

## OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS:

**FREDERICK THE GREAT****The Campaigns of the Soldier-King 1756-1759**

by Roy Schelper

*A fine work [a Frank Davis special], Frederick the Great is nevertheless an underappreciated game. I now enjoin you to play this subtle and unusual simulation before we again meet in these pages. Or perhaps Mr. Schelper can convince you...*

*Frederick the Great* is a unique simulation of the first four years of the Seven Years War between Prussia, Hanover, and the British (the Allies) and the Coalition, consisting of Austria, France, Russia, Sweden, and the Holy Roman Empire. The parentage of this game is hard to trace. Some of the elements derive from previous simulations while others made their debut in this game. It is a fascinating game that presents numerous challenges to both players.

The rules give the first indication that this is not a run-of-the-mill war game, and that it will offer the player some unusual twists. Combat units are of the "change" variety seen in a number of other simulations. They possess no innate movement capability, relying upon the leader units for movement. Even the leaders have no fixed movement capability, using a system in which each leader undertaking movement makes a separate die roll each force march phase and one die roll per nationality during each march phase. The result of these rolls is added to the initiative rating of each leader, giving a total which is that leader's movement allowance for that phase. One interesting feature is the mixed sequence of play which allows the non-phasing player to force march immediately after the phasing player's movement. This innovation coupled with the fact that combat takes place between units in the same hex, means that players can often decline combat, which was a common practice during the period represented. Attrition can occur as a result of force marches, during Winter game-turns, and whenever units are out of supply during the respective Supply Attrition phases. Allied lines of supply are six hexes while those of the Coalition are five. Balancing this Allied advantage, however, is the fact that Austrian units only have a ZOC that can cut supply lines. Fortifications and sieges are an important part of the game, with sieges handled in a fairly abstract manner. The game also contains provisions for prisoners, prisoner exchange, winter quarters, surrender, and "Honors of War." Perhaps one of the most interesting features is that force composition is secret until a force is committed to battle. All of these features combined make one of the more intriguing games around.

The victory conditions reflect both the enormous value of fortresses during the period and the strategic limitations of the Allies in terms of numbers. Each fortress is worth five victory points to whoever controls it—except Magdeburg, Dresden, Vienna, Prague, and Breslau, each of which is worth ten VP's, reflecting the historic importance of these fortresses. To determine the victor at the end of each scenario, total the value of fortresses controlled by each player minus the number of strength points lost (Allied casualties over fifteen SP's count double), and subtract the smaller number from the larger to determine the level of victory.

The graphics are both good and bad. The counters are bright and easy to read. The charts and tables are clear and well organized. The board, alas, is very drab. However, the board does not detract from the game; rather it slightly diminishes the luster of an excellent simulation.

**THE SCENARIOS***I. The 1756 Scenario—Frederick Attacks*

Despite the fact that this is the Prussian blitzkrieg scenario, the Coalition Player can stop the Prussians. The initial strengths are roughly equal. The Prussians have 39 SP's, 7 of which are tied down as fortress garrisons, while the Coalition has 41 SP's (32 for the Austrians and 9 for the Empire) with 8 SP's as garrisons. Neither side receives any reinforcements.

The main Prussian advantage lies with their vastly superior leaders, and the major drawback of their situation is the brevity of the scenario (ten turns).

The primary Coalition strengths are the Austrian zones of control, the terrain, and the shortness of the scenario. The major defect in the Coalition position is the Imperial army, which is atrociously led and which must surrender if the "Honors of War" are denied them.

The Prussian Player has the burden of the attack and must accomplish a great deal in a short time in order to win. In essence, there are two objectives, the conquest of Saxony and the defense of Silesia. First, he must take Torgau, which is the stepping stone to Dresden—the primary objective of the scenario whose possession almost guarantees victory. In order to achieve this result, the Prussian must demoralize the Saxon army. Additionally, he must protect Silesia against any Austrian incursion.

