

THE BATTLE FOR COLLECCHIO, APRIL 1945

# BRAZIL VERSUS GERMANY

In late April 1945, the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) received word that Axis forces were retreating in their direction from the area of Genoa, which US forces had just liberated. An armoured reconnaissance squadron was sent to Collecchio, and cut the Germans off.

By Piers Brand

**H**ere they bumped into the armoured cars from the 90th Panzergrenadier Division's reconnaissance battalion, who were soon followed by panzers from the division and elements of the 148th Infantry Division supporting them. At first the Brazilian M8 armoured cars fought a sharp skirmish with the German Sd. Kfz. 222 and 234 armoured cars, but their commander judged the M8s to be too vulnerable to infantry anti-tank weapons and obviously the enemy tanks.

The small Brazilian advance force soon found itself outnumbered, and in response a force of Brazilian infantry was hastily rushed into the town in Jeeps and trucks; once delivered, the drivers raced back to collect more men. Despite the war being clearly near the end, and it being evening by the time the infantry had arrived, the Brazilian divisional commander, General Mascarenhas de Moraes, dissuaded Major Ramagem, the commander of the 2nd Battalion 11th Infantry, from encamping for the night and convinced him to continue the fight with all the enthusiasm of a young infantry lieutenant.

With some troops dug in to block Highway 62, the Brazilian 5th Company launched an attack into the town and quickly captured the church. Further supporting attacks pressed into the Germans on the outskirts of the town, who responded with mortars and intense small-arms fire. During the battle neither the Germans or the Brazilians could rely on anything heavier than mortars and there was no artillery to support either side.

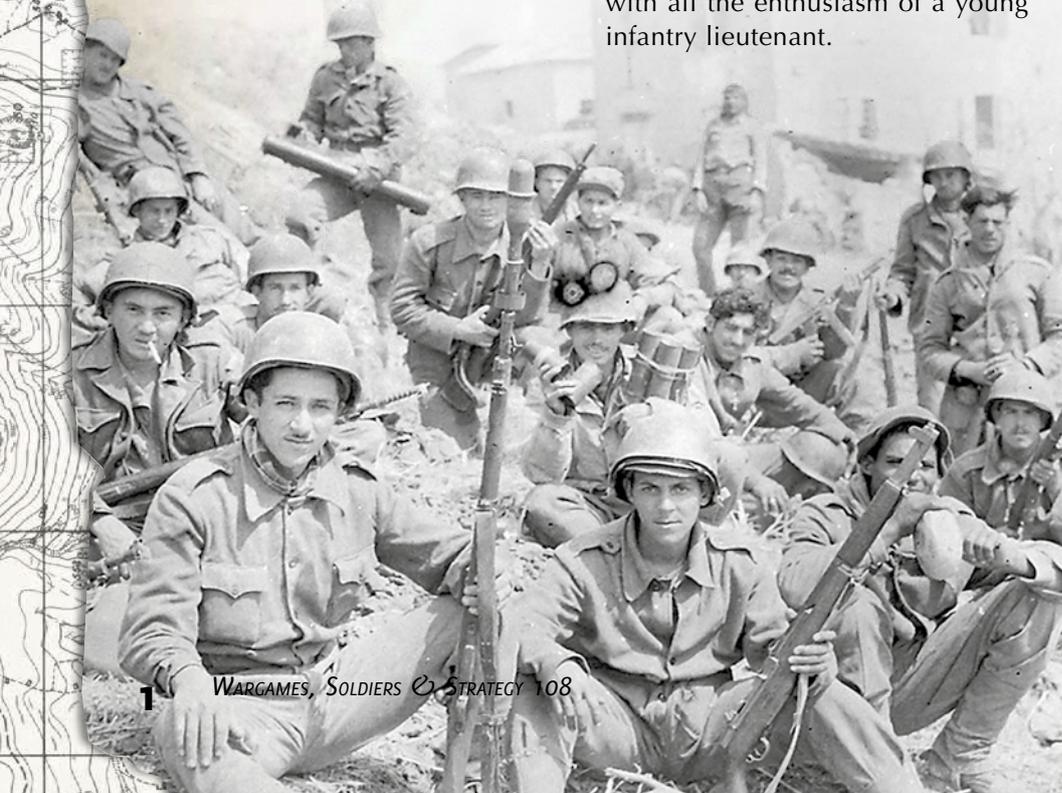
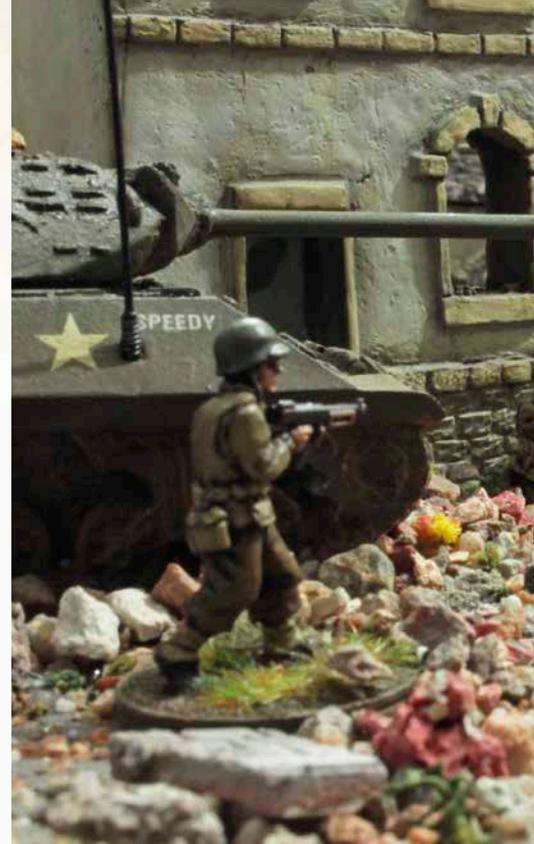
The battle was intense around the church, and the Brazilian general Zenobia da Costa appeared without warning during the fighting and took charge of the defence, acting more like a platoon leader than a general, standing up in rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire to direct soldiers into fighting positions. At one point a German patrol closed to a short distance from the general, but as everyone else hit the ground for cover he remained standing, continuing to point out targets and get the men fighting.

