

## REVIEWS

This is not an easy book to use, for it demands much of the reader. The notes provide help, but their scale varies; two short poems by Iolo Goch receive nine pages of explanation, whereas Jean le Bel's important chronicle is dealt with in less than a page. Nor is the book well-supplied with maps; those giving the place names which form part of Livingston's argument are not reproduced in it.

The editors hope that they have been able to 'bring the story of what happened at Crécy over 650 years ago closer to the truth than has ever been possible before.' It is not, however, possible to do this without taking into account the evidence for the recruitment and supply of the armies. Nor are all of what might be called their 'alternative facts' convincing. In providing a valuable collection of the narrative accounts of the battle, what the book demonstrates is how difficult it was for contemporaries to discover what happened at Crécy, and how impossible it can be for historians to discover the truth.

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**Norman Ohler, *Blitzed: Drugs in Nazi Germany*. London: Allen Lane, 2016. Bibliography, Index, 360pp. ISBN: 978-0241256992. Hardback. £20.00.**

Norman Ohler's *Blitzed: Drugs in Nazi Germany*, the English translation of his 2015 book *Der totale Rausch*, is a readable, entertaining, journalistic and deeply flawed historical study. Appearing to much acclaim and significant interest in the British popular press, the focus on the Nazis and their use of drugs has always provided something of an unhealthy fascination for tabloid newspapers, reflecting the intersection between two subjects defined by deviancy; deviancy squared if you will. One of the most interesting responses to the work of Ohler, well-illustrated by the *New Yorker's* (20 March 2017) headline: 'The Writer Who Uncovered The Nazis' Drug Use', are the claims for the originality of the work. While Ohler has undoubtedly considered some important archival material, especially the records of Hitler's physician, Dr Theodor Morell, and there is some engagement with the relevant secondary sources, including the key work of Steinkamp ('Pervitin Testing', 2006) and of Snelders and Pieters ('Speed in the Third Reich', 2011), his study very much follows the already developed scholarship that has considered drug use in the Third Reich; including the work of Nicholas Rasmussen (*On Speed*, 2008).

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Academic reactions to Ohler's work range from Antony's Beevor's overwhelmingly positive review in the *New York Review of Books* (9 March 2017), to the balanced, but highly critical scholarly review by Professor Paul Weindling in *Nature* (6 October 2016), and the scathing and impassioned response of Professor Sir Richard Evans in the *Guardian* (16 November 2016). For Evans in particular, Ohler's narrative, although acknowledging that drug use by Hitler and his colleagues did not alleviate them of the responsibility for the genocidal policies pursued by the regime, is still politically dangerous, and it is possible to read *Blitzed* as suggesting that Hitler's drug addiction lessened his accountability (claims Ohler refuted in the *Guardian*, 2 May 2017). In turn, Evans and Weindling also focus on what they see as Ohler overplaying the scale of drug use within civilian and military contexts. This is compounded by what both reviewers see as a failure to engage in sufficient depth with either the available archival resources or the relevant scholarly literature on the subject. There are also issues with Ohler's journalistic style and use of language, his choice of chapter titles, 'Sieg High!' or 'High Hitler' being particularly irksome to Professor Weindling and with good reason; serving to trivialise and sensationalise in equal measure.

Thus, does *Blitzed* have anything to offer the historian or, more specifically, the military historian? In certain respects it is a timely study that draws our attention to the often hidden or underexplored nexus between warfare and the use of psychoactives in the military context. This builds on the recent introductory text by Łukasz Kamiński (*Shooting Up*, 2016) and it should highlight to military historians that it is a subject in desperate need of exploration. This is important not only because of the extensive use of drugs in the historical military context, but because, globally, armed forces and their personnel continue to engage in both personal and organisational relationships with psychoactives. These include the drinking cultures prevalent across many branches of the world's armed forces, the extensive use of tobacco, tea, coffee or other caffeinated drinks, illicit steroid use and the approved and sanctioned use of stimulants such as amphetamines, enabling militaries to gain more from diminishing human resources in what is a 24/7/365 operating environment (see the work of John Caldwell, for example).

Indeed, the treatment of drug use in the military by authors such as Ohler, Rasmussen and Kamiński only strengthens the need for intervention by historians that are more experienced in considering the operational military context. For example, each of these authors, with what is a relatively limited base of evidence, potentially overplay the influence or place of amphetamines within German military operations, particularly those in the opening campaigns of the Second World War. As Deleuze and Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 2005: 287) have noted, '[a]ll drugs fundamentally concern speeds, and modifications of speed', and thus it is tempting to conflate the pace of the *Wehrmacht's* Blitzkrieg operations with the use of a stimulant

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drug, Pervitin (methamphetamine), known to prevent sleep while intensifying the experience of one's consciousness. I am perhaps more sympathetic to interpretations that stress the influence of psychoactives over the conduct, progress and nature of military campaigns, and Sadie Plant's cultural study, *Writing on Drugs* (1999), has done much to illuminate humanity's enduring and symbiotic relationship with drugs. However, I can only agree that Ohler pushes this link beyond the point of breaking; especially as his exploration of the military environment lacks breadth, depth and context.

He is not the only scholar to do so, and the work of Martin Francis on the RAF (*The Flyer*, 2008) or Nicholas Rasmussen on the Axis and Allied powers more generally, demonstrates a tendency for those writing on drug use in the military context to extrapolate some fairly sweeping conclusions. For example, while the figure of 72 million amphetamine tablets is often cited as the total number purchased for British forces during the Second World War, we have perhaps less than 100 examples of oral or autobiographical testimony from service personnel actually using the drug. It is only comparatively recently, by speaking with veterans and by exploring oral history material held by the Imperial War Museum, that scholars are beginning to get a feel, at least in the British context, for the scale and personal experience of amphetamine use during the conflict (Pugh, 'Bomber Command and the Use of Bensedrine Sulphate', 2016). Importantly, this is not to suggest that the conclusions of Ohler are incorrect, but it indicates that a more cautious approach to the subject is needed. This will enable military historians to establish a better understanding of the place of drugs in conflicts such as the Second World War.

If you choose to read *Blitzed* you will find it an engaging and entertaining piece of journalistic history. I suspect, like me, you will also find it troubling based on its tone, scholarship and engagement with the literature. However, it has got us talking about drugs and warfare and that can only be a good thing.

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**T.A. Heathcote, *Balochistan, the British and the Great Game: The Struggle for the Bolan Pass, Gateway to India*. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2015. pp. xiii+292. ISBN: 978-1-849-04479-0. Hardback. £24.00.**

From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the two World Wars, the Indus Frontier was one of the crucial borders of British-India in particular and the British Empire in general. It was a live frontier, where the Pathan (Pashtun) tribesmen fought