

BACK TO THE VIIPURI

By J. Richard Jarvinen

Once Again Into the Fray of Russian Campaign Opening Setups

The original *Viipuri* Defense (see *GENERAL*, Vol. 13, No. 6) was the result of several months work and playtesting some years ago and stood me in good stead in the occasional *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN* games I was able to play. Unfortunately it did suffer from several flaws, the most notable being hex W25, which Ron Beyma so convincingly pointed out in a Series Replay (*GENERAL*, Vol. 16, No. 4). A few months following that embarrassment, another German PBM opponent took advantage of an error in the Western Military District. After overrun three key units (see Diagram 1), he poured in armor units from other sectors and breached the Dvina on turn 1!

Needless to say, I went back to the drawing board and emerged several weeks later with a new *Viipuri* defense, one which takes care of the previous two mistakes and hopefully precludes any new ones. In the playtests since that time, no opponent has been able to tackle the Dvina or Bug rivers until the second turn, a concept I consider essential to any viable Russian defense.

In the central sectors, *Viipuri* II is characterized by a solid wall of strongpoints, the most significant feature of which is that all of the front line units can be attacked from only two hexes, save those units on N23 and O24 (see Diagram 2). Thus it is physically impossible to overrun any point on the line from H20 to S25, except of course, those units on N23, S25 and O24. Overrunning N23, however, costs a minimum of 35 factors and one Stuka while gaining practically no definite advantage. The woods at M20 effectively stop

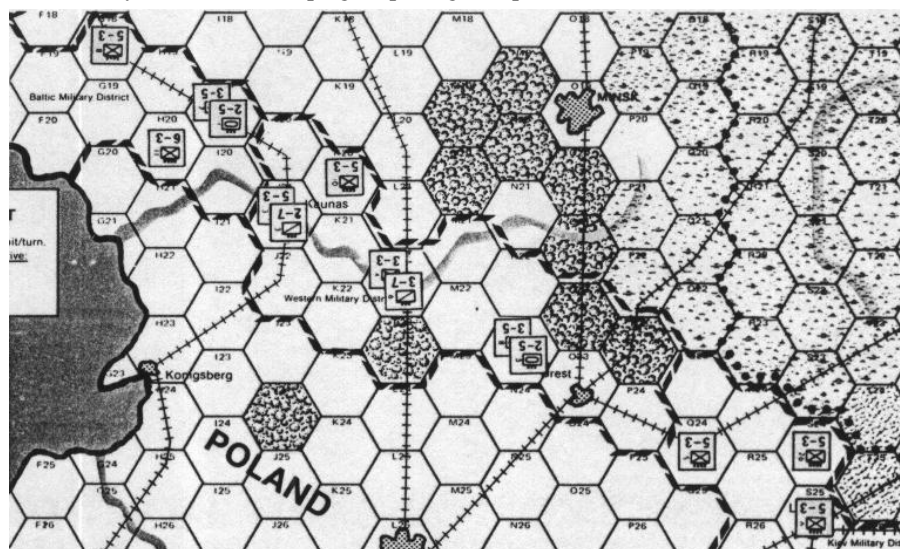


Diagram 2: VIIPURI II – Baltic, Western and Northern Kiev sectors

any armored penetration, while the deepest that regular infantry could then reach, by the second impulse is only M19. The defenders on L22 can now be turned but only overrun using another 4 factors front Army Group Center, leaving a mere 4 factors to carry on the war in the second impulse. A particularly paranoid Russian may want to switch the units on J21 and L21 to prevent this second overrun, but I prefer the slightly stronger group at J21.

The 5th Infantry at O24 in the Kiev Military District can also be overrun in the first impulse but again the gains for such a move are minimal. The German would then be forced to use a second Stuka to attack the two 5-3s on S24 and S25 to ensure breaking the

line. The mountains at L24 and L25 now effectively stop any 2nd impulse advance except for the one German mountain unit present at the start of the game.

In either of the above possible overruns, the German must use far too much airpower and man power to justify the small penetration gained. Thus he will undoubtedly settle for direct frontal attacks along the sector, hoping to maximize Russian casualties. But now assume you lose all those front line

