



**BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

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10th July 1978

*Dear Margaret*

I am writing to you and the Prime Minister in identical terms to invite you to appear together in one or more special television programmes during the General Election. I do so in the knowledge that the proposal, if it were to be accepted, would add to the strains and burdens of a busy period, but also with the conviction that the electorate would appreciate an opportunity of seeing the leaders of the two great parties together in discussion on the major issues of the Election.

The idea will not be new to you and I am aware of the difficulties it may present. Indeed, it is because of such difficulties that it seems preferable to make the proposal now when there is time to consider it carefully. In making it we seek no advantage to the BBC and would raise no objection in principle to a joint BBC/IBA transmission. Nor do we have a fixed view of programme form or transmission time. Whether it is one programme or two or three during the campaign, whether in the "Panorama" slot on Mondays or at some other time, whether you would debate with one another directly, or through questioners drawn from broadcasting and/or print journalism - all these are fairly open in our minds. What we are certain about is that these should be substantial programmes in which there is a proper opportunity for the viewers to be well-informed on respective attitudes and views on Election issues.

None of these details present unusual problems for the broadcasters and I believe they could be agreed between the BBC and the IBA, if the general proposal is acceptable. I should be grateful if you would give it your consideration.

*Yours sincerely,  
Ian Trethowan*

(Ian Trethowan)

The Rt.Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,  
House of Commons,  
London SW1A 0AA.

*cc. W. Morgan  
4/4/78*