

AAR: ASL Scenario A – The Guards Counterattack



The world probably doesn't need yet another ASL AAR of this classic scenario, but we chose **The Guards Counterattack** as our first attempt to learn the full ASL system. We've played a number of ASLSK games and feel like we have most of the basics down pretty well.

There is just too rich a vein of material in the full ASL world and I convinced my playing buddy to finally step off of the cliff with me.

Hopefully, this AAR (and others to follow) may help educate and inspire others who are thinking of finally getting into ASL. For those who have played for many (many..) years, this write up may serve as an entertaining reminder of our lost youths. Jon Mishcon likened this and other classic scenarios to an "old lover" back in The General Issue 22.6 (in 1986). 32 years have passed since then – does it hold up?

I have played this Scenario many times in the past as part of the original Squad Leader games/gamettes. It's been many years, however, since we've crossed the streets of Stalingrad. And ASL is certainly NOT SL.

Location: Stalingrad, Russia

Date: October 6, 1942

There's nothing I could add to the mountain of information surrounding the Battle of Stalingrad. This Scenario takes place about 2 months in, and about a month before Operation Uranus and the massive Soviet counter-attack.

Participants:

- German Company "H", 389th Infantry Regiment
- Soviet 308th Rifle Division, 2nd Battalion of 37th Guards Division

ROAR:

At time of writing, Germans win 50.6% of the time.

Special Rules: None

Victory Conditions:

Russians win at end of Turn 5 if they've gained (net) 2 or more buildings initially occupied/controlled. Or, they can win if they finish with favorable 3:1 ration of unbroken squad equivalents.

Introduced This Scenario:

The Complete ASL Rulebook. We read through Chapter A in great detail, and only added bits of Chapter B. As you all know, too much to mention.

Setup:

Apart from significant Rulebook study and going through any number of helpful websites, we did a detailed VASL walkthrough of Tom Repetti's Example of Play, which plays through about 1.5 turns of this scenario and clearly presents the mechanics as well as introduces new concepts that aren't part of the ASLSK rules. There's also a fun video [here](#) on YouTube – a video playthrough of the same scenario.

In the end, to give us a foundation from which to build, we set up the game per Jon Mishcon's article in The General (also re-printed in the "ASL Classic" magazine from 1999).

We're also going to follow many of his suggested tactics (at least in Turn 1) and see how things play out.

Our notes from Mishcon's article:

- A9.31 – Mishcon deploys one 4-4-7 into two HS 2-4-7 during setup. Did this to draw some Prep Fire.
- Encirclement – Germans just can't hide in upstairs building locations.
- Germans must form large firegroups and "pray for KIAs".
- Hard for Russian to root out F6.
- Building K5 has two stairwells for invading Russians to use.
- I7 is vulnerable to Russian Human Wave via F6/G6/H5
- Always use Commissar (9-0) in building N4.
- Try to align forces for Human Waves in building N4/M4 and building G6 (when taken).
- Units in F6 will become Concealed at start of play.

Russian Tactics Suggested

- Prepfire J4, Dash to F5, Congregate in M5 and N5.
- Retreat MMG to K2, Human Wave on L6 and I7.
- Leaving units in G5 will prevent retreat upstairs in F6.

German Tactics Suggested

- After 1st PFP, put someone on 1st floor above every stairwell.
- Concentrate fire on Russians advancing to stairwells.
- Move HMG into M7.

With this in mind, below is how the game was set up, before Concealment is applied for those units out of LOS.



Russians gain Concealment in G3, N2 and N4. Germans gain in F6.1.

Turn 1

Russian Turn 1

A lot of dice rolls followed by 20 minute periods of reviewing the rules.

PFP from J2-J4 had immediate effect, breaking one squad, but triggering the German sniper who moved to J2 – the very hex where the attack originated, pinning the MMG squad. The firegroup in M5.1/N5.1 attacked at 16FP/+3 against L6, and rolled 6-6. No long term effect, but certainly took the wind out of the Russian sails.

In the MPh, units in E4 and F3 begin their dash to F5. A firelane is set up by the LMG in J4 and, even with only 1 RFP, those -2 DRM take their toll. 6 units rush across, but only 3 make it to F5 – one is pinned, one broken and one outright eliminated.

The Germans had good success in their DFPh, first removing Concealment from the stock in H3 and pinning one of the squads. Their “kill stack” in L6 broke both units in M5.1, preventing any organized FG or HW attempt for the Russians in their next Turn.

In the APh, the 3 Russian 6-2-8s advance from F5 to F6, directly below a large, concealed German stack that started the game in F6.1.



