

**A three Session Game AAR of The Seven Years War: Frederick's Gamble at Metro Seattle Gamers**  
By Game Developer Fred Schachter

*Introduction – Among the nice things about **The Seven Years War: Frederick's Gamble** (henceforth referred to as **7YW:FG**), is that not only is it a fun and exciting game, but if you're playing in a club setting, the game years are episodic and therefore it is easy enough to set the game aside after a session to resume it at another time. This is great if you meet for a few hours after everyone departs work for a bit of evening gaming enjoyment. It certainly made possible our getting through all six years of what proved a grand gaming experience.*

*Then there's the game's ability to shift from two, three, or four player mode with ease: even while a game is in progress. Furthermore, at Metro Seattle Gamers, where this game took place, the guys encourage "newbies" to learn a game new to them and join the fun by expanding their hobby horizons. This was certainly manifested in this **7YW:FG** After Action Report, which took place over three sessions and had both veteran play-testers and complete novices participating in the action.*

*To best enjoy this AAR, a copy of the **7YW:FG** play test map, available from the GMT website for the game, should be helpful. It should also be noted this game was conducted using the latest field battle and siege rules announced within a recent InsideGMT post.*

**Session One: Three 7YW:FG Game Years – 1757, 1758, and 1759**

*Here's a summary of Session One's results:*

We got the action started with myself playing France with Scot as Austria (The Imperial Camp) vs. Jeff's Prussia and Chris M. as Britain (The Coalition Camp). Chris was a complete newbie to the "Nappy" CDG game system, an attorney and game designer himself, which translated into someone who quickly picked up this fine Greg Ticer design's game mechanics. As Chris got into playing, he remarked how those game mechanics were easy to learn and intuitive. He also found the game situation and player dynamics fascinating and fun.

**Action in the Colonies**

In North America, Montcalm's French Army was stopped dead in its tracks with 50% losses (that took some doing dice-wise considering the new field battle system) by Abercrombie's British Regular, Colonial Militia, and Loyal to the Crown Natives. The French Army, with their surviving strength points (SP's) withdrew, licking its wounds, to Fort William Henry, which it had previously captured from Britain.

In India, Clive took the French Bengal Port Key of Pondicherry, but was stalemated by a powerful Nawab piece and Fort in Plassey. Nally's French/Sepoy Army conquered all Mysore. The British, during the waning Impulses of 1759, were about to amphibiously invade Mysore with play of the "Eyre Coote in India" card, which would have delivered a 2-6 ("2" Battle Rating / "6" Command Rating) Leader with 4SP of British Regulars, but it was foiled by Prussian play of one of the game's two "Hand of God" Event Cards. So into discard went "Eyre Coote".

When "Hand of God" is played as an Event in **7YW:FG**, it precipitates a complete reshuffle of the draw and discard piles together to form a new draw pile. So perhaps "Eyre Coote" will have another opportunity to appear.

**Action in Europe**

Sweden became a French Pact Ally and their Army invaded Prussia to capture Demmin. The Prussians responded by moving Lehwaldt's weak Army to Zorndorf, where he could also screen against the Russian menace, and, garrisoned Kustrin and Stettin. The Swedes, with but two (2!) dice against a garrisoned Fortress, would have tough odds in a siege assault.

The Danes remained full strength and Neutral until towards the very end of 1759 when Prussia, through the "Courting the Danes" Event (and astutely timed Diplomatic Track CP play), brought them into the Coalition as a Prussian Pact Ally.

In Europe, the French had all three of their available Armies on the map, but 0-6 Soubisse, after capturing the one level "speed bump" Prussian Fortress of Wesel, proved unable to take the Hanoverian two level Key Fortress of Munster: so there was stalemate in the north. The other two French Armies, each commanded by a 1-8 Leader, were in Frankfort and Heidelberg confronting 0-4 Cumberland and 1-6 Sporcken's full strength British Armies who were screening Hanover and the western border of Saxony ("Saxony Defects" had been played).

British losses in the colonies and Europe, combined with Imperial Camp play of Kleiner War Events upon them (which reduce a Power's Trained Troop reserve or eliminate enemy non-Fortress Flags from the map), looked to be a potential cause for British concern, until a 1759 expenditure of the British Overseas Reserve Marker for a die roll of five (5!) provided a much-needed buffer.

The Coalition had something to grouse about the way the Mandatory Play Army Event cards were falling: "His Britannic Majesty's Army" Event had yet to appear (a new British Army in Europe). "William Pitt" (a new British Army in North America) got placed into discard through play of the "Drought" Event: the unlucky British player chose it out of a much relieved French player's hand of cards; and "Eyre Coote in India" (a new British Army in India) remained out of play versus all Imperial Army Events getting into the game action. The British successfully, by quickly rolling a six for a CP expenditure, got rid of their "Caribbean Foray" Foreign War as did the Austrian's with their "Balkan Revolt" Foreign War.