To insure the conquest of Saxony, two Prussian forces should operate there. One should concentrate on the capture of Torgau initially, while the second attempts to bring

the Saxons to battle. Once Torgau has been secured, the attack on Dresden should begin without delay. There will be an enormous Austrian pressure upon Prussian supply lines and it may be necessary to fight a battle to adequately protect the rear.

You should stay alert in Silesia and protect it with a sufficient force, because the loss of a fortress in Silesia can offset any gains in Saxony. Keep this force in rough terrain, and don't be tempted to invade Moravia. This is not to say that you should not threaten to invade or take advantage of any Austrian mistakes, but victory is to be won in Saxony, so bear that in mind.

There is one final note for the Prussian Player, and that is to beware of excessive casualties. Restrain your impulses to fight just to have a battle. Heavy casualties will rob you of a victory if you are not careful. There are three occasions when battle is in order. They are: 1) an opportunity to annihilate the Saxons presents itself, 2) if the Austrians risk a battle outside of Dresden, and 3) if pressure on the supply line to Torgau is excessive.

The Coalition Player has a very difficult situation to contend with in this scenario. He must fight tooth and nail to retain as much as possible of Saxony, especially Dresden, while keeping the Prussians off balance in Silesia.

The key to Saxony is Dresden, and it should be garrisoned by Austrian troops and an Austrian leader, if possible. Furthermore, there should be an Austrian army in the field to harass the line of approach to Dresden. Additionally, a third force should cover the eastern passes, protecting Moravia, and threatening Silesia. Unfortunately, the Saxon army, hampered by miserable leadership, represents more of a liability than a strength. Nonetheless, it can be utilized. Take it out of Dresden and place it one of the western passes south of Leipzig. From this position it can be used to threaten the Prussian lines and, as an "army in being," distract the Prussian Player from his real objective. Extreme caution should be used with this army, though, because it will not survive a battle.

The main advantage of the Coalition is time—which is short for the Allies, calling for the Coalition Player to play a delaying action. Sluggish Austrian movement will lose the scenario, as will all-out attacks, but judicious retreats, feints, and raids, mixed with a tenacious defense of Dresden can leave the Prussians frustrated and give the victory to the Coalition Player.

*II. The 1757 Scenario—The Coalition Responds*

This scenario, representing the Coalition's response to Frederick's pre-emptive attack, is a tense one that will challenge both sides.

Initial forces are as follows: The Allied Player has 87 SP's (69 Prussian and 18 Hanoverian) with 14 Prussian and 3 Hanoverian SP's tied down in fortresses, leaving a force of 70 SP's in the field. Facing them are 104 Coalition SP's (58 Austrian, 39 French, 6 Swedish, and 1 Imperial), of which 5 Austrian, 10 French, 1 Swedish, and 1 Imperial SP are garrison troops, leaving 87 SP's in the field. The Coalition receives large reinforcements on Game-Turn 8, consisting of 22 Russian, 10 French, and 8 Imperial SP's, while there are no Allied reinforcements.

The Allies have two major advantages, their superior leadership (at least for the Prussians) and their interior lines. The first advantage enables them to challenge the usually larger forces of the Coalition with some hope of success, while the second allows them to strike the widely separated enemy forces and, to a certain extent, neutralize the superior numbers of their opponent.

On the other side of the ledger, the major Allied weaknesses are the inept leadership of the Hanoverians (Leader #1 is the Duke of Cumberland who won only the battle of Culloden during his entire career) and the numerical inferiority of the Allies. The first of these deficits means that the Prussians will probably be forced to intervene in the west to protect Magdeburg, and the second implies that the Allies will be stretched thin, especially during the latter half of the scenario.

The Coalition has one major advantage—superior numbers on all three of the major fronts. This enables them to play a somewhat looser game than the Allies in regard to casualties, permitting them to launch simultaneous offensives in the Rhineland, Saxony/Silesia, and Brandenburg/East Prussia. Additionally, in the Rhineland they possess leadership equal to the Hanoverians, which creates the potential for major gains.

The weaknesses of the Coalition are the converse of the Allied strengths, i.e., long exterior lines and poor leadership, except in the case noted above. However, their numbers can go a long way in compensating for these problems.

