

The Spring offensive against Italy, May-June 1916

## **Strafexpedition 1916**

*It is not often that a large scale offensive gets launched high up in the mountains. When around 2.000 Austro-Hungarian guns opened fire on the Italians in the morning of May 15, 1916, a battle started that would involve an estimated 650.000 soldiers. The offensive, on which preparations had started at the end of 1915, was the largest that has ever been fought out at this height.*

### **Strafexpedition 1916**

Strafexpedition 1916 is a game that has been published by the Italian company Europa Simulazioni (ES), also known from the game All is Lost save Honour. The name 'Strafexpedition' was a name used by the Italians in the propaganda. This way the Italians showed the world that their former Austro-Hungarian ally wanted to punish them with the offensive. When the war started, Italy was a partner of both Germany and Austria-Hungary. Since the Italians considered this pact to be defensive, they did not declare war on the Allies. On May 23, 1915, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary, this after all kinds of flattery by the Allies.

The game contains to very nice 22"x34" maps, 720 diecut counters, a 24-page rulebook which also holds the information on the 5 scenarios, and a couple of separate charts and tables. All the components look very nice, and come in a beautiful and sturdy box.

The counters depict the various army types like infantry, border guards, Landwehr, Bersaglieri, and more. Artillery is divided into subtypes; heavy, field, and mountain artillery. There are also counters for fortifications, trenches, and loss markers.

### **Offensive preparations**

A game turn is divided in separate phases. First reinforcements will be placed on the map. Next each player has to decide which brigades he wants to activate. He does this by placing the HQ counter of the brigade on the Brigade Displace. This is done in secret, not visible for the opponent. The cost to do this is 1 Logistics Point. These Logistics Points 'drive' the game. You will need to manage your points in order to be able to do things. In order to function in the mountainous terrain, supplies had to be brought up and to the frontline. In the initiative phase it is determined which player will perform his actions first. Next weather is determined; supplies and artillery are arranged, to be followed by the event phase. By the roll of a die, using a table, it will be established if an event takes place and what faction will be affected. If so, another die is rolled and the Event Table will show you which event takes place. It is possible that there is a logistical problem, or maybe artillery fire can fall short, causing friendly fire casualties.

### **Initiative**

The player that holds the initiative can now activate one of the brigades that have been placed on the Brigade Display; he can use it to attack, move, or fire artillery. The opponent has the opportunity to fire defensively in the same turn, to be followed by a battle, which can cause a counterattack, which can cause another action, etc. Next, the player that held the initiative can activate another brigade or pass. If a player passes, the initiative goes to the opponent, and he can activate a brigade.

So the game play goes back and forth until both players no longer have any brigades that they can activate or both players pass. Strafexpedition is a game that keeps players actively involved in the game; they will have to be aware of any opportunities that might arise allowing them to make best use of their forces. If both players have passed, or there are no longer any brigades that they can activate, the player that held the initiative is allowed to activate any brigades that did not perform any actions at all. It's obvious that there are some restrictions to this. Units that are far behind their own lines are allowed to perform strategic movements, meaning that they have more movement points available to move around. Next units that are in supply can be reinforced or recovered, and it has to be determined if a Sudden Death Victory takes place. If not, the game continues with the next turn.

## **Scenarios**

The 5 scenarios differ in size and allow players to go full bore for the campaign, using both maps, or to try one of the smaller one-map scenarios. Because the front more or less contains two different sectors, it is possible to play this game with more than two players. The rules to do so are included in the rulebook. Following the publication of Strafexpedition, a small expansion map was printed that covers the battles that took place in the Valsugana valley. This was a diversionary attack that took place in order to tie down Italian reserves. The expansion rules can be downloaded from the Europa Simulazioni website, the counters are in the main game.

## **Conclusion**

It is good to notice that high quality boardwargames get published in Europe too; games that can match the ones that are published by the big American companies. Almost unnoticed, Strafexpedition 1916 has proved to be one of the best games being published in 2012. The reactions on Consimworld are very positive too, and rightly so!

Text: **Hans Korting**

**Rating:** 9

**Author:** Andrea Brusati

**Publisher:** Europa Simulazioni

**Number of player:** 1-4

**Play time:** 120 min

**Price:** € 48,00

**BGG-score:** 8,0 (25)

**Pros:** beautiful game covering an often neglected front of WWI

**Cons:** the maps make use of thick paper and are a little difficult to lie down flat