The lack of British continental strength combined with Prussia's distractions with Austria resulted in a powerful Russian presence in the east with 2-4 Apraxin's Army, in a remarkable dice roll of three 1's, capturing Konigsberg with a single siege assault dice roll, while 3-8 Saltikov's full strength Army reached Torum with 2-6 Fermor's Army supporting from Warszawa, which had a temporary 1-level Fortress placed on it through "Engineers get to Work".

The Austrians got banged up quite a bit in a series of battles, but got help through additional Event-provided SP's coming their way (to Prussia's chagrin). Austria launched 2-6 Loudon's Army in an invasion of Silesia via the Ratibor gap to capture the one level Fortress of Neisse and then go on to besiege the Prussian Two Level Key Fortress of Breslau while 1-8 Charles' 8SP Army crossed the pass from Koenigsgratz, took 2SP losses in Attrition, and then went on to besiege and capture the Prussian Two Level Schweidnitz Fortress Key.

The grim Prussian situation in Silesia got something of a respite when the Austrian siege of Breslau was broken by 2-6 Schwerin returning from the HOW (Honors of War) Box during the Interphase to drive off the besiegers. Schweidnitz Fortress, however, remained Austrian and from there Charles went on to seize One Level Glogau Fortress to menace Saxony from the east.

All this Silesian activity meant only 3-8 Daun's Austrian Army was around to face the might of 4-8 Frederick & 3-8 Ferdinand's powerful Prussian Armies. A number of bloody battles were fought with the Prussians, who thanks to Imperial Kleiner War Events and "Saxony Defects" being played, along with battle/siege losses having but two Prussian Trained Troop Points remaining. In response, the Prussians used their Turn Reserve Marker to raise more trained troops and rolled a fortuitous "6" to get themselves out of a potential jam.

Nevertheless, the Prussian southern offensive into the Austrian heartland was a mighty one which captured the two level Fortress Key of Prag and ultimately, through some good dice rolling and Battle Card Events, a 3SP garrisoned Wien (Vienna) itself.

Austria ended the session on the ropes with but two Key Fortress Mustering Centers in Austria itself remaining to its name (Brunn and Olmutz).

## **Session Two: One 7YW:FG Game Year – 1760**

The 1759 Year end saw no successful peace die roll and the Czarina in robust health (so Russia would remain in the war); and the game therefore went on.

We continued this MSG **7YW:FG** game for the 1760 Turn as a two player contest with myself continuing as the Imperial Camp (France, Austria and their Pact Allies) and Jeff M. leading the Coalition (Britain and Prussia with its Denmark Pact Ally).

### **Action in the Colonies**

There was no significant Colonial activity. The North American stalemate continued with Montcalm in Fort William Henry and Abercrombie in Albany. Both Armies were reinforced with sufficient supplementary SP as to make either of them attacking a dubious proposition.

In Bengal, the Nawab got built up to their maximum 4SP and I may try something with them next session to recapture weakly-held Calcutta before Eyre Coote and his British Army arrives. If Clive's Army, weak as it is, intercepts from Chandernagore, it's going to be a tough battle. The French continue to hold all Mysore.

### **Action in Europe**

In Europe, there was stalemate thanks to my ability in rolling but a single one for approximately 40 Imperial Siege Assault dice. The Austrians could not capture Breslau, the French failed at Munster (now supported by the Coalition Pact Allied Danes), and the Russians were stymied at Kustrin. My dice rolling prowess was no better with Field Battles. I used Kliener Krieg Events to bring the Prussian TTP down... Jeff then again rolled 6 for the Prussian Turn Reserve Marker's use to avoid a trained manpower crunch which could have seen him considering the merits of a "Bottom of the Barrel" play.

Just as an aside, a "Bottom of the Barrel" play can be done by any of the four major Powers plus Russia. It provides an immediate influx of eight (8!) Trained Troop Points at the price of reducing that Power's Nationality Bonus for field battles by one for the duration of the game. A steep price to pay... but without TTP a Power cannot use card or reinforcement CP's (Command Points) to bring new SP's onto the map.

Frederick staved off Loudon in Saxony. But now, after redeployments, it's Daun commanding a full strength 8SP Austrian Army in Bautzen with Austrian Flags in Luckau and Kunnersdorf. Loudon is in Koenigsgratz screening Austrian-held Schweidnitz and the heavily held Key Fortress of Brunn while Ferdinand's Army protects Prussian-occupied Wien and Prag. Charles, as mentioned before, now enters a *third year* besieging Breslau (sheesh!).

