

# **Frederick the Great**

## **Game Analysis**

*by Luc Olivier*

### **Introduction**

Frederick the Great is an historical simulation of the campaigns of the Prussian soldier-king during the Seven Years War (1756-1763). The game is scaled on the operational level; each scenario simulates a campaign season (generally from April to December); each game turn represents fifteen days of real time; each Combat Strength Point represents about 2,500 troops. A total of four Scenarios, each constituting a separate game, are included.



### **Credits**

Publisher: SPI 4/1975 in S&T 49

Designer: Frank Davis & Edward Curran

Developer: Christopher Allen, Edward Curran and Frank Davis

Graphics: Redmond Simonsen

### **Components**

1 21"x32" map of the Central European Theater of War

1 Counter sheet of 200 die-cut counters

1 Rules folder (included in the S&T)

### **Counter Manifest**

Prussian (White on Dark Blue)

7 Leaders

20 1 Strength point Combat Unit

8 2 Strength point Combat Unit

6 4 Strength point Combat Unit

2 8 Strength point Combat Unit

Hanoverian (Black on Medium Blue)

4 Leaders

10 1 Strength point Combat Unit

4 2 Strength point Combat Unit

2 4 Strength point Combat Unit

1 8 Strength point Combat Unit

Swedish (White on Dark Gray)

1 Leader

5 1 Strength point Combat Unit

1 2 Strength point Combat Unit

Russian (White on Black)

3 Leaders

12 1 Strength point Combat Unit

3 2 Strength point Combat Unit

3 4 Strength point Combat Unit

2 8 Strength point Combat Unit

French (Blue on Light Gray)

6 Leaders

18 1 Strength point Combat Unit

5 2 Strength point Combat Unit

5 4 Strength point Combat Unit

2 8 Strength point Combat Unit

Austrian (Blue on White)

7 Leaders

16 1 Strength point Combat Unit

6 2 Strength point Combat Unit

5 4 Strength point Combat Unit

2 8 Strength point Combat Unit

Empire (Blue on Light Gray)

1 Leader

6 1 Strength point Combat Unit

2 2 Strength point Combat Unit

Markers (Light Brown on White)

1 Game turn

6 Dmrlz (Demoralized)

15 Depots

**Player's Value**

For a game published in 1975, Frederick The Great was an innovative, very clean and clever game. The designer succeeded in capturing the feeling of 18th Century warfare in few rules. Counters represent troops, leaders and markers.

Troops do not represent formations, they are only force points changeable at will, driven by a leader. Each side has specific leaders with a rank, initiative, attack and defense ratings. Of course, Prussian leaders are often better than others. The highest ranked leader commands the stack even if he is the worst warrior.

The classical move-fight sequence is modified by a defender reaction move, with the possibility of reinforcing or avoiding battles. At the beginning of the movement phase the player rolls one die and each leader moves with the sum of the die and its own initiative rating. Troops cannot move without leaders and some leaders cannot move out of supply.

For the reaction phase, each leader reacting must roll separately and can suffer attrition. More attrition can be suffered for being out of supply or for the winter period (the last three turns of each scenario). To be supplied, the units must trace to a supply source, either a fort or a depot already build. To build a depot, you need two turns and a lot of troops.

Fights are either battles or sieges. Battles are attritional for both sides and a good leader is very important to win. Sieges are the only way to capture enemy fortresses but they require time. You need to build a specific depot and roll the right dice on the table. A siege can be completed by storming, the Honor of War, or surrender. Troops can surrender during battles and sieges; prisoners can be exchanged during specific turns.

The victory conditions for the four scenarios involve capturing the fortresses and killing enemy soldiers. As killing means losing approximately the same number of troops in battle, capturing forts is better. The right tactics are to cut the lines of supply and out maneuver the enemy. The Allies – Prussians and Hanoverians – can use interior lines to be more efficient, the Coalition – Austrians, French, Empire, Russians and Swedish – are more numerous and will try to overrun the enemy.

The four scenarios recreate four years of the war: 1756, 1757, 1758 and 1759. The last years (1760 to 63) are covered by the Avalon Hill version with three more scenarios. A global scenario for simulating the entire campaign is provided in The General 20.3. The game fits well but has been criticized as too generic and lacking some country specific flavor. Nevertheless, it is a real classic still playable more than 25 years later.

### **Collector's Value**

Frederick The Great was one of the few games in 1975 dealing with the pre-19th Century. To be published in spite of low feedback rating, it was the annual "Editor's Choice" to serve the minority. Jim Dunnigan said: "The Editor's Choice in which we buck the feedback and try to satisfy one minority and perhaps let the majority know what they are missing". Two editions of the game have been published, one by SPI in S&T 49, the other by Avalon Hill in 1982.

The redevelopment for the AH edition was done by Joe Balkowski. The system was basically the same; the changes were mainly cosmetic, such as giving the leader counter historical names instead of numbers.

Here is a quote from BROG in S&T 95, with Mark Acres reviewing the new version: "The Avalon Hill version of the game is virtually a reprint of the original, with two important changes. First, the good news: the original FTG had only four scenarios, but the AH version adds three new ones for the 1760-1762 period. Next, the bad news: the new scenarios are distinctly lopsided in favor of the Coalition player. Even worse, the original victory conditions for all the scenarios have been changed, apparently in an effort to balance the three new ones.

The Prussian 'two-for-one' point loss ratio in the original game was reached after only the loss of fifteen strength points, instead of the revised game's twenty strength point level. The AH change to twenty points not only fails to balance the new scenarios but also threatens the balance of the older ones. Even so, FTG remains one of the classic games on the pre-modern era."

Boone 3rd edition quotes low, high and average prices of 5/36/12.48 at auction and 5/38/15.92 for sale, for the SPI edition; and low, high and average prices of 3/31/11.49 at auction and 5/28/14.24 for sale, for the AH edition.

### **Support Material**

Moves 21 and 31 provide beautiful strategic and tactical analyses of the SPI version.

Issue 20.3 of The General is dedicated to the AH edition with new 1740-44 scenarios (Silesian Wars), a new global scenario of the whole war with diplomatic rules, new counters, a broad analysis and some new rules.

A good review was written by Charles Vasey in F&M 5, adding rules for sieges and national characteristics to inject more feeling of the period.

The Wargamer Vol.1/2, Vol.1/3, and Vol.1/17, Jagdpanther 13, Paper Wars 13, and 40, F&M 75, S&T 95 and The General 21.3 have reviews.

Each of the three main books from Palmer and Freeman review the game briefly. Freeman says: "...arguably one of the finest simulations on the market. However, since the object of the game is to avoid combat, most people find six to eight hours of that sort of thing quite boring ... The game, which established designer Frank Davis's reputation, is not only a superb battle of wits, but it is also an excellent evocation of eighteenth-century warfare."

### **Other strategic games on Frederick The Great**

Campaigns of Frederick The Great (3W)  
S&T 163 Seven Years War (DG)

### **Other games by Frank Davis**

The First World War (SPI)  
North Africa quad (SPI)  
Red Sun Rising (SPI)  
Wellington's Victory (SPI)  
Guns of August (AH)

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