

Reply to Professor Alvin Finkel's response to my review of *The Chamberlain-Hitler Collusion*

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Professor Finkel's courteous response to my review of *The Chamberlain-Hitler Collusion* is more than 50% longer than the original review and deals with a number of issues not raised in that review. In the interests of not straining the patience of H-France subscribers, let me limit myself to a few of the questions I did raise in the review.

1) In the second paragraph of his response, Professor Finkel suggests that I misled readers by claiming that he and Leibovitz saw anti-communism as the critical key to British and French appeasement. I would invite H-France subscribers to compare this paragraph to the first paragraph of my review and see if we are not saying more or less the same thing. Indeed, much of the argument in his response is entirely consistent with points made in my review.

2) In his final paragraph Professor Finkel indicates that he believes that the book in question "presents a radical and even rather upsetting thesis." In my review I contended that at least with respect to the *general* argument, there was nothing terribly original here and that many of these points had been made by a host of other historians for the last 50 years--some not cited in the text. He sees no need to reply to this point.

3) With respect to the more specific interpretation, Professor Finkel seems to think that I have done him and his co-author a disservice by placing undue emphasis on the Godesberg "deal". Alas, I was reviewing the book they actually wrote and not their current, and much more nuanced fall-back position. The details of the Godesberg deal are introduced at the beginning of the book and expanded upon at some length, including Hitler's famous offer (in both German and English). The whole argument is repeated in the chapter on 1938. If, as Professor Finkel now seems to be arguing, the Godesberg deal was not so very critical and only part of a larger pattern of diplomatic initiatives, I respectfully submit that he and his co-author adopted an exceedingly odd narrative strategy.

4) For a deal to be a deal, there has to be some evidence that both parties have signed off on it. All I said was that there was no evidence in Schmidt's account--the authors' only source--that Chamberlain did so. The best Finkel can muster by way of rebuttal is to note that Schmidt did not actually accompany Chamberlain back to London. While I will cheerfully grant that point, the fact remains that if Chamberlain did or said anything at Godesberg which suggested that he was buying into Hitler's seductive offer, it seems to have escaped the attention of the only witness present.

5) If Chamberlain's specific assent to the Godesberg deal is not critical to the authors' argument, as now seems to be the case, why then in the book did they go to such tortured lengths to (one example of which I cited in the review) to stress how the atmosphere improved once Hitler had dangled the bait? It is also worth noting that I paid the authors the courtesy of going back to their source. I argued that their interpretation is inconsistent with a careful reading of what, in the book at least, appears to have been a crucial text. The authors seem not to have found this point worthy of a reply.

Professor Finkel and I could probably go on arguing forever. Let me end this--and end it on a positive note. If he and I agree on one thing it is that the proof of this particular pudding will be in the tasting. Perhaps, as he suggests "most" (and, implicitly, more) "objective readers" will find the book more convincing than did I. I look forward to hearing from them.

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