

NARRATIVE SCENE: Lobositz, Bohemia, 1756, **Prussian German**

Title: Lobositz, Bohemia, October 1st, 1756

[Scene opens on the aftermath of a battle at sunset. Smoke from the battlefield's slopes and hills mingles with the fading light, leaving a distant haze. The camera pulls back to reveal Duke August Wilhelm of Bevern and Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick flanking King Frederick II on either side. All are on horseback and surveying the aftermath.]

Brunswick (confidently): Your Majesty, Browne has pulled back. They are retreating across the Morellenbach.

Bevern (reassuring): We hold the field. We've won this day.

[Cut to a more distant shot, further back. The last of the Austrians fade into the distance. The backs of Frederick and his two officers on horseback can still be seen, but appear as dark silhouettes. Behind them are scattered silhouettes of other officers and commanders on horseback— many of whom advised retreat. The shot itself remains focused on the aftermath of the battle.]

Frederick (tense): Were it not for Field Marshall Keith, we would have lost this day.

Bevern (quiet): Indeed.

[Shot lingers, dramatic pause.]

Frederick (grudgingly, to his officers): They say these Austrians aren't the same as before... I'm starting to believe it.

[Shot remains, the sound of the Prussian army beginning to bivouac for the night can be heard in the background.]

On August 29th, 1756, King Friedrich II led a force of 70,000 Prussians into Saxony. By September 9th, the King himself entered the capital of Dresden, but not all of the electorate was under Prussian control. In the southeast, Saxon forces under Count Frederick von Rutowski were stubbornly holding on to the fortress of Pirna. In order to dislodge them, Friedrich had to make sure the neighboring Austrians in Bohemia would not intervene. To do that, Friedrich decided to directly tie up the Habsburgs, and formally declared war. Prussian forces under Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick immediately attacked the Austrians in Bohemia, while Field Marshal Kurt Christoph von Schwerin swept into northern Moravia.

Opposing the Prussians was the Austrian Field Marshal, Maximilian Ulysses von Browne, who was aware of Friedrich's attempts to divert the Austrian relief of Saxony. To address this, Browne set up a fortified position in the town of Budin, and confronted the Prussians as they marched into the valleys around Lobositz on October 1st. Friedrich initially underestimated the Austrian army, expecting to face only a light skirmish rather than a full-scale defensive position. The battle was hectic, with the aftermath leaving roughly three thousand casualties on either side. Friedrich's close subordinates convinced him that they had secured a tactical victory. However, Lobositz was part of a cunning strategy by von Browne, who used the battle as a cover for his maneuver to link up with the besieged Saxon forces at Pirna.

Browne's swift movement nearly succeeded in breaking the siege, but the Saxon army failed to capitalize on this opportunity due to poor coordination and lack of resolve. Ultimately, Friedrich's grip on Saxony remained unbroken, forcing the Saxons at Pirna to capitulate on October 14th, consolidating Prussian control in the early phase of the war. As the winter months set in, the Prussians went to ground, and King Friedrich set about planning for a new strike against the Austrians.

The spring of April 1757 saw Prussia launch a fresh campaign, marching through mountain passes to converge on the Bohemian city of Prague. They were soon met by von Browne, who had concentrated the Austrians into a defensive position flanking the city. On May 6th, the two armies clashed. The fighting was fierce and costly, with Marshal von Schwerin losing his life in battle, while the opposing von Browne suffered mortal injuries that claimed his life nearly seven weeks after the battle was over. Friedrich was able to contain the Austrians inside the city, laying siege to it for a short while. However, Marshal Leopold von Daun arrived with a relief force and engaged the Prussians at Kolín on June 18th. The battle was a humiliating defeat for the ambitious Friedrich, who was forced to abandon his campaign in Bohemia.

As the king faced setbacks against Austria, the war expanded across new fronts. To the east, Russian forces under Marshal Stepan Apraksin invaded East Prussia, capturing the city of Memel in early July, and securing a victory at the Battle of Gross-Jägersdorf in August. While logistical challenges forced the Russians to withdraw temporarily, their entry into the war presented a new and formidable threat. Russia wasn't the only surprise entrance. On September 13th, the Kingdom of Sweden declared war on Prussia, hoping to regain territory lost during the Great Northern War, and launched an invasion into Pomerania with 22,000 men.

