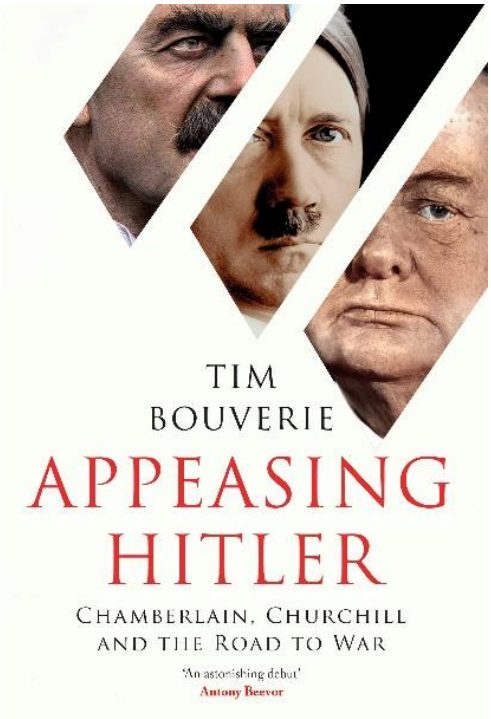
Appeasing Hitler

Chamberlain, Churchill and the Road to War

Tim Bouverie



'An astonishing debut'
Antony Beevor

On a wet afternoon in September 1938, Neville Chamberlain stepped off an aeroplane and announced that his visit to Hitler had averted the greatest crisis in recent memory. It was, he later assured the crowd in Downing Street, 'peace for our time'. Within a year of the British prime minister's return from Munich, Germany invaded Poland and the Second World War began.

That moment of theatre was the culmination of over five years of drama. Beginning with the advent of Hitler in 1933, Tim Bouverie takes us on a fascinating journey from the early days of the Third Reich to the beaches of Dunkirk. We enter the 10 Downing Street of Stanley Baldwin and Chamberlain, and the backrooms of Parliament where an unusual coalition of MPs – including the indomitable Winston Churchill – were among the few to realise that the only real choice was between 'war now or war later'. And as German troops enter the demilitarised Rhineland, march into Austria and threaten to invade Czechoslovakia, Bouverie takes us into the drawing rooms and dining clubs of fading imperial Britain, where Hitler enjoyed surprising support among the ruling class and even members of the Royal Family.

Appeasing Hitler is the first narrative history of appeasement which chronicles the entire period. Fast-paced and revelatory, it is based on original research - including a number of previously unseen sources. In particular, Tim has enjoyed unique access to the archives of the Duke of Buccleuch and the Duke of Westminster - in addition to the Royal Archives at Windsor - allowing him to shed new light on the behaviour of the British aristocracy during this period. In addition to this, the book contains newly discovered letters from Neville Chamberlain and Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, as well as a wealth of fresh information about that curious phenomenon of the appeasement years: the amateur diplomats.

The result is an unforgettable portrait and a ground-breaking history of the key players of the time who, through their actions and inaction, shaped their country's policy and enabled Hitler's domination of Europe. Both sweeping and intimate, it is not only an eye-opening history but a timeless lesson on the challenges of standing up to aggression and authoritarianism – and the calamity that results from failing to do so.

Praise for *Appeasing Hitler*:

'This is the debut of an unusually talented writer, one of
the most promising young historians to enter our field for years'
Max Hastings

'This is well-paced narrative history: intelligent, lucid, riveting — even while
possessing the terrible knowledge of what happened next.'
New York Times

'A brilliant and sparkling debut that reads like a thriller. I couldn't put it down.'
Peter Frankopan

'Drawing on an impressive and interesting range of sources and characters,
Tim Bouverie has written a fascinating and scholarly portrait of a decade when credulity, self-interest and poor judgement prevailed tragically and inexorably
over morality and good sense: this is the reporting of history at its best'
Caroline Moorehead

'*Appeasing Hitler* is the stunning debut of a major new narrative historian. Tim Bouverie makes us look again at the familiar story of the doomed attempt to appease Hitler in the 1930s. While he is fair and reasoned in his judgements, he shows how the dictator ran rings around Western leaders who naively or wilfully misread his intentions and ignored what was happening in Germany. A riveting and depressing story which has resonance today'
Margaret Macmillan

'Excellent'
Andrew Roberts

'Gripping…Bouverie excels at capturing the atmosphere and conveying eh debates'
The Observer

'Quite simply, the best book ever to have appeared on this whole subject.'
Sir Noel Malcolm

'It should become the standard text on this inglorious episode'

Daily Telegraph

'Written in the best narrative tradition of British history writing', the story is put together 'sensitively, with dry humour and an instinct for the dramatic moment to create a vivid picture of the characters, their milieu and the mood of the times…it is not surprising that it has been a bestseller in Britain…For the present age of populism the message of the Appeasement story is that the majority can be wrong'.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

'The best account of the subject that I have ever read'
Professor Sir Michael Howard

'Tim Bouverie tells the story of appeasement with skill,
verve and panache, using contemporary accounts to great effect in
exploring the mentalities that lay behind the political decisions'
Ian Kershaw

'It is a marvellous, clever book, written with that stylistic ease and brilliance of Anglo-Saxon historians, a read that creates at once anxiety and reward. Democracies, this is Bouverie's lesson, always have to reinvent, reinsure, prove themselves anew; through their heresies they are not immune from steering towards their own downfall.'

Sueddeutsche Zeitung

'The best single account of what actions led the UK to fall into World War II'
General Jim Mattis

'Truly impressive and enjoyable. Tim Bouverie writes with verve and wit,
gives us an often moving and always human angle on the story, and removes the tarnish
from the word 'appeasement' to make us look anew at one of
the most important, and salutary, periods of modern times'
Roland Philipps

'An eye-opening narrative which makes for exciting but at times
uncomfortable reading; as one reflects on possible lessons for the present'
Antonia Fraser

'No previous book on Appeasement has managed to cast such a vivid, detailed and utterly fascinating light on the incredible political machinations that were being played out in the late 1930s. Tim Bouverie has brilliantly brought alive the tension, political brinkmanship and immense drama of those days, getting into the minds of the key players and a far wider cast of equally interesting but largely forgotten characters, and with a skilled eye for small details that brings the narrative bursting into life. This is political drama at its most compelling, and one whose relevance sits with the reader long after the book has been put down. Superb'
James Holland

Appeasing Hitler debuted at **#4 on the *Sunday Times* hardback nonfiction bestseller list**. It was reprinted twice in advance of publication (there were over 6,500 pre-orders), and has now been reprinted four times.

In 2020 it was shortlisted for the prestigious Orwell Prize for political writing.

Current Publishers:

UK: Bodley Head
USA: Tim Duggan Books
Brazil: Planeta
China: Ginkgo
Croatia: Ljevak
France: Flammarion
Germany: Rowohlt
Italy: Mondadori
The Netherlands: De Arbeiderspers
Poland: Wielka Litera
Romania: Litera
Spain: Debate

Russia:

Among the central themes of *Appeasing Hitler* is the catastrophic failure of the British and French to collaborate with the Soviet Union in an attempt to deter Hitler or defeat him as swiftly as possible. It contains detailed descriptions of Anglo-Soviet diplomacy.

Tim Bouverie studied history at Christ Church, Oxford. Prior to becoming a historian he was a political journalist for the UK's Channel 4 News, covering all major political events between 2013 and 2017. A regular reviewer of history books, he has written for the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Times*, *Spectator*, *Observer, Air Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. He is currently the Alistair Horne Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, where he is researching a new book, *Allies at War*, a study of allied diplomacy during the Second World War.