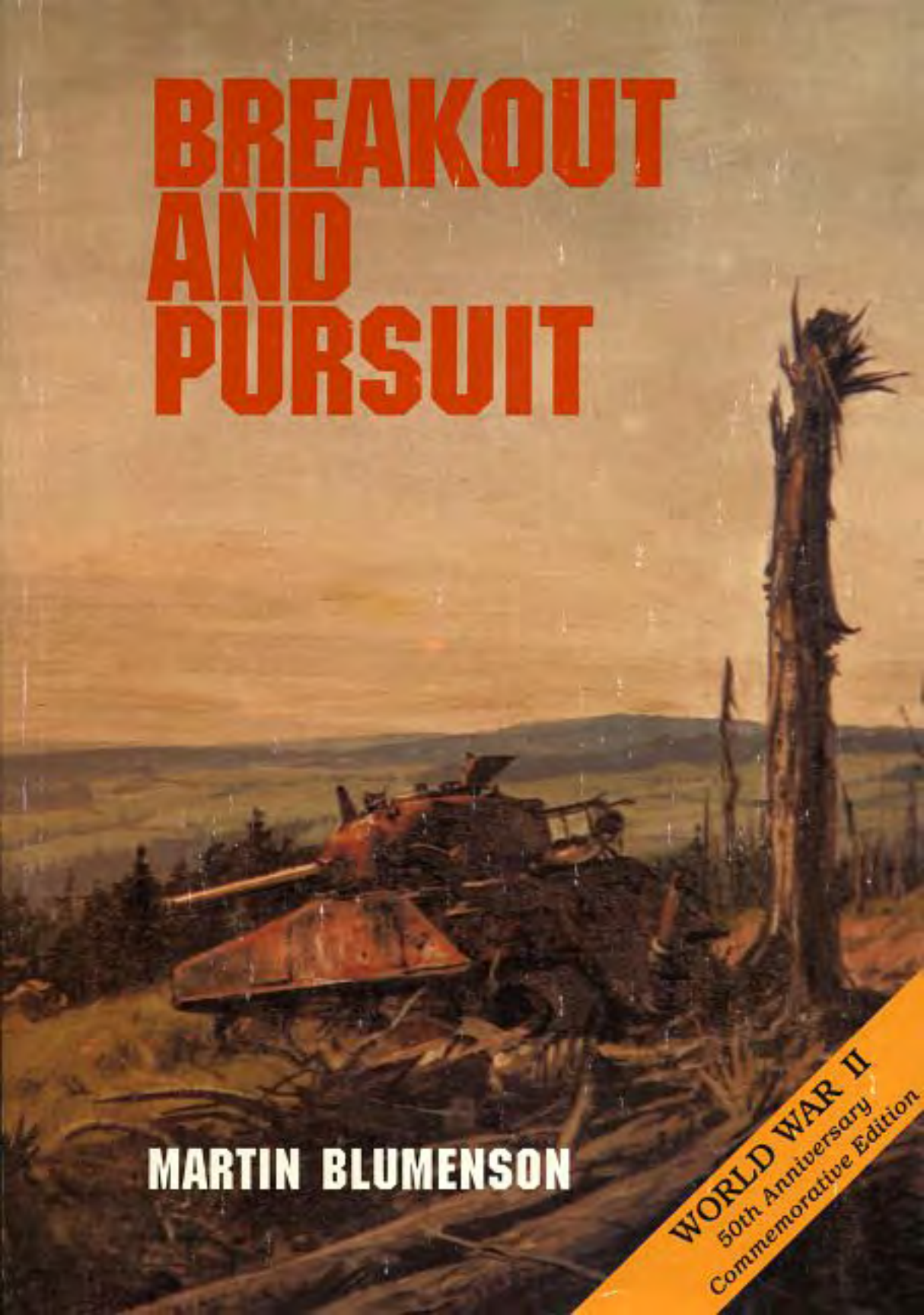


BREAKOUT AND PURSUIT

The background of the cover is a painting depicting a scene of war's aftermath. In the foreground, a heavily damaged and rusted tank lies on its side, partially obscured by debris and twisted metal. To the right, a tall, thin, charred tree trunk stands as a stark monument. The landscape beyond is a vast, hazy plain under a pale, overcast sky, suggesting a desolate and somber atmosphere.

