entertain the idea of such an interview immediately before the Anglo/French summit in November. You will no doubt receive a number of requests from the French media to interview the Prime Minister before the summit. If the Antenne 2 interview remains the first priority, and they would still be interested, we could resubmit their request at the beginning of November.

4. I am sorry to give you such a disappointing response. If it is any consolation Antenne 2 are in good company. Similar replies have gone to numerous requests from other journalists and organisations including BBC Panorama (on several occasions) and all the major American television networks.

Yours etc.

N M Fenn
Head of News Department

cc WED
Mr Fergusson
Mr Anson (No 10)



10 DOWNING STREET

~~Mr. James.~~ Spoken to Fco about
these lines CA₂/9

With Fern would like your

views on this request. I told

Nans Dept on the phone that

I very much doubted the P.M.

would agree to an interview

now. There might be a

slightly better chance in

the context of Riccard's

visit on 19/20 November

but much would depend how

the Embassy voted this request

against those from Figaro, L'Express

etc. The Fco. will let us



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BRITISH EMBASSY,
PARIS.

Copy to 12 September 1979

N M Fenn Esq
News Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London

Dear Dick,

1. I had a visit yesterday from Monsieur Jean-Pierre Elkabbach, the Directeur de l'Information at Antenne-2, which is the second French television network. Monsieur Elkabbach is one of the few television and radio journalists who seems to enjoy the full confidence of President Giscard.

2. Elkabbach said that he and Alain Duhamel, who is one of his colleagues on Antenne-2, would like to interview Mrs Thatcher for their regular programme "Cartes sur table". This is a good public affairs programme which goes out at a peak time of 8.30 pm. Interviews on it last up to 50 minutes, but could last a few minutes longer if necessary. Chancellor Schmidt has appeared on it with Elkabbach. So also have Presidents Sadat and Assad and many other prominent personalities.

3. Elkabbach said he and Duhamel would willingly come over to London if Mrs Thatcher consented to be interviewed. The broadcast could be made live from London or could be recorded. Elkabbach would want to have a planning meeting with someone in order to discuss the themes which would be raised and to prepare a proper shape for the programme.

4. I told Elkabbach that I knew that the Prime Minister had avoided committing herself to interviews with foreign TV and radio networks during her first few months in office. I did not know whether she was still reluctant to give interviews or would now be prepared to consider Elkabbach's approach. I could not promise any results. I would put his proposals to London and see what the reaction from Number 10 Downing Street was.

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*Charles, Amson
No 10 Press Office
Grateful for your views
Kin Dowrick
233 8618*



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5. Elkabbach asked me if I personally would be in favour of such an interview. I said that as Ambassador in France I was of course entirely in favour of the leaders of each country speaking to the other, but this was not the decisive consideration. The Prime Minister, like the President of France, had to take all sorts of commitments and interests into account in deciding whether to grant a particular interview. I would pursue the matter and let him know.

6. It would of course be an excellent thing from the point of view of relations with France if the Prime Minister were to agree to give the interview suggested. The interviewing team is in the first rank of French interviewers and the programme and timing are as good as could be obtained. As you no doubt know the next Anglo French Summit Meeting between the Prime Minister and the President will be taking place in London on 19/20 November. It would be excellent from my point of view in Paris if an interview of this sort could be put out a few days before that. I realise, of course, that ideal situations of this sort are rarely achieved.

7. Could you please let me know what sort of reply to return to Elkabbach. It would be helpful if I could have something fairly soon. I enclose an extra copy of this letter in case ... you want to send it across to the Prime Minister's press secretary.

Yours ever,

Reginald Hibbert

Reginald Hibbert

cc

E A J Fergusson, FCO

Western European Department, FCO

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