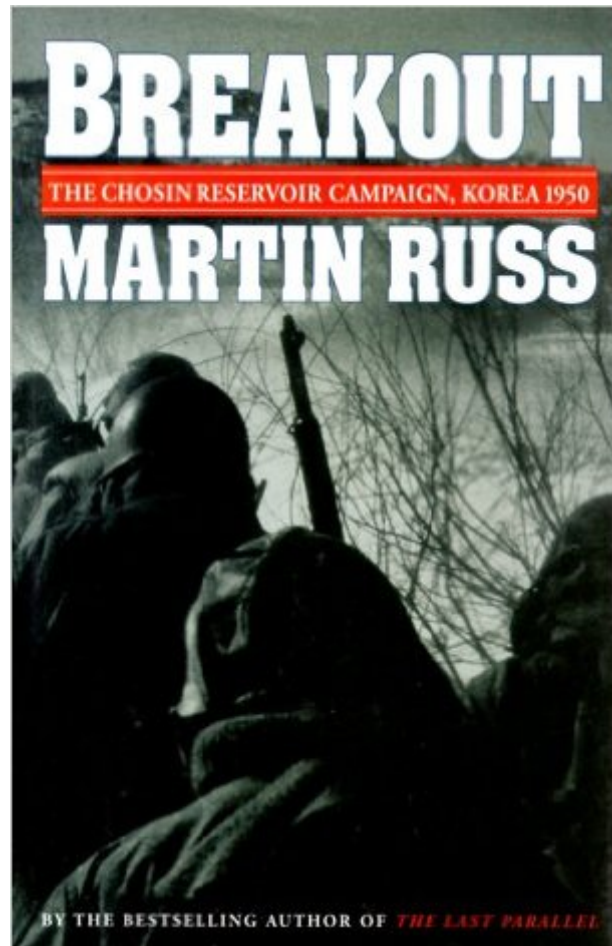


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Breakout: The Chosin Reservoir Campaign, Korea 1950



Synopsis

On November 27, 1950, a Chinese army of some 60,000 men poured over Korea's border, intent on wiping out a force of 12,000 Marines marching north to the Yalu River on General Douglas MacArthur's orders. The Marines were strung out along a narrow mountain road snaking its way up to the high plateau of the Chosin Reservoir. As the mercury dropped to a bone-chilling 30 degrees below zero, eight Chinese divisions emerged from hiding to pounce on the unsuspecting Americans. How the Marines, despite serious losses, broke out of encirclement while inflicting grueling punishment on the enemy is one of the most stirring sagas in the history of American arms. Step by bloody step, the Marines-given up for lost by headlines in the U.S.-fought their way back down the same precipitous road, miraculously taking their dead and wounded with them as they ran the ferocious gauntlet of unceasing Chinese attacks. Weaving into his account the voices of scores of individuals-ordinary Marines and their officers-Russ creates an unforgettable portrayal of the terror and courage of men as they face sudden death under the most horrendous conditions, making the bloody battles of the Korean hills and valleys come alive as they never have before.

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Customer Reviews

Seldom does a reader get the opportunity to read a true account of modern battle that is so gripping, so detailed, and so unforgettable as is this story of the attempt by 12,000 American Marines to fight their way out of an encirclement by seven divisions of Chinese and Korean troops at the Chosin Reservoir in Korea. Written by an ex-Marine who was himself a wounded veteran in Korea, its lines wring of the accuracy and poignancy only eyewitnesses could tell about the plight of the men caught

in the snow, wind, and sub-zero cold to fight off the vastly superior number of Chinese and Koreans and escape from the trap that had been set for them. This is a riveting story well told. The situation was bleak; it was mid-winter, and the Marines were cut off from supply lines and exposed to the extremes of weather, surrounded by seven divisions of better equipped and better situated Chinese and Korean troops who were most fanatical in their pursuit of them, ready to move in and annihilate the whole Marine force. The Marines, meanwhile, had little or no air support due to the terrible weather conditions, were relatively low on ammunition and other supplies, and the terrain was so formidable that they were quite effectively cut off and isolated and on their own. There could be little or no help from outside to save them. Yet through all these obstacles and with the numbers so much against them, the Marines slowly but methodically fought their way out, hill by hill, bluff by bluff, regiment to regiment, battalion to battalion, company to company, whatever it took to inflict such terrible casualties on the Chinese and Koreans as they went, as they fought, from Division level all the way down to small groups of 3 or 4 men fighting with unvarnished tenacity to kick

Breakout: The Chosin reservoir Campaign, Korea 1950 - Fromm International If you read only one book this year about men at war, let it be this one. You will read of the men of the 1st Marine Division and their fight out of the trap set for them by 7 divisions of Chinese whose sole mission was the extermination of the Marines. You will read of the men of the 1st Marine Division and a small commando of British Royal Marines fighting in incredibly difficult terrain and in flesh-killing cold, cold so deep and bitter that weapons froze and exposed flesh turned leper-white with frostbite. You will read how the Division fought, regiment by regiment, battalion by battalion, company by company, platoon by platoon and, finally, in small groups of 3 and 4 to repulse and win through attack after attack by a sea of tough, seasoned Chinese troops. You will read of individual acts of simple but great heroism and fidelity, for the men who fought in those frozen wastes remained faithful to one-another and their unit and their Corps. And throughout it all you will hear the voices of the men Russ interviewed and set down in their personal narratives, which he seamlessly wove together with his superb exposition. And always they speak simply of the extraordinary events in which they took part when they were young and slim and quick, events which remain fresh and immediate after almost 50 years. And they speak in the rhythms and accents of Americans from every region - from the barrios of Los Angeles to the privileged precincts of Westchester County. And, at the end, you will feel joy and pride as they stride out of the trap in step, marching and singing a paean of triumph, having destroyed 7 Chinese divisions and bringing out all their wounded and most of their dead. And you will weep for the dead.

In October, 1950, in one of the greatest blunders in military history, MacArthur ordered the 16,000 men of the 1st Marine Division into north Korea near its border with China. MacArthur made matters worse by separating the Marines into 4 units approximately 10 miles from each other. Martin Russ in "Breakout: The Chosin Reservoir Campaign, Korea 1950" tells how MacArthur's misjudgment almost resulted in the entire 1st Marine division being annihilated. (Final count of Marine casualties: 2,400 dead, 3,500 wounded, 200 missing, 6,200 nonbattle casualties, mostly frostbite.) (Full disclosure: I'm an ex-Marine.) In November 1950 the Marines met the Chinese communist forces in battle for the first time. A pamphlet told the Chinese troops what to do: "Kill these Marines as you would snakes in your home." (30,000 Chinese died in the campaign.) "Breakout" tells the amazing story of how the Marines fought their way from north Korea to the sea against daunting odds. Sixty thousand Chinese had surrounded the Marines. The cold -- 20 to 30 degrees below zero -- was causing frostbite and weapons to freeze up. The terrain was icy and mountainous. There was little food and little time to rest at night, since the Chinese attacked at night. Unless totally disabled, the wounded could not be evacuated to the rear since there was no rear and they were needed on the firing line. But through it all morale and optimism remained high. The stories of unbelievable courage and perseverance are moving and uplifting. For instance Lt. John Yancey was ordered to hold a crucial hill which controlled a roadway between two large Marine units. Yancey's 176 men, outnumbered over 20 to 1, held off wave after wave of assaults.

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