MARTIN BLUMENSON

WORLD WAR II
50th Anniversary
Commemorative Edition

UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II

The European Theater of Operations

BREAKOUT AND PURSUIT

by

Martin Blumenson

CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

UNITED STATES ARMY

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1993

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 61-6000

First Printed 1961—CMH Pub 7-5-1

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

. . . to Those Who Served

Foreword

The campaign in the summer of 1944 related in this volume included some of the most spectacular ground action of the U.S. Army during World War II. It began with the slow and costly hedgerow fighting against determined German efforts to contain the Normandy beachhead; it entered its decisive stage when the breach of German defenses permitted full exploitation of the power and mobility of U.S. Army ground troops; and it reached the peak of brilliance with successive envelopments of principal German forces and the pursuit of their remnants north and east to free most of France, part of Belgium, and portions of the Netherlands. By late August the war in the west appeared to be almost over, but the tyranny of logistics gave the enemy time to rally at the fortified West Wall and delay surrender for another eight months.

In the European Theater subseries the backdrop for this volume is *Cross-Channel Attack*, which carries the story to 1 July. *Breakout and Pursuit* follows the U.S. First Army through 10 September (where *The Siegfried Line Campaign* picks up the narrative), and the U.S. Third Army through 31 August (where *The Lorraine Campaign* begins). The logistical factors that played so large a part in governing the pace and extent of combat operations are described in much greater detail in Volume I of *Logistical Support of the Armies*.

The tremendous scope of this campaign, and its partially improvised character, have left a heritage of controversies to which no final answers can be given. The author has had free access to the records and to many of the leading players in the drama, and his account should have wide appeal to the general reader as well as to the serious military student of grand tactics.

Washington 25, D.C.
15 June 1960

JAMES A. NORELL
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History

The Author

Martin Blumenson, a graduate of Bucknell University, received M.A. degrees in History from Bucknell in 1940 and from Harvard University in 1942. Commissioned in the Army of the United States, he served as a historical officer of the Third and Seventh Armies in the European theater during World War II. After the war he taught history at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point) and at Hofstra College. Recalled to active duty with the U.S. Army in 1950, he commanded a historical detachment in Korea before beginning work on *Breakout and Pursuit* in June 1952. He wrote the book while on active duty in the Office of the Chief of Military History. After a tour of duty as Historian, Joint Task Force SEVEN, he returned to OCMH as a civilian historian and is writing a volume on the war in the Mediterranean theater—Salerno to Cassino. His works include *Special Problems of the Korean Conflict* (Washington, 1952); *The Atomic Weapons Tests in the Pacific, 1956* (Washington, 1957); two essays in *Command Decisions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959); and numerous articles in military and historical journals.

Preface

Covering the period 1 July to 11 September 1944, *Breakout and Pursuit* takes up the story of the European campaign at the time when the Allies considered their cross-Channel beachhead well established on the Continent. How the Allies exploited the initial success of their landings and drove from the shores of Normandy to the German border is the subject of the volume.

The events of the period comprise a rich variety of military experience. Virtually every sort of major operation involving co-ordinated action of the combined arms is found: the grueling positional warfare of the battle of the hedgerows, the breakthrough of the main enemy position, exploitation, encirclement, and pursuit, as well as a number of actions falling under the general heading of special operations—an assault river crossing, the siege of a fortress, and night combat, among others. In their variety and complexity, these operations frequently bring into sharp focus the delicate problems of coalition warfare.

The point of view is from the top down—how the situation appeared to the commanders and what decisions they made to solve their problems. Though the author has tried to present at some time or other the situation at each command echelon on the Allied side, the most consistent observation post is at the corps level where, because of the nature of the operations, particular independence of judgment and great initiative in action were required.