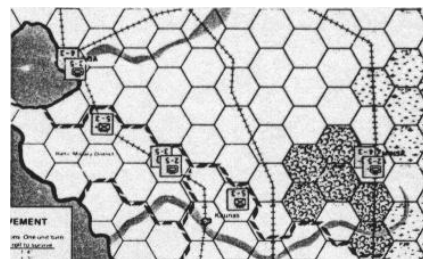
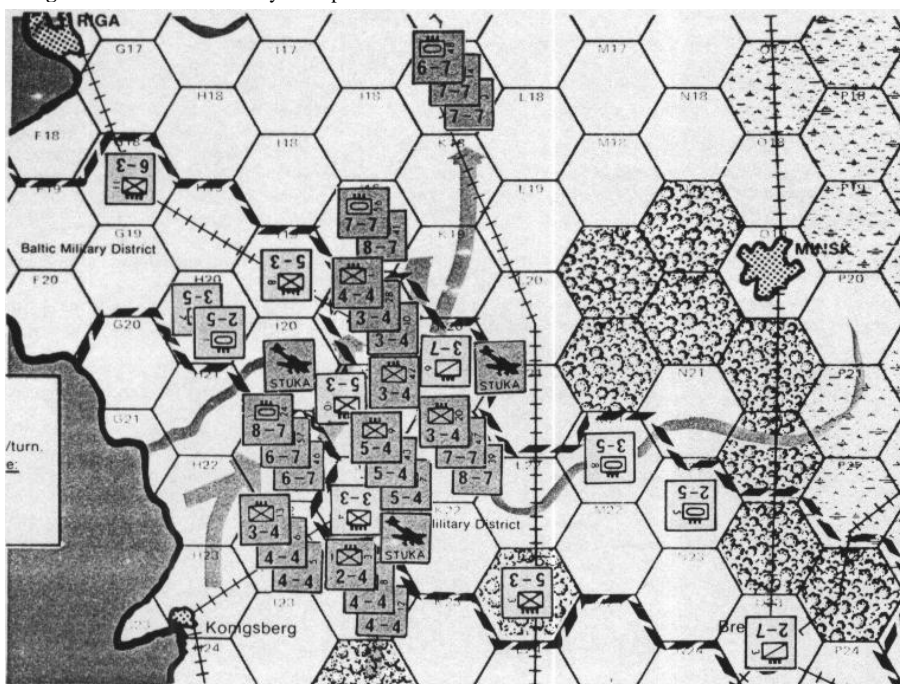


Diagram 3: VIIPURI II – Second Impulse Defense line.

units (see Diagram 3). Another solid line presents itself to the invaders. The only possible way for deep penetration is now to overrun the 10th Infantry on K20 at a cost of 50 factors. Again the returns for such an attack seem minimal. The Dvina River still could not be reached, which 50 factors against one 5-3 is a definite case of overkill.

The positions of the units in the Baltic Military District remain as they were in the original *Viipuri* defense but specific unit positions have been changed. The 6-3 11th Infantry has been rotated to the front line position to face Army Group North. While this tactic causes the expected loss ratio to jump from that of the original defense, it causes additional problems for the German

Diagram 1: Western Military Group Overrun: June '41



that cannot be ignored. If the German commander does not wish to use a Stuka against the 11th Infantry, he can only achieve 4-1 odds and thus risk a mildly disastrous Contact result. If he does use a Stuka to ensure a breakthrough at 5-1 or better, it constitutes considerable waste of his airpower. He only needs one additional factor to raise his attack strength to 30 (in order to ensure a 5-1), but Stukas can be used much better by raising normal 2-1 attacks to 5-1; thus using a Stuka against the Baltic defender robs other areas of his most potent offensive weapon.

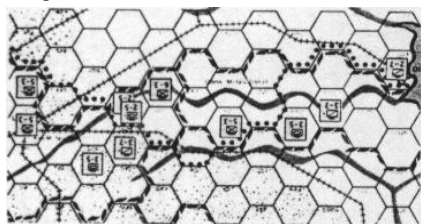


Diagram 4: VIIPURI II – Southern Kiev, and Odessa District

The northern area of the Kiev Military District is defended similar to the Western Military District, only now it is the mountains rather than the woods that are used to advantage. The major problem is to prevent an incursion along W25 by armored members of Army Group South (one of the decisive factors in my loss in the Series Replay). Since the key to such a German tactic is to overrun a weak unit on Y25, thus giving access to W25 (See Diagram 4), the solution is to put a unit on Y25 which could not be overrun (see Diagram 5). The 9th Infantry nicely fills this slot and completes the solid front line defense. Note that overrunning only one of the this units on AA25 or BB25 will not open a hole in the Odessa District and since both cannot be overrun, the defense is intact.

The only remnant left unchanged from the original *Viipuri* defense is the Finnish front. While it has been pointed out that the 7th and 23rd Infantry (on C10 and B9 respectively) should exchange places as the doubled 43 is as effective as the doubled 5-3 in holding off the Finns, I still tend towards the original setup. This might be more from nostalgia than common sense, but does have the advantage of setting up the *Viipuri Trap* (see original *Viipuri* defense) against the careless or greedy German.

The major drawback to a solid front-line defense is that casualties tend to be very high. But if German penetration can be effectively retarded on the first turn, a minimum of units can present two nicely doubled river lines for the German to consider in Jul and August. In particular the hexes Riga, H16, J15, L14, V22, AA21 and DD22 should be occupied. Surviving units from the first turn who can't really escape to safe areas should be considered at P15, U24 and Odessa.

In my opinion, the third turn is generally when the Russian should consider giving up vast amounts of space. With normal weather, the German will be unlikely to get any cheap shots against any cities with production centers except tot Kiev. The ensuing winter can be used to consolidate forces and make local counterattacks in threatened areas.

Hopefully the readership will find *Viipuri II* more satisfying and enduring than the original *Viipuri*. Improvements and changes are bound to occur and I invite all *RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN* enthusiasts to share their views and criticisms, their pet defenses and favorite tricks. *THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN* is a fascinating game and the more discourse that occurs, the more rewards that we players reap in pursuing one of life's little pleasures. To that end, any one wishing to take me on in another PBM Series Replay can write me at: 4040 SW West Hills Rd., Corvallis, OR 97330.