

Chapter 13

War in Europe, 1944-45

After Pearl Harbor, Americans were united and determined to crush Japan. However, after negotiations with England in December 1941, President Roosevelt promised to focus the war effort on Germany. In reality, America was engaged in two wars simultaneously. While the allies focused their attention on the European front, America was fighting, mostly on its own in the Pacific. And for the first year, the United States and its allies were losing both wars.² The British surrendered Singapore in February 1942, and by March, Japan had conquered or was on the verge of conquering much of the territory in the Pacific, including Malaysia, New Guinea, the Mariana and Caroline Islands, Admiralty Island, the Gilbert Islands, the Solomon Islands, Burma, Borneo, and others. The Philippines fell two months later, and the Japanese delivered a massive blow to U.S. morale when they forced the 78,000 American and Filipino troops who had surrendered in Bataan to walk sixty-five miles without food or water while being constantly beaten and tortured. More than 5,000 Americans died on that death march. By the winter of 1941-42, America was in full retreat throughout the Pacific.

Europe was not faring much better. By the beginning of 1942, Germany controlled Austria, Poland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Greece, France, and much of Eastern Europe. The one bright spot was that the German drive into the Soviet Union had stalled. Germany also controlled the seas. In the first quarter of 1942, German U-boats sank more than a million tons of goods, 860,000 tons in November alone. In March 1943, 400 U-boats sank 120 ships. On 19 August 1942, an experimental invasion force of 5,000 Canadian, 1,000 British, and 50 American troops attacked the French port of Dieppe, fifty miles up the coast from Le Havre. The invasion was planned to gain experience and intelligence for landing a force

²The discussion that follows is drawn from Gerald Astor, *The Greatest War*, 3 vols. (New York: Warner, 1999); Mitchell G. Bard, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to World War II* (New York: Alpha Books, 1999); and Antony Shaw, *World War II Day by Day* (Osceola, WI: MBI, 2000).