The Allies must stay alert in this scenario, because pressure will be intense in all theaters and it will mount toward the end of the game, and Frederick (Prussian Leader #1) can only be in so many places at once. It is imperative that you avoid futile marches, because you will otherwise find that losses due to force march attrition will be high, and you will accomplish nothing. Frederick is the only Allied leader who can afford to risk battle, given the demoralization rules, with the Russians and French presenting the best targets for the Soldier-King.

Careful use of the Hanoverians is strongly recommended. Harass the French rear, but avoid battle. If it becomes necessary to bring in Frederick, go for the throat and demoralize at least one French army, destroying any depots around.

The Saxony/Silesia front presents problems for the Allies. Silesia is particularly vulnerable to a strong Austrian attack. A sizable force should cover Silesia while another defends Saxony. Stay out of trouble unless Dresden or one of the Silesian forts is in danger or Frederick is around. When Frederick is present, and an opportunity presents itself, an attack on Prince Charles (Austrian Leader #1) should be considered.

In the north, an assault on Swedish Pomerania is in order during the early part of the game. It is an easy target, and later in the scenario you will not be able to attack, because other theaters will need the men.

Flexibility in the early part of the game is necessary for the Coalition Player. Harass the Prussians in the south while launching an offensive in the west. Stay away from Frederick; but if you have a chance to attack any of the other Allied commanders, you should consider it, provided excessive casualties can be avoided. Once the Russians begin their advance from Königsberg, put on the pressure on all major fronts. Force the Prussians to force march all over the board. Go for either Dresden or Glatz (Glatz is preferable to Schweidnitz, because they are worth the same amount of victory points, and Glatz is easier to defend in case of any Prussian attempts to lift the siege.) Grab all you can from the Hanoverians, since this will be one more place that Frederick will have to march to. The Russians, who have little time and a long way to march, should take Königsberg, and make an attempt at taking Colberg. They should fight only if they are facing a leader other than Frederick, but they will likely be forced to fight him to protect their extended supply lines.

The other two members of the Coalition, the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden, can do little. The Swedes should sit in Stralsund, unless by some miracle the Russians take Stettin, while the Imperial forces should act as a last-ditch reserve in Bohemia and try to stay out of harm's way.

Generally, the Coalition can and should risk battle against anyone except Frederick, to force the Allies to lose over 15 SP's, which means that limited attrition is an integral part of the Coalition strategy.

### III. The 1758 Scenario— The Situation Stabilizes

The numbers get more lop-sided in this scenario, but both sides have improved leaders. Initial forces are as follows: The Allies have 81 SP's initially (67 Prussian and 14 Hanoverian) with 13 Prussian and 4 Hanoverian SP's on garrison duty, leaving 64 SP's in the field. The Coalition forces total 129 SP's (52 Austrian, 31 French, 11 Imperial, 5 Swedish, and 30 Russian), including 6 Austrian, 10 French, 1 Imperial, 1 Swedish, and 1 Russian SP garrisoning the forts, which leaves 110 SP's in the field, and gives the Coalition a 1.7:1 superiority ratio.

Reinforcements are equal, with the Hanoverians and the French each receiving 8 SP's.

Allied advantages are identical to those of the previous scenario, except that they have been improved by the retirement of the Hanoverian Leader #1, and his replacement by the Hanoverian Leader #2, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, plus an enlarged Hanoverian contingent. This allows the Allied Player to go on the offensive in the west, eliminating one trouble spot for Frederick.

The Prussian numerical weakness worsens in this scenario, despite the increased Hanoverian force, which makes it necessary for the Allies to exploit their strengths to the fullest.

In this scenario the major Coalition advantage, superior numbers, has been improved. Another Coalition strength derives from the fact that both the Imperial and Russian armies begin the game on the map, enabling major advances to be undertaken from the onset of the scenario. Furthermore, Austrian leadership has been improved by the retirement of Leader #1, Prince Charles of Lorraine.