Near the end of Russian Turn 1 – the dash to F5 was only about 50% successful.. many Russian units were Pinned this turn and thus a bit more spread out than we would have liked. The Germans rolled fairly well and kept the Russians at bay in the east.

German Turn 1

In RPh, we got to try out the new Commissar rules. Hex N4 had two broken Russian squads, one unit passed while the other failed and was ELR'd.

For the PFPh, in Hex 6, the Germans come out of Concealment and fire downstairs onto the Russian's heads:



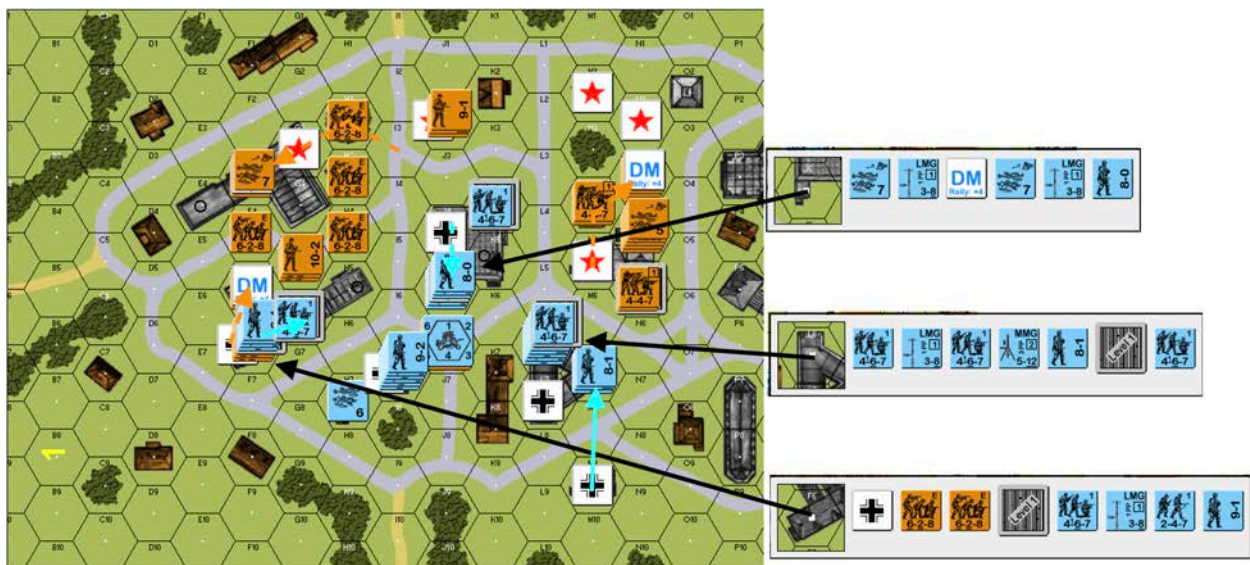
Their attack, however, only manages to break 1 Russian unit.

The balance of the German PFPh goes well, breaking units in I3 and the firegroup in M5 and N5.

The Germans move From M9 into building M7, per Mischon's recommendation, passing 4 PTC in the process unaffected.

In the DFPh, the best success for the Russians comes from an J2-J4 attack, breaking the pesking Germans in the upstairs. However, that same attack triggers the German sniper who, with a dr=1, picks on the Russian Sniper and lowers the SAN to 5.

The Germans use their APH to move some units upstairs in L6 and to spread out a bit upstairs in building G6.



End of Game Turn 1 – The Germans made the most of their PFPh and repulsed most of the Russian advance.

Turn 2

Russian Turn 2

The Russian player already feels like he's blown an opportunity to swarm (via Human Wave) into building G6. Things feel scattered and the PBF combat up and down the stairwell in F6 has (so far) not gone the way he wanted. The Russian advantage of numbers hasn't yet been put to good use and the Germans feel more dug in than when we started. Time to get moving.

In the PFPh, the Russian in F6 finally get the DR they wanted and break both German squads (but not their leader) in F6.1. The Russians also soften up the Germans a bit in L6 before moving on to the MPh.

The Russian 10-2 with stack of 6-2-8s assault move into G6 and survive cleanly the DF from the I7 kill stack, both as D1F and DFF. They continue to flood the building and are largely successful in achieving the goals in the west. The eastern part of the map is a different story, any movement is met with immediate response. The Russian attempts to assault move into the streets in L3 and L4 goes terribly wrong – one unit broken and the other unit KIA'd by the German MMG in L6.

