



# The Siege of Brest 1941: A Legend of Red Army Resistance on the Eastern Front

*Rostislav Aliev*

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On 22 June 1941, soon after 3am, the first German shells smashed into the Soviet frontier fortress of Brest – Hitler's Operation Barbarossa had begun. Across a massive front stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, the Wehrmacht advanced, taking the Red Army by surprise, brushing aside the first stunned resistance, breaking through and taking thousands of prisoners, but the isolated stronghold of Brest held out. The defenders, trapped and without hope of relief, put up a tenacious resistance against an entire German division as the Soviet front collapsed behind them. The heroic defence of Brest has become one of the legends of the Second World War on the Eastern Front, an example of selfless Soviet heroism in the face of Nazi aggression. Rostislav Aliev, in this gripping narrative, describes the fighting in vivid detail, hour by hour. In the process he strips away the myths and exaggerations that have grown up around this famous story. Using eyewitness testimony and fresh research, he reconstructs each stage of the siege – the shock and violence of the initial artillery barrage, the disorder among the defenders as they struggled to organize resistance, their doomed counter-attacks, the continuous, merciless pounding of the fabric of the fortress by German guns and bombs, the grim fate of the Soviet survivors, and the extraordinary aftermath – the suicidal resistance of small groups of Red Army soldiers operating underground in the passages and dungeons of the shattered fortress.

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