

Frederick II Leads the Third Charge of the Prussian Cavalry at the Battle of Mollwitz on April 10, 1741 (late 18th century)

Abstract

In the first Silesian War (1740-42), Prussia's newly enthroned King Frederick II ("the Great") (r. 1740-86) attacked the Austrian Empire under Maria Theresa (r. 1740-80), exploiting her precarious position as female successor to the imperial throne. His goal was to annex the province of Silesia. This etching shows Frederick at the Battle of Mollwitz (April 10, 1741), where, as the caption suggests, he "personally led his cavalry against enemy lines after it had been repulsed twice." In fact, the young king contributed little to the narrow victory. Fearing that all was lost, he left the scene prior to the decisive cavalry attack. Despite this, he would come to be hailed as a brilliant military commander throughout all of Europe. Images such as this one, published half-a-century later in *Historical Genealogical Calendar for 1794* [*Historisch genealogischer Kalender für 1794*], edited by H. Siwicke, perpetuated his reputation.

Source



Source: Etching by Daniel Chodowiecki, late 18th century.

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