Coalition weaknesses are the most critical in the west where the French are totally outclassed in terms of leadership, and in Swedish Pomerania, where the Swedes are weaker than ever. However, in the south and east, the increase in forces greatly diminishes Coalition weaknesses, strengthening overall position in this scenario *vis a vis* the previous one.

These changes in force and deployment create an entirely different situation for the Allied Player. In the Rhineland, the Hanoverians can play aggressively, seeking the demoralization of the French forces and, with luck, seizing a fortress or two. In any event, the Hanoverians should be able to fight the French to a standstill. In the south, the Prussians should retake Schweidnitz promptly, defending the siege with a large force. Once the fortress has been retaken they should, as in the 1757 scenario, protect Silesia and Saxony with a sizable force in each province. A short, sharp campaign in Swedish Pomerania is advisable, provided it can be terminated before the Russians get too close to Colberg. As in the historical campaign, the Russians present the best target for attack by Frederick because of their extended supply lines. A good tactic is to force march behind them, cutting their lines, and then attack them. This operation, if successful, can delay the Russians for a good many turns, enabling Frederick to race south to counter the Austrians or launch an offensive in Bohemia or Moravia. Due to the increased efficiency of the Hanoverians, the Prussians should hold their own in this scenario.

The Coalition Player must also make some changes in his play. First of all, instead of the all-out French offensive of 1757, the French must fight a careful campaign aimed at keeping the Hanoverians at arm's length while maintaining at least one army capable of action. The goal of the French should be to reduce the Hanoverian forces—without absorbing undue casualties—to the point where they can not besiege French fortresses. The Russians should fix their primary

objective as the fortress of Colberg. Do not be tempted by the idea of a march south to aid the Austrians in Silesia, because this will cause you nothing but grief. Avoid facing Frederick, if possible, but consider attacking the Prussians if they try to screen Colberg with a force under any other leader. Once Colberg has fallen, move on Stettin or Kustrin. In the south, the Austrians should exercise care when Frederick is around, but when he leaves to counter the Russians you should go all-out to capture something, risking battle if a favorable situation occurs. Whether or not the Austrians capture anything is not crucial, because any activity in the south will force Frederick to return quickly, thereby easing the pressure on the Russians. The Imperial forces can be used to support operations in western Saxony, threaten the Hanoverian flank, or act as a reserve to the Austrians. The Swedes, once again, can risk no action until Stettin falls. In short, the Coalition strategy should be: feint and jab in the west, push hard in the south, and advance methodically in the east.

*IV. The 1759 Scenario—Frederick At Bay*

The disparity in numbers gets still worse for the Allies in 1759. They can field 76 SP's initially (57 Prussian and 19 Hanoverian) with 13 Prussian and 4 Hanoverian SP's acting as garrison forces, which leaves a meager 59 SP's in the field. The Coalition starts with 135 SP's (49 Austrian, 43 French, 30 Russian, 7 Imperial, and 5 Swedish). There are 18 SP's in fortresses: 5 Austrian, 10 French, 1 Russian, 1 Imperial, and 1 Swedish, which means that the Coalition can field a total of 117 SP's to give them a numerical superiority of almost 2:1.

Allied strengths and weaknesses are basically unchanged, although both leadership and numbers have slipped a bit, making the situation extremely difficult. It is easy to understand why the campaign of 1759 contained the triple disasters of Kunersdorf (in which Frederick was routed and the Prussian army with him was destroyed), Dresden (which fell to the Coalition), and Maxen (where an entire Prussian corps—equivalent to 5 SP's—surrendered in the face of an overwhelming attack) all occurred in this year, especially after you play the Allies. The Coalition numbers have erased almost all their weaknesses in this scenario. Furthermore, the French leaders have been improved by the retirement of Leaders #1 and #2. They still must contend with the long exterior lines, but the influence of this problem upon the game is not great.