On the Eastern front, Saltikov, who rolled a single one during several siege assault resolutions, continues to besiege Kustrin with Fermor in close support. Apraxin's Russian Army is now in Konin (southern Poland) where he could move to support the Austrians in Saxony or Silesia. The Imperial Camp's Swedish Army is now in Pritzwalk with Swede flags in Ulzea (adjacent to both Hannover and Stade... but these are British garrisoned) and Demmin, adjacent to the Two Level Prussian Key Fortress of Stettin. However, the Swedish Army, under their 0-4 Leader Hamilton and with but 4SP, is so weak and brittle, due to no more TTP remaining, that they're more a theoretical threat than a real one.

There was but a single massive battle with the French during 1760. Through a two Duchy interception Event, both French 1-8 led Armies with 12 SPs concentrated on Sporcken's Army in Erfurt, but Jeff rolled a two dice 10 for Cumberland's Army to intercept join him and, guess what, my dice rolling resulted in a French defeat: So much for the French lackluster continental performance for the year.

The Year ended with the Coalition ahead and the Prussians with the most VP. They would win the game with a successful Peace die roll (Prussia lost their Koenigsberg and Schweidnitz Keys, but held Leipzig, Dresden, Prag, and 2-Keys Worth Wien). Consequently, both the British and French expended cards to influence the Peace die roll, which was a 3... meaning the war would grind on another year.

The Czarina, through a die roll of 6, continued to live. The Austrians have no more TTP, nor do the Swedes, Danes, or Imperials. Remarkably, the British have yet to receive Pitt (North American Army), Coote (India Army), or His Britannic Majesty (European Army).

1761 should prove an interesting year.

### **Session Three: Two 7YW:FG Game Years – 1761 and 1762**

For the sake of brevity and my own failings of detail recollection, I'll merge the two years we played to an extent. In case you wonder why the game went into its final 1762 Year, the short explanation is that France, who was leading the game in VP and had a +3 on the Peace die roll at the end of the 1761 Year rolled a 2: which failed to win the game for them. This epic MSG **7YW:FG** contest therefore went on to an exciting final year of play.

This session commenced as a three player contest, with newbie to any Nappy War game series release Jeffro J. taking the British with Jeff M.'s Prussians to form the Coalition Camp Team while I, persevering as France, was later joined by Mike S. as Austria to constitute the rival Imperial Camp Team.

Jeffro J., although new to **7YW:FG**, took to the game system like the experienced gamer he is and had a grand time discussing strategy and tactics with his partner, the veteran Jeff M. Much of **7YW:FG's** enjoyment is the table talk you can have with your Camp partner (and opponents) and wow did we have fun doing just that!

### **Action in the Colonies**

**North America's** stalemate continued throughout 1761, the Austrians, however, held the "William Pitt" Event which consequently caused Montcalm to withdraw his now mostly European SP Army to Montreal to enable a possible interception into 2 Colonial SP garrisoned Quebec (a Two Level Key Fortress). The concern with Wolfe's 4SP British Army's arrival proved moot as Austria, through clever expenditure of its Turn Reserve Marker and Resources, was the last Power with a card at the conclusion of Impulses play and was able to hold over the "William Pitt" card into 1762.

In 1762, Austria had no choice but to play "William Pitt", but delayed doing so until as late during the Year as possible. The French build the last of their available Colonial SP and, rather than risk not making an interception dice roll, moved Montcalm's Army into Quebec to form a considerable host to await a British attack from the St. Lawrence River via Louisbourg.

However, Imperial play of the "Victory at Sea" Event (which moves the British Naval Track Marker in a manner weakening the British hold on maritime power), fortuitous dice rolling by the HRE and French, whose final card of the 1762 year was the 5CP "We Need Every Man", all conspired to drive down the British Naval Control Track Marker to 3, which automatically caused Louisbourg to revert to French control and deny the British use of their Sea Lane lines of communication. Unless the British could get the Naval Control Marker back to at least five, amphibious attack on French Fortress Quebec could not be made.

With their final card play, the British moved Abercrombie's British SP to consolidate with Wolfe's in Boston... there to launch the amphibious invasion of New France. Alas for Britain, their dice rolling failed to regain the Naval Control Marker to its 5 Space (it had been as high as 8 at one time) and a potentially dramatic field battle between Montcalm and Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham was not to be. Such a

battle, even had the British been victorious, would not have risked Quebec's fall since the British had no Impulses remaining to conduct any siege assaults during what was left of 1762.