The Russians get their revenge in G6 with a fantastic 2MC shot on to the stack in I7, breaking all 3 German units (but not the leader). This shot does trigger the German Sniper, but he only manages to Pin the Russian Sniper for the balance of this player turn.

RtPh: The broken Germans in F6.1, unable to rout away (they know of Russians in J2), must surrender per A20.21. The Russians accept the surrender and two Prisoner units drpp their LMG and are moved downstairs to F6 and guarded by one of the Russian squads. The unbroken German leader, upstairs in F6.1 is disgusted by the whole affair.

CCPh: We get our first Close Combat in G6.1, when the Russian 6-2-8 advanced into the unit with the lone German 9-1 leader. No ambush. The Russians make their kill # and the German leader fails and is eliminated.



End of Russian Turn 2 – things going better now. Only a lone German squad upstairs in G6 is preventing the Russians from taking control of their first Axis building. The German defense in the west is collapsing; the east is still held strong and the Russians need to spend time rallying broken units.

German Turn 2

RPh: Germans self-rally in H7, rally in L6; of the 3 broken units in I7, 2 make their rally die rolls (thanks to 9-2 leader), but the 3rd rolls 6-6, fate (A10.64) steps in and the unit is CR'd. Overall, a huge win for the Germans, whose west defensive line was rapidly collapsing. The Russian Commissar in N3 rallies all 3 of his 1st line 4-4-7 units.

PFPPh: The Germans in L6 attempt Spraying Fire (A9.5) against the Russians in locations M5 and M5.1, and attack each hex with an 8FP (already halved)/+2. The result is only a PTC on all 3 – of which 2 pass, but the German SNIPER is awakened and he strikes N3. Random selection saves the Commissar, but one of his recently rallied units is again broken.

MPh: German skulks G6.1 to H5.1. Half squad starts end around to the west.

DFPh; The Russian elects to deploy is full squad guarding prisoners into 2 HS (A20.5) and begin the task of focusing on that MMG in I7. This gives them an 18FP/+3 attack from F6/F6.1 to I7, but of course they roll high doubles, cower and are done for the Phase. Their comrades in G6 come through for them.. breaking the German leader and the remaining two GO squads in I7.



After Germans advance and end of Turn 2. The Rally Phase in Turn 3 will be VERY important. They must rally in I7 and J5 to have any chance of holding back the Russians.

Turn 3 Russian Turn 3

RPh: Commissar does his work in N3 and once again rallies those, whether by inspiration or intimidation. Neither of the German units in N5 are rallied. The German leader in I7 (under DM) does not Self-Rally and thus none of his stack can likewise make any rally attempt. This is very bad news.

Russians largely skip PFP and get to moving. One squad moves N3 to L3 and the Germans respond with Firelane established M7 to K2. This immediately breaks the Russian in L3 and sets up a 4ResFP fireland. The balance of Russians decide not to cross that street this turn and maneuver from within the building for a better opportunity in the future.

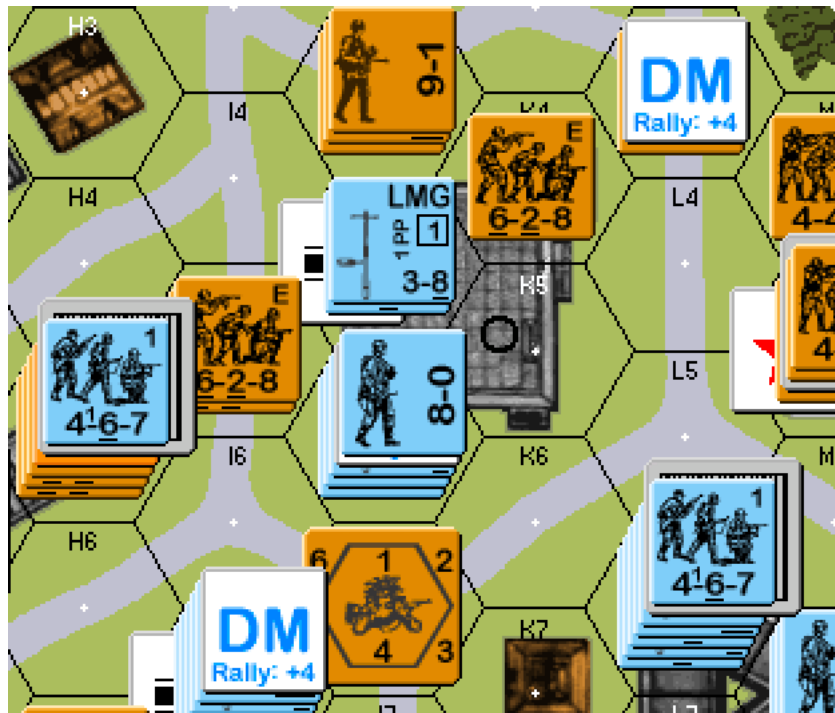
A Russian 6-2-8 assault moves into K4 and survives PFB from J4, both as D1F and SFF. The same scenario is played out upstairs in building G6 when a Russian unit moves from F6.1 to G6.1 and shrugs off the PFB from the German unit trapped in H5.1.