Adding to Friedrich's troubles, Hanover was also forced out of the war after French forces invaded and overwhelmed the Hanoverian army at the Battle of Hastenbeck. The

disbanding of Hanover's military was finalized in the Convention of [Klosterzeven](#), which was signed by the disgraced Duke William of Cumberland. Even worse, Friedrich suffered another humiliation when the Prussian capital of Berlin was raided by Austrian Hussars under Count [András Hadik](#) in October. Not only was Friedrich grappling with multiple fronts, he also endured enemy incursion into his own territory.

While Prussia was busy fighting the Austrians, their British allies were already engaged in a bitter struggle throughout North America. What began as disputes in the Ohio Valley had led to confrontations at Jumonville Glen, Fort Necessity and Monongahela, with the two powers fighting to stake their claim in territories across North America. However, by May of 1756 the colonial feud began to erupt into a full-scale war, tying both France and Britain into the wider struggle throughout Europe and other parts of the globe.

Early on, French forces in North America were at an advantage thanks to fortified positions and good commanders, like [Louis-Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm](#). Strong alliances with local Native American tribes also assisted French and Canadian troops in repelling British expeditions, while at the same time supported successful attempts to drive the British out of their claimed territories. The destruction of Fort Bull and later assault on Fort Oswego were crucial for disrupting British supply lines and demoralizing their troops.

With British command hampered by indecision, delays in supplies, reinforcements and general communication, the French were able to keep the British pinned down and off-balance throughout the opening years of the war. By August 1757, General Montcalm had captured Fort William Henry, expelling the last British presence from the area of Lake George in New York—though the killing of captured British soldiers by Indian irregulars bred resentment on all sides of the conflict, meaning that skirmishes continued on the frontier as both sides prepared to campaign in 1758.

Far off in South Asia, the Anglo-French struggle for domination over India had erupted into the Third Carnatic War. By 1757, the French town of [Chandannagar](#) was captured by the British under Admiral Charles Watson and Colonel Robert Clive— with the latter being a veteran of the First and Second Carnatic Wars. In that same year, the Nawab of Bengal, [Siraj-ud-Daulah](#), allied with the French and faced off against the British East India Company under Clive at the Battle of Plassey on June 23rd. The Nawab's army and his French allies heavily outnumbered the British, yet Clive was able to deliver a decisive victory in part thanks to the defection of several Bengali leaders and Siraj-ud-Daulah's subsequent flight from the battlefield. News of British success worried the French Crown, who appointed Thomas Arthur

Lally as governor-general of French India and tasked him with ousting the British, though he would not reach India until April 1758.

Confrontations also played out across other regions of the globe. In 1756, French forces captured the British-controlled island of **Menorca**. The loss of this strategic naval base strained British operations in the western Mediterranean, while allowing France to maintain a dominant position. In the Caribbean, skirmishes between French and British naval forces intensified as both sides sought to control lucrative sugar islands. Western Africa also saw confrontations between these two colonial powers, with 1758 seeing British expeditions capturing the French territory of Senegal along with the trading posts of **Gorée** and **Saint-Louis**—weakening France's hold on its African territories and disrupting the slave trade routes vital to the French economy.

Back in Central Europe, the latter end of 1757 gave King Friedrich II a chance to recover from his earlier setbacks thanks to a number of brilliant victories. On November 5th, Friedrich crushed the combined forces of France and the Habsburgs at the Battle of **Rosbach**—inflicting heavy casualties on his enemies all while keeping his own losses minimal. At Leuthen, the Prussians won another stunning victory on December 5th, as Friedrich's forces—outnumbered nearly 2 to 1—managed to route an Austrian army under Prince Charles of Lorraine and Marshal von Daun. With the Austrians defeated in Silesia, Friedrich advanced on the city of Breslau, laying a siege that lasted until December 20th with the city's surrender.

Friedrich's victories also gave the Prussians a chance to divert forces to address the Swedes in the north, who were left alone with a garrison force of 8,500 troops after their Russian allies retreated back to Eastern Prussia. King Friedrich had dispatched 28,000 Prussians under Field Marshal Hans **von Lehwaldt to oust the Swedes**. Unable to join up with their French allies in the west, the Swedish army retreated back to the regional capital of **Stralsund**, allowing the Prussians to retake vast swathes of Pomerania by January of 1758, and keep the Swedes contained in Stralsund for the time being.