The emphasis is on the ground combat performed by U.S. Army troops. The activities of the other Allied forces and of the opposing Germans are included to the extent required to bring the American effort into proper perspective. Air support and logistical arrangements have been detailed when necessary for a better understanding of ground operations.

The attempt has been made to fulfill two objectives, each of which has sometimes excluded the other. On the one hand, the author has endeavored to present material of interest to the career soldier, who may seek instruction and who may perhaps be prompted to further study. On the other hand, the author has tried to write an account of interest to the general reader, who may be motivated by curiosity and the hope of learning in some detail about the conduct of the campaign, the expenditure of men and matériel, and the problems that face military leaders engaged in war.

The dates in the volume are all in 1944 unless otherwise noted.

The author has had the privilege and pleasure of working with many who have lightened his task and to whom he is greatly indebted. Mr. Wsevolod Aglaimoff, Deputy Chief Historian for Cartography, gave liberally of his military sophistication, perspective, and wisdom; his contributions to the military content and language of this volume were considerable. Mr. James B. Hodgson did most of the research in the German records; his knowledge of enemy operations was always a tonic to an author struggling to reflect both sides of the same battle in a single mirror. Miss Mary Ann Bacon, the editor, saved the author embarrassment by discovering before it was too late many inconsistencies and contradictions in fact as well as in style. Dr. Kent Roberts Greenfield, the former Chief Historian, by his very presence an inspiration in the cause of scholarship, gave invaluable help in military as well as historical matters during the writing and revision of the manuscript.

Mrs. Lois Aldridge at the Federal Records Center, Alexandria, was never too busy to locate and make available pertinent documents, which otherwise would not have come to the author's attention. Mrs. Helen V. Whittington, copy editor, performed a painstaking task with cheerful patience. Ruth Alexandra Phillips selected the photographs. Nicholas J. Anthony compiled the Index.

Among those to whom the author owes a special debt of appreciation are the present Chief of Military History, Brig. Gen. James A. Norell, as well as Maj. Gens. Orlando Ward, Albert C. Smith, and John H. Stokes, former Chiefs of Military History, and Cols. George G. O'Connor and Ridgway P. Smith, Jr., former Chiefs of the War Histories Division.

The work was undertaken under the guidance of Dr. Hugh Cole and the supervision of Dr. Roland A. Ruppenthal, former chiefs of the European section. It was completed under the direction of Mr. Charles B. MacDonald, Senior Historical Adviser of the World War II Branch, whose understanding of military operations, felicity of phrase, and patient and unsparing counsel put him without question first among those who helped to give the volume whatever value it may have.

To these and many more go my sincere thanks.

For the facts presented, the interpretations made, and the conclusions drawn, for inadequacies and errors, I alone am responsible.

Washington, D.C.
15 June 1960

MARTIN BLUMENSON

Contents

PART ONE

In the Wake of the Invasion

Chapter		Page
I.	THE ALLIES	3
	<i>Mission</i>	3
	<i>Forces</i>	7
	<i>Terrain</i>	10
	<i>Tactics</i>	13
II.	THE ENEMY	17
	<i>The Machinery of War</i>	17
	<i>The Changing Strategy</i>	20
	<i>Tactical Dispositions</i>	29
III.	THE SITUATION	36
	<i>American</i>	36
	<i>German</i>	47

PART TWO

The Battle of the Hedgerows

IV.	THE OFFENSIVE LAUNCHED	53
	<i>The Preparations</i>	53
	<i>The Defenses</i>	58
	<i>Poterie Ridge</i>	60
	<i>Mont Castre</i>	63
	<i>Montgardon Ridge</i>	72
V.	THE OFFENSIVE BROADENED	78
	<i>The Carentan-Périers Isthmus</i>	78
	<i>The Vire and Taute Bridgehead</i>	90
VI.	THE ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT	102