Thus six years of **7YW:FG** play saw the action in North America end without a single Key changing control between the belligerents.

**India:** Southern India remained under French domination throughout 1761 and 1762. Although strong French garrisons occupied both Madras and Pondicherry, awaiting a possible amphibious assault by 2-6 Eyre Coote's 4SP British Army: that threat never materialized. Why? The French had the "Eyre Coote" card in their 1761 hand and when Britain played "Palace in Chaos" to randomly seize a card from the French hand to place into the discard pile, the selected card was "Eyre Coote in India". You can imagine the British player's response to that bit of ill luck!

Thus for the second time during the game, the first being when the "Eyre Coote" card's play was cancelled by a "Hand of God" Event, "Eyre Coote" went onto the discard pile.

During 1761, the Nawab attempted to seize British Calcutta from a weak garrison, but Clive intercepted from British garrisoned Chandernagore. The Nawab lost the battle and had to retreat back to Plassey, but not before inflicting grievous loss to the British, in relative terms considering the small size of the forces involved, which would have significant ramifications the following year.

For in 1762, the 4SP Nawab attacked Chandernagore and with both sides committing battle cards managed to eke out a victory while destroying all British strength save for the Clive leader himself who retreated to Calcutta. The Nawab, however, paid a butcher's bill of their own having their 4SP unit reduced to a 2SP. The French build the last of their Sepoy SP to make a British recapture of Chandernagore a daunting prospect indeed.

The British built a Fort and Sepoy in Calcutta and it looked like the game in Bengal would end with those positions... until the Russians (!) intervened. Czarina Elizabeth survived the end of 1761 die roll, a 50/50 proposition, by rolling a 4. Per the rules, a 50/50 die roll is needed before every Russian 1762 card play. The first die roll by the French killed Elizabeth, but France played the "Ear of the King" Response Card Event to negate it.

Since we were playing a friendly game, in particular to teach its nuances to Jeffro J., Jeff M. advised, and this is paraphrased, "I have 'The Hand of God' Event which could negate that play of 'Ear of the King' and cause Elizabeth to die and the Russians to depart the game. However, it's Fred rolling the die and he'll likely again roll a 1-3 before the Russians' next card play".

So the Russians got to play their first card of 1762 and it was "French Descent from the Sea (in India!)" which caused a 2SP European French unit to be placed in Calcutta to amphibiously attack Clive. In a very close battle the French eked out a victory and, lacking any place to retreat to, all British pieces in Calcutta were eliminated in a Flag Overrun. In addition, the French luckily rolled the die for eliminating Clive and were awarded a Resource for it, a Resource which would prove important calculating victory.

So the game, thanks to the twists of fortune including Eyre Coote's powerful British Army never entering play, ended with the French completely dominating both areas of India and gaining two Keys (Madras and Calcutta). The British were expelled from the sub-continent.

### European Action:

During 1761, a French 1-8 led Army tried to capture Munster but could not roll a single one despite several impulses of trying. 0-4 Cumberland came north with his British Army to attack the French and drive them back to Wesel. He then returned to Stadt, somewhat weakened, for the 1762 campaign. The two other French Armies one in Heidelberg and the other in Frankfurt; continued the stalemate versus a 1-6 Sporcken-led British Army with the Danes, a 0-4 Leader with 4SP, screening in Lippstadt.

The Russians under 3-8 Saltikov finally captured the Prussian Two Level Fortress of Kustrin and then moved on to besiege the Two Level Prussian Fortress of Stettin leaving 2-6 Fermor's Army to hold Kustrin with 2-4 Apraxin's Army in Poznan. This precipitated 4-8 Frederick himself intervening with a powerful counter-attack. Fermor's Army was smashed and Kustrin recaptured by the vengeful Prussians. Frederick then pressed on to relieve the siege of Stettin by driving Saltikov's Army into Danish flagged Demmin.

When Frederick got drawn back south into Austria for the 1762 campaign, Saltikov renewed his siege of Stettin and captured it. The Swedes, anticipating the Czarina's death, moved onto the Stettin Fortress Duchy and when Elizabeth died, per the rules, automatically besieged its intrinsic garrison but could not roll a single one. Thus ended the Russian Front's action with all Prussian Keys occupied by Russia reverting back to their control (Stettin and Konigsberg).

As to the struggle between Austria and Prussia, after several failed attempts, the Austrians finally captured Breslau, thereby completing their conquest of Silesia. This was complemented by an Austrian 2SP unit, after the death of Elizabeth, moving north to flag Warszawa for the Hapsburgs. Prussian-occupied One Level Fortress Glogau, which the Prussians had recaptured from prior Austrian-occupation, proved a tough nut to crack but eventually it too fell.

