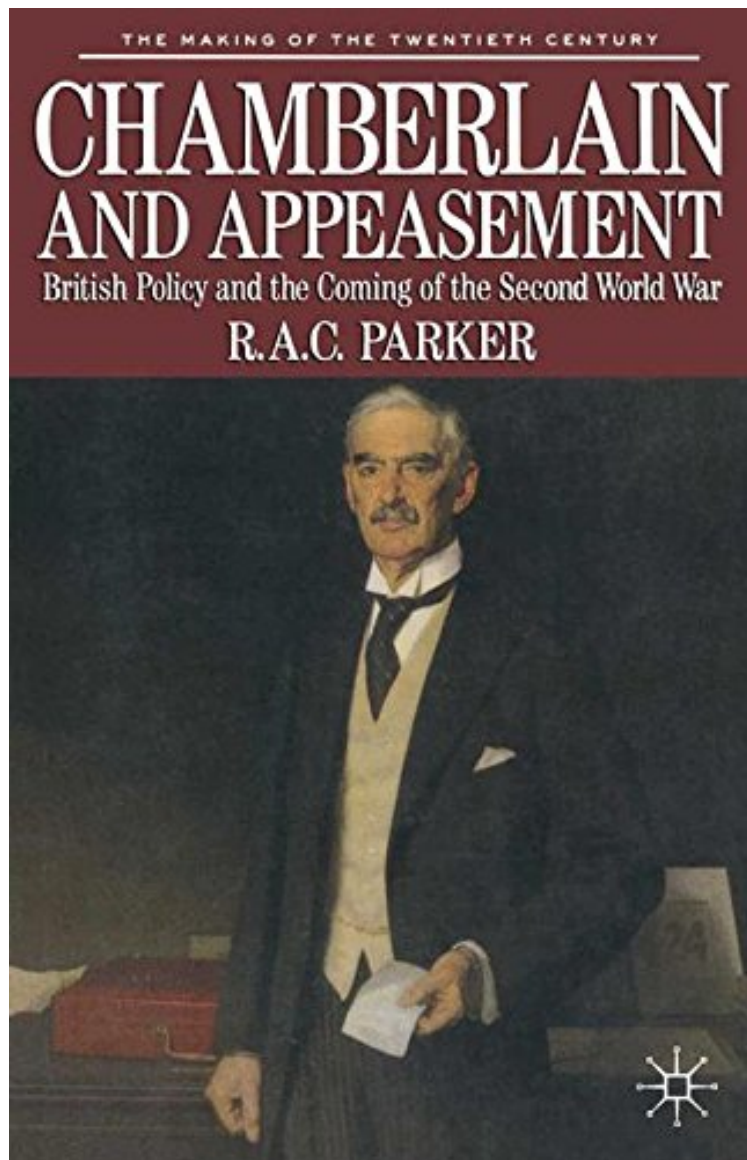


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Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War (The Making of the Twentieth Century)

Kate Dorney

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#3450311 in Books 1993-10-07Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.25 x 5.50 x 1.00l, 1.09 #File Name: 0333417135388 pages | File size: 78.Mb

Kate Dorney : Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War (The Making of the Twentieth Century) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War (The Making of the Twentieth Century):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Labeling a close-minded, stubborn manBy SkydogThis judicious scholarly monograph weaves numerous short quotations from source documents into a reasonably readable and balanced assessment of C. It concludes that his "policy was arrogant, not weak or timid" (p.218). Parker notes that since the opening of WWII archival records in the 1960s historians have become "steadily more benign" in revising the myth fostered by Churchill and others that C. was a stupid and/or cowardly man. He was not, claims the author "a parochial, narrow minded nonentity" but a "hard working, clear headed and efficient statesman" (p.326).One theme of the work is that appeasement, based on British guilt feelings about the severity of the Treaty of Versailles, was a widely popular policy through much of the 1930s. Even when this view waned in the post-Munich period and down to the onset of war, no political faction of consequence offered any alternative German policy that could hope to command a parliamentary majority. Give Parker credit; he avoids the seductive trap of 20-20 hindsight. But it remains an open question whether readers will accept his assessment that "In the the circumstances that [C.] found, scholars suggest, he managed public affairs as well as anyone could have done" (p.343).This is not to suggest that Parker gives C. a free pass. He taxes the Prime Minister with failing "to grasp the suicidal irrationality of Nazism" (p.332). Wisdom of hindsight or not, any suggestion that there was not plenty of evidence in Mein Kampf and Hitler's behavior up to 1939 that this was not an individual easily reasoned with would be difficult to swallow. I came away from this book wishing that Parker had tried harder to analyze C's thinking processes, particularly his almost pathological self-certainty and refusal to learn from criticism by friends or adversaries. C.'s misjudgments of the character of the dictators, the value of a Soviet alliance, and the need for more rapid rearmament nearly led to extinction of the U.K. as a sovereign entity. Whether one chooses to label these catastrophic errors as stupidity or willful self-delusion seems in the end like semantic hair-splitting.

This book provides a fresh and original approach to a controversial episode in British history, Chamberlain's policy of 'appeasement' towards Hitler's Germany. Written directly from primary archival sources, Alastair Parker's account offers the student new perspectives on the man who dominated the making of British policy before and after his 'triumph' at Munich in September 1938 - Neville Chamberlain. This study considers his personality, his aims and his methods and the opposition to him from men both within and outside his party.

'R.A.C. Parker's book is a scrupulously scholarly synthesis designed to demolish both the original myth and the revisionist fantasy.' - Times 'This is an excellent, stimulating and important book, a version of the appeasement story that will stand for another 30 years.' - Guardian 'Superb. Based on a matchless knowledge of the archives and written with a kind of controlled intensity interspersed with elegant wit, it makes all previous accounts redundant and is of the first importance.' - Kenneth O. Morgan, *New Statesman and Society* 'You will want to read this book. It is intelligently provocative. It forces one to reconsider the real issues involved in the ongoing debate about appeasement, a controversy that has neither lost its historical importance nor its contemporary relevance.' - Zara Steiner, *Financial Times* 'Parker's work sets a standard at which any dissident will have to aim.' - Independent R.A.C. Parker's book is a scrupulously scholarly synthesis designed to demolish both the original myth and the revisionist fantasy.' Times 'This is an excellent, stimulating and important book, a version of the appeasement story that will stand for another 30 years.' Guardian 'Superb. Based on a matchless knowledge of the archives and written with a kind of controlled intensity interspersed with elegant wit, it makes all previous accounts redundant and is of the first importance.' Kenneth O. Morgan, *New Statesman and Society* 'You will want to read this book. It is intelligently provocative. It forces one to reconsider the real issues involved in the ongoing debate about appeasement, a controversy that has neither lost its historical importance nor its contemporary relevance.' Zara Steiner, *Financial Times* 'Parker's work sets a standard at which any dissident will have to aim.' Independent