

Chris Jackson

The origin of the unit is the 87th Rifles a pre-war formation, formed before 1929. 1929 to 1941 mainly stationed in the Ukraine (later Kiev Special) Military District.

They had seen action during the Invasion of Poland in 1939 and were sent as re-enforcements to the winter war with Finland (during it's second phase) thus escaping the fate of many Red Army units during the first phase of the Conflict with Finland, which proved to be a tenacious enemy.

Based in the Ukraine in 1941, they were attached to the 5th Army and stationed in the "Vladimir Volinsky fortified region".

They were in action against German troops during the opening hours of the German invasion with at least part of the Division being encircled on that first day. Their involvement in heavy fighting seems to have continued as their recently appointed commander, Maj.Gen.F.F.Alyabushev was killed only 3 days after the start of the war. Three months later, in the fighting that ended with the encirclement of Kiev, the 87th Rifle Division were still part of the 5th army order of Battle. Although encircled, along with hundreds of thousands of other Red Army soldiers, much of the 5th army were able to escape after a counter attack by Belov's 20th cavalry corps broke through the German ring around Kiev.

Amongst the troops that escaped to fight another day was Beloved Veteran Red Army Officer Colonel Alexandir Rodimstev Commander 5th Airborne Brigade and soldiers of the 3rd Airborne corps, which had been transferred to 5th Army shortly before the fighting around Kiev..

6th November 1941, the 87th Rifle Division was re-formed around the survivors of the 3rd Airborne corps and put under the command of Col. Rodimstev.

19th Jan 1942, the 87th Rifles were (Officially) awarded Guards Status and were re-designated the 13th Guards Rifle Division. We have been unable to find the reason for the award of this honor, but to be re-designated as Guards, a unit had to achieve a major success during operations. The taking of a major objective, under very heavy fighting and against all the odds would be the type of criteria for the award. It was authorized by Stalin and could be withdrawn just as quickly if a unit failed to achieve a subsequent objective, no matter what the circumstances of the failure.

In May 1942, the 13th were involved in the counter offensive at Kharkov, where they fought on its northern axis, so escaping encirclement and destruction. During this offensive, they suffered 50% casualties, mostly sustained repelling fierce German counter attacks. It was during one of these attacks that an Artillery Captain of the 13th earned the first, "Order of the Great Patriotic War", 1st class to be awarded. Following this offensive, Colonel Redimstev was promoted to Major General.

After the Kharkov operation, the 13th Guards are pulled from the line for refit & resupply.

September 13-14 - 4:45am - German infantry divisions make their first advance into Stalingrad, with the German 71st Infantry reaching the city centre, north of the Tsarita gorge. A direct Stavka (Soviet Supreme General Staff) directive orders the 13th Guard Division (in the midst of it's re-fit) to the Volga and Stalingrad as reinforcements. The 13th arrives in pieces, its men straight from a grueling forced march. Due to being in the midst of re-fit & resupply, one thousand of its men have no rifles, and the rest are short of ammunition. Briefed by Chuikov on his assignment, Rodimtsev declared, "I am a Communist. I have no intention of abandoning the city (Stalingrad.)" Chuikov sends this questionable band straight into the battle. Because of the influx of new

Chris Jackson

1750 pt Udarny Strelkovy

Stalin's Onslaught

recruits the division is now largely inexperienced, and lacks both maps and knowledge of Stalingrad's blitzed terrain. But Gen. Alexander Rodimtsev's (13th Guards Division Commander) is familiar with street fighting from his experiences during the Spanish Civil War. His division moves across the river at dusk, to reinforce a line held by a mere 15 tanks. Of 10,000 soldiers under command of General A. I. Rodimtsev, 3,000 perish within the first 24 hours under brutal Hand-to-Hand Combat conditions, the German advance is stopped.

The commander of the 62nd Army himself to carry out a vital, but near suicidal mission - hold the railroad station in downtown Stalingrad would handpick one of Rodimtsev's junior officers.

Lt. Anton Kuzmich Dragan received these orders from Vasily Chuikov in person. Gathering a platoon of less than 50 men, Dragan and his soldiers proceeded to frustrate the Germans in an epic room-by-room struggle for control of the depot for nearly three weeks. Breaking through walls, crawling over the rafters, and burrowing under the floorboards, the Russians would yield a portion of the building to the Germans only to emerge elsewhere and start the struggle all over again.

Exchanging gunfire down hallways, lobbing grenades back and forth between rooms, Dragan's men inflicted as many casualties as possible on the enemy. In spite of this heroic resistance, Dragan's force was eventually reduced to a handful of men. Running out of ammunition, their rations gone, one of his soldiers took out a bayonet and carved on the wall, "Rodimtsev's Guardsmen fought and died for their country here". Under cover of darkness, Dragan and 5 of his soldiers slipped out of the building, made their way through enemy lines, and later rejoined the fight.

September 15 - Battle at the Mamaev Kurgan Park begins two months of brutal fighting between German and Russian infantry. Control of the park's summit will change hands numerous times over this period. Fighting also commences throughout the city in bombed-out buildings and factories. They then fought in the cauldron that was Stalingrad, on the slopes of the Mamayev Kurgan, in the Red October Tractor plant and in "Pavlov's house"(Sergeant Jakob Pavlov was part of the Division) Some accounts state that of the 10,000 men of the 13th that crossed the Volga, only between 280 and 320 of them came out alive. This profligacy with life seems incredible to Western eyes, but was not unremarkable during the conflict on the Eastern front.

Following the Red Army Victory at Stalingrad and the destruction of the German 6th Army, the 13th Guards are again pulled from the lines for re-fit and re-supply. Alongside the 5th Guards tank army, the 13th Guards are held in reserve South of Kursk, to counter the forthcoming German offensive there-operation "Citadel". The original intention was to use these two formations to counter attack after the German assault had been ground down, but (as we now know), both formations were committed to prevent a possible breakthrough, which, after 3-4 days of continuous heavy fighting (including the tank battle at Prokhorovka) they achieve grinding the elite SS formations to a standstill.

Shortly after thereafter, they move over to the planned counter attack and played their full part in the liberation of their country. They take part in the Kirovograd operation in the Ukraine and are the unit that liberated the town of Poltava. Our information on this liberation is sketchy, but the 13th Guards Rifle Division have the designation of "13th Guards Rifle Division, Poltava", indicating that this was not an easy liberation.

As part of the 1st Ukrainian front, they arrived at the Southern edge of Berlin and took part in the crossing of the Teltov Canal, assaulting into the heart of the Reich. We can't be sure if the 13th Guards ever linked up with the Americans at Torgau, but it is possible, as their parent formation, the 5th Guards Army, certainly did.

Chris Jackson
1750 pt Udarny Strelkovy
Stalin's Onslaught

25	HQ	
45	AT Section	
45	ATR Section	
95	Sapper Platoon	
15	Komisar	
275	1 st Udarny Strelk Kompanie	2 x R/MG Platoons, 1 x SMG Platoon, Komisar, Maxim
260	2 nd Udarny Strelk Kompanie	2 x R/MG Platoons, 1 x SMG Platoons, Maxim
100	Scout Platoon	1 x squad
55	AT Platoon	1 x section
150	Assault Gun Platoon	4 x SU76M
505	Heavy Assault Gun Platoon	4 x ISU-152, 5 x AAMG
180	Flamethrower Sections	2 x Sections

Chris Jackson
1750 pt Udarny Strelkovy
Stalin's Onslaught