In the same month, a new Russian army invaded East Prussia. Marshal Apraksin had been replaced by Count William Fermor, who had captured Memel in July 1757. As the Russians re-established control over East Prussia, Fermor set about consolidating his forces ready to march against the Prussian heartland.

For the western front, Prussia's victory in the Rosbach campaign emboldened British politicians—who encouraged King George II to revoke the Convention of Klosterzeven and begin remobilizing the King's subjects in Hanover. It was time to fight back against the French. To help with this, the formidable Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick was enlisted, changing his commission from Prussian to Hanoverian. From his arrival in November of 1757, the Duke of

Brunswick whipped the dejected Hanoverians into shape, and by the spring of 1758 had driven the French out of Hanover and back over the River Rhine.

For King Friedrich, the Hanoverian offensives were crucial to securing the Prussian west flank, as pressure from the east began to worsen. By August, Count Fermor had led a force of 42,500 Russians on Friedrich's doorstep in Brandenburg. By the 24th, the king arrived opposite the Russian position at **Zorndorf** with 37,000 of his own troops. The next day, the two armies would clash in what would become one of the bloodiest battles of the war: over 16,000 Russians and 12,800 Prussians would perish in an exhausting slog that yielded nothing more than a stalemate, leaving both sides to withdraw and recoup their losses.

To his subjects and supporters, Friedrich proudly declared victory. In reality, the display at Zorndorf left him shaken and anxious about the Russians, who were not entirely repelled from Brandenburg. The situation grew more complicated as the Austrians under Marshal Leopold von Daun continued advancing from the south. A surprise victory against Daun at **Hochkirch** prevented the Austrians from taking Saxony, but the coming winter meant that neither side could make a decisive move. As 1759 rolled over, French forces in the west began to gain the upper hand against the Duke of Brunswick, withstanding numerous offensives and pressing him back.

In July, the strategic fortress of Minden was lost, but Ferdinand pressed on to confront the French in battle. On August 1st, the Duke's finest hour arrived when he skillfully drew the French into a decisive engagement on the fields outside Minden. While the French sported superior numbers, the Anglo-German troops stood their ground against repeated French assaults and cavalry charges. By midday, the French forces were in full retreat, and Ferdinand had secured a resounding victory that not only saved Hanover but dealt a significant blow to French ambitions in Germany.

Meanwhile, in the east, Prussia's strategic situation became more desperate. Russian forces under Count **Pyotr Saltykov** pressed further into Brandenburg, delivering a crushing blow in the battle of **Kay** in July. By this point, Friedrich knew that a direct confrontation with the Russo-Austrian coalition was inevitable, as a combined force of roughly 76,000 troops were drawing ever closer. In order to confront them, Friedrich took personal command of his army once again. He gathered over 50,000 soldiers to meet the advancing coalition at **Kunersdorf**, east of the Oder River.

In the early hours of August 12th, Friedrich launched a flanking assault on the Imperial and Russian forces, determined to replicate his earlier successes. He was unaware of how entrenched the coalition defenders really were. Initially, the Prussian attack made headway and captured several key positions, but as the day wore on, Friedrich's forces became overextended

and severely weakened by Russian artillery. After a series of futile assaults by the Prussians, the coalition army counterattacked, inflicting devastating losses and forcing Friedrich to withdraw from the battlefield. By the end of the day, the Prussians had lost 19,000 men.

For King Friedrich, all seemed lost. His army lay in ruins as the coalition of Russia and Austria descended on the capital of Berlin. It would need a miracle for his kingdom to survive the coming days. Elsewhere, the colonial wars raged on, as French and British forces traded volleys and cannon fire across North America, India and the Caribbean. Meanwhile in Spain, the death of King Ferdinand VI on August 10th paved the way for the ambitious Charles III, whose Bourbon connections to France would help in his vision to overhaul the faltering Spanish Empire, and in doing so threaten to widen the conflict further. As the year drew to a close, it became clear that the great war which had enveloped the world was not about to end anytime soon.

Sources

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