



Breakout: The Chosin Reservoir Campaign, Korea 1950

By Martin Russ

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Of interest will be the new PBS American Experience Documentary "The Battle of Chosin", which premiered on November 1, 2016.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Martin Russ's controversial book *Breakout: The Chosin Reservoir Campaign, Korea 1950* tells the riveting story of how 12,000 Army personnel and Marines fought their way out of an encirclement by more than 60,000 Chinese soldiers. A Marine wounded in combat during the Korean War, Russ writes with a passion for the men who endured freezing temperatures and scaled treacherous mountains while continuing to strike the enemy as they advanced toward safety.

While many accounts of modern war bog readers down in a morass of military and administrative details, Russ's history so clearly distinguishes the various units, locations, and personalities that shaped the campaign that it could easily be compared with the finest novels of battle, including Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*. Expertly moving between American, Chinese, and Korean points of view, Russ argues that the Marines were trapped at Chosin because of the arrogance of Douglas MacArthur, the incompetence of the U.S. Army, and the disciplined planning of the Chinese generals.

Celebrated for his brilliant war memoir, *The Last Parallel*, Russ has provoked criticism for his tendency in *Breakout* to disparage the U.S. Army. However, his quotations of numerous dispatches showing Marine commanders' concern about advancing into the Chosin area, as well as his consistent portrayal of Army officers' ineptitude, lend credence to his argument that it was the particular esprit de corps of the Marines that prevented the disintegration of American forces in the freezing wastes of North Korea. --James Highfill

From Publishers Weekly

In the annals of American heroic stands against long odds, Chosin Reservoir stands with the Alamo and Bataan with the bonus of a happy ending. Russ (*The Last Parallel*) has written the definitive account of the 1st Marine Division's epic breakout from the Chosin Reservoir in the winter of 1950. Outnumbered, unsupported and isolated in the depths of winter, 12,000 Marines, surrounded by 60,000 Chinese soldiers, cut their way out of encirclement and fought a path to the sea, bringing out most of their wounded and many of their dead with them. Small wonder, then, that Chosin Reservoir is celebrated as a victory by the Corps. Russ weaves the Marines' stories into a compelling tapestry of understated heroism, showing how the 1st Marine Division owed much to officers and senior NCOs with combat experience in WWII and the force of character to lead teenage riflemen from the front. Cohesion, as well as courage and tactical skill, brought the Marines out of Chosin. Time and again, those whom Russ interviewed stress the overriding importance of not letting down other Marines, no matter the cost. Russ relies heavily and appropriately on the accounts of Marines who fought at Chosin. The result is that there is a lot of detail, a lot of close-up recollections of localized battle, but Russ does an admirable job, when necessary, of panning back to give readers a picture of the whole campaign. Major ad/promo; author tour.

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From Library Journal

This dramatic story epitomizes the brotherhood and fighting spirit of the U.S. Marine Corps and is a hallmark of one of the Corps's greatest battles, the battle of the Chosin Reservoir in Korea, 1950. Freezing in subzero weather, low on food, fuel, and ammunition, and surrounded by ten Communist Chinese divisions that weren't supposed to be there, the 1st Marine Division fought its way out of encirclement, bringing out most of its dead and all of its wounded while inflicting horrific casualties on the enemy. Russ, a former Marine and author of *The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal* (1973), has produced a gripping oral history

that captures the viciousness of combat, the brutal weather conditions, the forbidding terrain, and the Marines' incredible triumph with stark realism and unvarnished candor. He also illustrates the fine line between hope and despair, heroism and cowardice among men at war. Although primarily a history of the Marines in Korea, this book also provides a clear view of the big picture, with stinging criticism of General MacArthur and the incompetence of the U.S. Army. An outstanding history; highly recommended for all public libraries. A Col. William D. Bushnell, USMC, Brunswick, ME
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