## FIGHTING COLLECCHIO

The following scenario is for use with *Battlegroup: Fall of the Reich*, but it can be easily adapted to be used with any set of WWII rules by simply using the orders of battle provided. The game represents part of the

Soldiers of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force celebrate Brazilian Independence Day (September 7th) in Italy, 1944.

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Welcome reinforcements! An M10 can help deal with opposition.



Take cover! The lightly armoured cars can't go toe-to-toe with their heavier German counterparts.

fighting in the town of Collecchio and condenses the series of actions into a single scenario.

The Brazilian force begins the game to the left of the blue area marked on the map, while the Germans defend behind the red line as shown. The Brazilian objective is to capture at least three of the buildings in the complex in order to secure a foothold on the outskirts of Collecchio. Once a building is taken, and if there are no German units within 5" of it, the German player must take one chit for the first captured, two for the second captured, and three chits for the third building captured. The winner is the first side to break the enemy's battle rating. If the Germans lose, it is considered that they have been pushed back into the town, allowing the Brazilians to move in and continue the battle, as happened historically.

### Brazilian Battlegroup

(all troops are regular)

- 3 x M8 Greyhound (scout, mortar spotter)
- 1 x recon platoon command M8 Greyhound (officer, scout, mortar spotter)
- 3 x Jeep recon teams – three men in Jeep (scout)



### From turn 3:

- Infantry platoon (riding in trucks and Jeeps – whatever a player has available!)
- Platoon command – five figures (officer, mortar spotter)
- 3 x rifle squads – seven men with M1 Garand rifles
- 3 x BAR squads – five men with two BARs and M1 carbines
- 2 x machine gun teams – three men with .30 cal. MG
- 1 x bazooka team – two men with a bazooka
- Forward headquarters – three men in a Jeep (senior officer, mortar spotter)

### From turn 7:

- 3 x M4 Shermans, with rifle squad and a BAR squad (as above)
- M10 carrying a platoon command
- Off-table support:
  - 2 x 81 mm mortars
  - 2 x 81 mm mortars

Battle rating: 45

Officers: 4

### German advance guard

(all troops are regular)

- 2 x Sd. Kfz. 222 (scout)
- 1 x Sd. Kfz 234/1 (scout, mortar spotter)



© Rocio Espin



Dismount! Recon infantry takes to the ground when the Germans open fire from the buildings in Collecchio.

- Recon platoon command – three men in Kübelwagen (officer, scout, mortar spotter)
- Motorised reconnaissance patrol – three men with a Panzerfaust in a Kübelwagen
- Infantry foot patrol – rifle squad: five men; MG team: three men with MG42
- Sniper

#### From turn 4

- Reinforced infantry platoon
- Platoon command – six men (officer, mortar spotter)
- 4 x rifle teams – five men with a Panzerfaust
- 4 x MG teams – three men with an MG42
- sMG42 team – three men with tripod MG42 and a three-man loader team
- Panzerschreck team – two men with Panzerschreck

#### From turn 6

- 1 x Panzer IV Ausf. H
- Truck carrying a rifle squad with rifle and an MG team
  - 1 x Panzer III Ausf. L
  - Off-table support
- 2 x 80 mm mortars

The Germans may also designate one house as a fortified building, giving a cover save of

3+, to represent some of the thick stone-walled dwellings in the region.

*Battle rating:* 30

*Officers:* 2

### CONCLUSION

By 9 pm more Brazilian infantry arrived, riding into the battle on M4 tanks and M10 tank destroyers. The Axis forces made continued attempts throughout the night to break through the Brazilian blocking position to escape and retreat, but after an assault at dawn, supported by a few remaining Panzers, failed, the Axis resistance collapsed. The next day the Brazilians had full control

of the town and began the push towards Fornovo.

The battle at Collecchio and the following fighting at Fornovo would convince the German commander that his defeat was inevitable. Within four days of the fighting at Collecchio, the Germans had sought a ceasefire and then surrendered. General Mascarenhas de Moraes and his Brazilian soldiers received the surrender of the Wehrmacht and ENR Divisions on 29 April 1945. In just seven days the Brazilians had taken 14,700 troops, 800 officers, and two generals prisoner and captured around 1,500 vehicles and 80 field guns. **WS&S**



Infantry reinforcements prepare to storm the town while a bazooka team goes hunting for panzers.