However, during 1761 and 1762, the Prussians managed to retain both Saxony Keys with casualties inflicted on the antagonists without change to the basic geographic situation. The Coalition's Danish Army during the 1761/1762 interphase was sent down into Austria, to Prag, to bolster the Prussians.

During 1762, the French again sought to capture Munster, but could not roll a single 1 (seem a familiar Imperial refrain at this point?). A French Army moved into Erfurt to screen against a British incursion into the HRE while the third French Army, after capturing Marburg, commenced a siege of Kassel. Sporcken's British Army intercepted and the French were compelled to retreat back into Marburg.

Thus ended the European French/British War: All four Hanover Keys remained British despite repeated French attempts to overturn the situation. Remarkably, considering there were five years of play when that card could have come up, the British never received "His Britannic Majesty's Army". How the European War against France would have transformed had the British possessed a 3-8 Ferdinand Leader with 8SP is something we could only conjecture... it would not have been good news for France, that's a safe assumption.

In Austria, the Prussians under Frederick besieged and captured Brunn after several impulses to wear its garrison down. When the last siege assault Impulse causing its fall was resolved, the Austrians, rather than play the 3CP "Raising the Siege" card for the Event to retain Brunn, let it fall to Prussia and then used that card to fling Daun's full strength Army upon Frederick with Charles and Loudon's Army in support from adjacent Konigsgratz: a support which would have them join the battle thanks to an

offensive intercept Event, "Land or Sea". This was a good idea in game terms, for it would have concentrated some 20 Austrian SP's for a single battle!

The Prussians dramatically foiled that design: Ferdinand's Army intercepted from Wien and the Austrian Intercept Event was flung into the discard pile by Prussian play of their "Hand of God" Event. In the ensuing battle, Daun was defeated and the game ended with a forlorn Austrian attack on Prussian-occupied Prag while Frederick went on to besiege the final Imperial-held key in Austria itself, a no SP garrisoned Olmutz. However, Frederick failed to capture it when with a 12 dice roll not a single 1 could be obtained.

Never-the-less, the Prussian War in Austria itself ended with all Austrian Keys save Olmutz under Prussian control.

With 1762's conclusion, we tabulated VP's to determine a game winner:

**The Coalition: 18 VP**

Britain: lost two Keys in India (Calcutta and Madras), zero points for the Naval Track, which ended the game at four, no Resources: 6VP

Prussia: lost two Keys in Silesia (Schweidnitz and Breslau), gained a VP for Pact Ally Denmark, no Resources, but was up 6 Keys for holding Saxony (Leipzig and Dresden) and most of Austria (Prag, Wien – worth two Keys, and Brunn): 12 VP (1 VP for a Pact, 11 VP for Keys)

**The Imperial Camp: 18 VP**

Austria, Pact Ally with the HRE and no Resources, lost four Keys in Austria (Prag, Wien – worth two Keys, and Brunn) but retained Olmutz and gained Breslau, Schweidnitz, and Warsaw: 5 VP

France: retained all initial holdings and gained two Colonial Keys (Calcutta and Madras), Pact Ally with Sweden, one Resource: 13 VP (1VP for a Pact, 1 VP for a Resource, and 11 VP for Keys)

The game ended in a tie between the two Camps... each with 18VP! Therefore, the tie-breaker rule was invoked, which is measured by which Major Power, regardless of Camp, best improved its initial Key position. Would it be France or Prussia?

- France commenced the game with 9 Keys. It gained two (Calcutta and Madras) and got two more VP... one for its Sweden Pact Ally and another for a remaining Resource: a total of 4VP.
- Prussia started the game with 7 Keys. It lost two (Schweidnitz and Breslau) but gained 6: Leipzig, Dresden, Prag, Wien (worth 2 Keys), and Brunn for a net of +4 Keys to which one VP is added for the Prussian Pact with Denmark... a total of 5VP and a Prussian Victory!

It should be noted that even had France and Prussia been tied with 4VP each, Prussia would still have been declared the game winner for going later than France in the Impulse Track.

What a close game with several junctures where the fates hung results in the balance as can be discerned by rereading this AAR!

*(Please forgive my grouching about bad dice rolling, which is often complimented by my inspiring remarkable dice rolling by my opponent[s], a fate I've endured over decades of gaming... but I DO have a lot of fun playing games and did have some luck during this particular contest. Besides, complaining about the dice with game participants is a time-honored war gaming tradition which all agreed is indeed a part of 7YW:FG's entertaining experience!)*