A Defensive fire shot from L6 to H5 creates a 16FP/+1 shot with 1MC to the German leader and 2 6-2-8 squads. The leader rolls '1-1' on his MC and thus the game stops again while we read through the new (to us) rules of Heat of Battle (A15.1). Are leaders Elite? Yes, per A1.11.

Leader goes Berserk.. off to A15.4, A15.44 for more reading. Per (A15.41) he now attempts to change his two squads – which “pass” their MC and become Berserk as well. The Russians had assault moved into H5 and so can’t move any more in this phase, but will enter the streets to H6 toward the KEU in I7 during the APh.

DFPh: The Germans in J4 opt for FPF against J3 to keep that leader and MMG away – and do no damage but also don’t suffer breaking.

RtPh: We ran into a situation that we’re not sure was played out correctly:



The Germans in J5 were put into DM when the Russians in I5 moved ADJACENT to them during the MPPh. Now, it is the RtPh. For the Germans, there are KEU in H5, I5 and N5 (off screen of the photo above). No Quarter is NOT in effect. J5 is a stairwell hex and so we elected to have the broken units, with LMG and with 8-0 leader, simply run upstairs to J5.1. J5.1 is not ADJACENT to I5 and we did not move to another ADJACENT hex by running upstairs for 1MF.

German Turn 3

RtPh: Germans in J5 are not rallied. Units in N4 with Commissar are rallied.

PFPPh; L6-J5.0 (16FP/+2) rolls a '5-6' and is completely ineffective.

MPh: After reading the Guard rules (A20.52), the Germans in E8 realize that neither of the Russians in H7 nor in F6 can fire on him. He goes CX and starts scooting to E5 and draws D1F from J4. But even at 6FP/-3, the Germans make their MC and finish their movement in E4, putting the broken Russians in F3 back into DM. This plucky German HS could manage to take control of this building unless the Russians double back and secure their rear.

DFPh: The Beserk units in H6 fire on the broken Germans in J5.1 and force NMC for the leader and two broken units. The leader breaks, but one of the squads gets Heat of Battle – who rolls an adjusted DR of 11 and is Disrupted. They immediately surrender to the Russians downstairs. So much for hoping for a hero to get the Germans out of this fix!