In this scenario, the Allies must use extreme caution. Think twice about attacking with any leader, including Frederick and Ferdinand. The Hanoverians are going to be faced with hordes of French under improved leaders, so you must feint and jab at supply lines, risking battle only under the direst circumstances. The Prussians will be under severe pressure, and even the Soldier-King will be forced to think in terms of rear area raids and retreats. Stay away from battles, because one demoral-

ized force will be disastrous. There are just enough Allied SP's to protect things, so restrain the impulse to go on the offensive. Bear in mind also, that the Coalition will attempt to bring you to battle to try to win by attrition. It is imperative that, whenever you shuttle Frederick around, you do so decisively and purposefully. This scenario will keep the Allied Player on the edge of his chair with a lump in his throat.

For the Coalition Player this scenario is the time to play a semi-hell-bent-for-leather game. Play aggressively in the west and try to inflict casualties. After the Hanoverians have been worn down, start laying siege to every fortress you can get to. Be prudent, but don't be overly cautious. In the south, the Austrians have an excellent chance to take Dresden, and Silesia is vulnerable as well. Challenge the Prussian leaders, and when you hold rough terrain, don't be too frightened of Frederick. The Russians should follow their standard march on Colberg and Stettin. The Empire and Swedes should play their normal minor role, taking care not to get in range of the Allies. The basic Coalition approach should be to beat the Allies in the field and take some fortresses, which will mean attacking the Allies whenever a viable opportunity occurs.

*V. General Notes*

The quickest way to lose in *Frederick the Great* is to charge around as though you were playing the French in *La Grande Armee*, trying to annihilate your opponent. Even as the Coalition Player in the 1759 scenario or the Prussian Player in the 1756 scenario, it will not work. The type of warfare represented in this game just was not waged that way. A campaign was judged a success if you nabbed a fortress cheaply. Battle was something that was to be avoided, because soldiers cost the state a lot of money. Admittedly, Frederick fought a lot of battles, but a careful analysis of his campaigns will show that he was forced by circumstances to do so. Casualties were a large factor in determining success, once again because of the cost to the state, and the victory conditions reflect this observance very well.

Another fundamental notion is that a good leader can win battles at miserable odds. This might seem unfair when Frederick and 10 SP's have just routed your Russian army at 33%, but the Coalition leaders probably felt the same way in the historical campaigns. Of course, victory is not certain at low odds, but keep in mind that a good leader and a small force can burn you.

Supply is another dominating feature of the game, and to win you must become obsessed with depots and supply lines. These are the two favorite targets for both sides. There are two ways to protect your depots and supply lines. The first method is to leave detachments behind—a very flimsy defense that can, however, be used to bait a trap. The second, safer method, is to use a larger force as a screen and risk being out-maneuvered. However you play it, most of your battles will be fought to protect your supply lines.

maneuver, as pointed out in the Designer's Notes, is the crux of the game, but it is so important that it bears repeating. Move, and move purposefully in this game or you will lose. Aimless marching and counter-marching will accomplish nothing. Warfare in this period was "war of maneuver", and don't forget it, because the game reflects this reality. Even Frederick, with all his bloody battles, only fought when maneuver failed. Move to advance your supply lines, while cutting those of your opponent, which will enable you to besiege enemy fortresses. Feint and put flourishes into your maneuvers to keep your opponent guessing, but move.

The victory conditions give you a clear idea of the primary objectives, the capture of fortresses. One problem that you will face is how to oppose a siege. The best way, of course, is to cut the supplies of the besieger, but failing this strategem an attack is often in order. Another way to gain time is to put a leader with an initiative rating of 1 or higher into the threatened fort. Whatever means you choose to defend your fortresses, don't let them go easily.

*Frederick the Great* is a harsh master. It will punish those who attempt to deny the history which it recreates, but to those who attend to its lessons, this game will offer new insights into one of the more incredible annals of military history.

---

**Opening MOVES** [continued from page 3]

If it is naturalism that one most desires, then one should honestly pursue it and not denigrate non-naturalistic games for their lack of "realism". This is not merely semantic nit-picking: the words we use to describe concepts and to establish criteria can seriously affect our perceptions if we mis-apply them or call two dichotomous qualities by the same name. If I criticize a game for being "unrealistic" I should actually mean it—not merely be commenting on its lack of appeal as an adult toy.

