



The American Soldier, 1945

Because of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (BEF), Brazil had the distinction of being the only Latin American nation whose participation in World War II was represented in division strength. The first Brazilians to fight in Europe were the men of the 6th Regimental Combat Team, committed in Italy on 14 September 1944. Other elements of the BEF followed and were assigned to sectors at the front controlled by the U.S. IV Corps of the Fifth Army.

In 401 days of continuous operation as part of the IV Corps, the Brazilians took part in the liberation of 24,580 square miles of Italian soil, including more than six hundred towns and cities. One of the unit's more memorable engagements was an attack in support of the IV Corps' 10th Mountain Division assigned to take a series of mountain peaks and ridges which had been used by the Germans to observe U.S. troop movements along one of the two main arteries to Bologna and the Fifth Army's front.

Two objectives of the Mountain Division's attack were Riva Ridge and the Monte Belvedere-Monte della Torraccia. Riva Ridge was a cliff that rose almost fifteen hundred feet from the valley floor, all of which had to be scaled prior to gaining access to Monte Belvedere.

Covering on the right, the BEF was to hold a three-mile sector between the Mountain Division's right flank and the Reno River in front of the Fifth Army. During the operation, the BEF seized Monte Castello, about one mile southeast of Monte della Torraccia. Soon after nightfall, on 23 February 1945, the Brazilians assaulted the crest and seized their objective, thereby protecting the Mountain Division's right flank from enemy counterattack.

Featured in this painting are members of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in the final stages of defeating the enemy on Monte Castello. The men of the BEF are firing an 81-mm mortar and are attired in typical American uniforms of the World War II period: wool trousers, M1943 field jacket, and the modified M1910 individual equipment which included the M1 rifle, M1 carbine, and the M1A1 Thompson submachine gun.