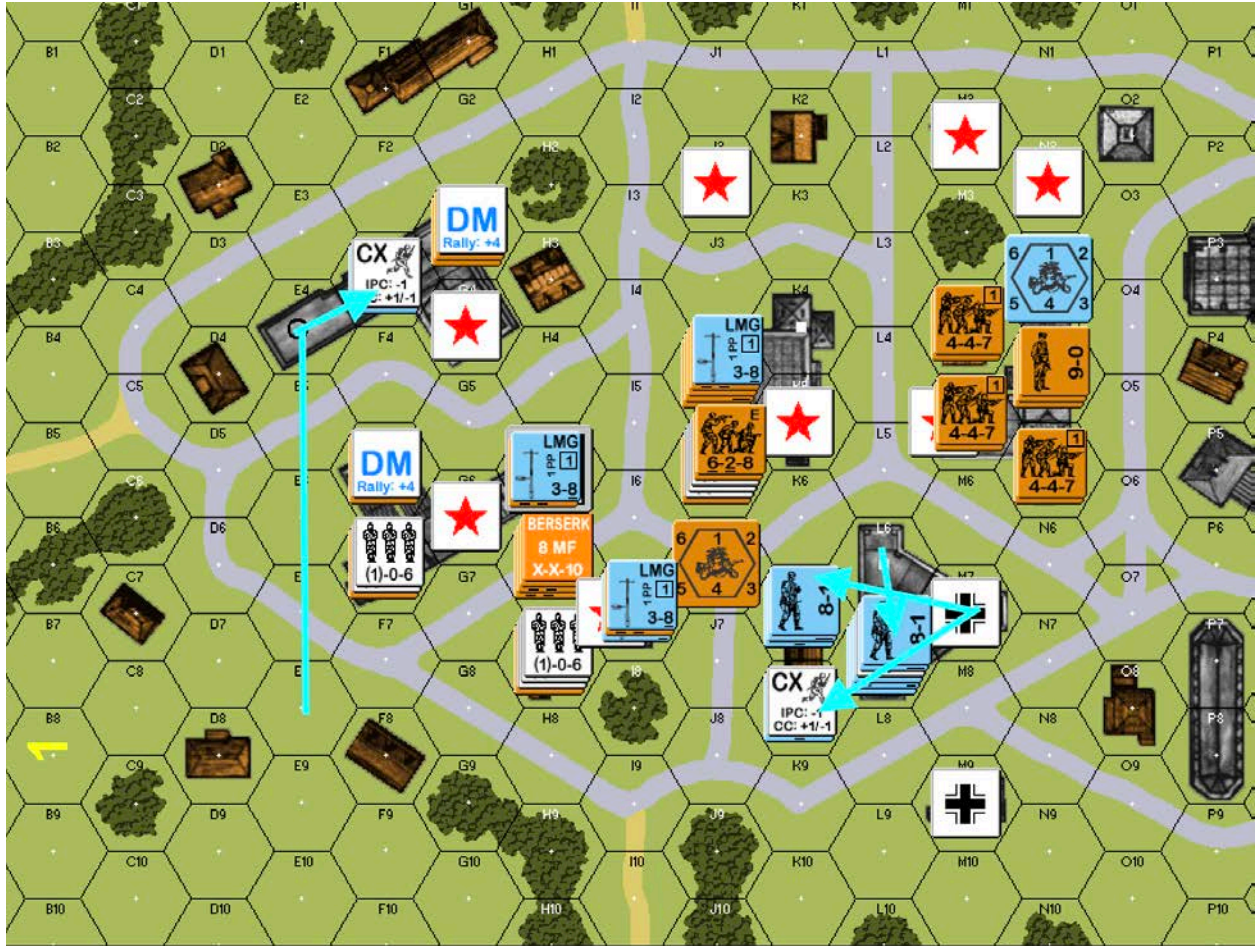
A Firegroup in M5&N5 get a 16FP/+3 shot on L6 and manage to break both German units.

RtPh:

German squad and leader in J5.1 are forced to surrender. They have ADJACENT units in J5. They can't move to J4.1 (reduces # hexes to KEU) in J4. They can't move to K5.1 for same reason (KEU in N5). This surrender gives control of building J4 completely to the Russians.

The Russians have now met the minimum requirements for the Scenario Victory Conditions, but must now maintain this level through the end of Turn 5.

CCPh: The Melee in H5 concludes with the elimination of the German HS. Here, building control of G6 now goes over to the Russians as well.



Near the end of Game Turn 3 – at this point the Germans concede the Scenario.

The Russians have taken control of 3 German buildings and are still strong and positioned well. Most of the remaining German forces are broken; even with successful rallying in Turn 4, they won't have the offensive strength to take back what they've given.

Result: Russian (Soviet) Victory

Impressions: Well, this was a lot of fun for the both of us. We both have a good bit of ASLSK experience, but throwing in all of these new Chapter A rules sure did slow down the game a good bit. What must surely come as second nature to most of you took us a great deal of time to read and play through. I'm sure you remember what that was once like. Things looked pretty rosy for the Germans after Turn 1, but things went terribly wrong afterwards; the Germans couldn't buy a DR with any of their defensive "kill stacks" and then once the leaders began failing their MC, there wasn't anybody left to defend from the western invasion. We never did get in a Human Wave – that will have to wait for another day.

Any comments/observations about faulty application of the rules would be appreciated – it's the only way we're going to learn... that, and play more scenarios.

Rules Notes:

(A2.9 Setup Limitations). It took me a long time to figure out how Mishcon could divide one German 4-4-7 unit into two HS and place them in different locations during the setup. This rule shows how – up to 10% (FRU) of the squads can be freely Deployed without TC prior to setup. This scenario has 13 German squads, so I could Deploy 2 if I had wished.

(A7.7 Encirclement). Key is being fired on consecutively by 2+ units in PFPh, DFPh or AFPh. Occurs when LOS of attacks:

- Through opposite hexspines.
- 3 target-hex vertices between them (180 deg hex sides)
- Any 3 non-contiguous hex sides.

Result of Encirclement is (-1) to Morale, +1 DRM on IFT. MF cost doubled for first location entered. We still didn't play this right, quite likely. How do people "remember" that a unit has been fired on from different directions "consecutively" across different phases?