

# Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation, 1974-1987

Jean Seaton

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During the Margaret Thatcher years, Britain experienced mass unemployment, trade union strikes, bloody war in Northern Ireland and the Falklands, and an existential threat to its public service broadcaster, the BBC. Pounded by a coherent free market argument, the BBC had to justify its right to the Licence Fee and its independent place in the 'unwritten' British constitution. It did so by producing memorable programmes for the whole British public (not just for the groups that advertisers liked), bolstered by a surprising amount of help from elements of the Conservative government (although not from Thatcher). Drawing on previously unseen state and BBC papers, many released specifically for this dramatic and revealing account, as well as a compelling range of interviewees, Jean Seaton examines the turbulent controversies (stirred up by programmes such as Maggie's Militant Tendency) and the magnificent triumphs (such as Life on Earth and Morecambe and Wise) of an institution that Britain loved and hated, and in many ways is still defined by.



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