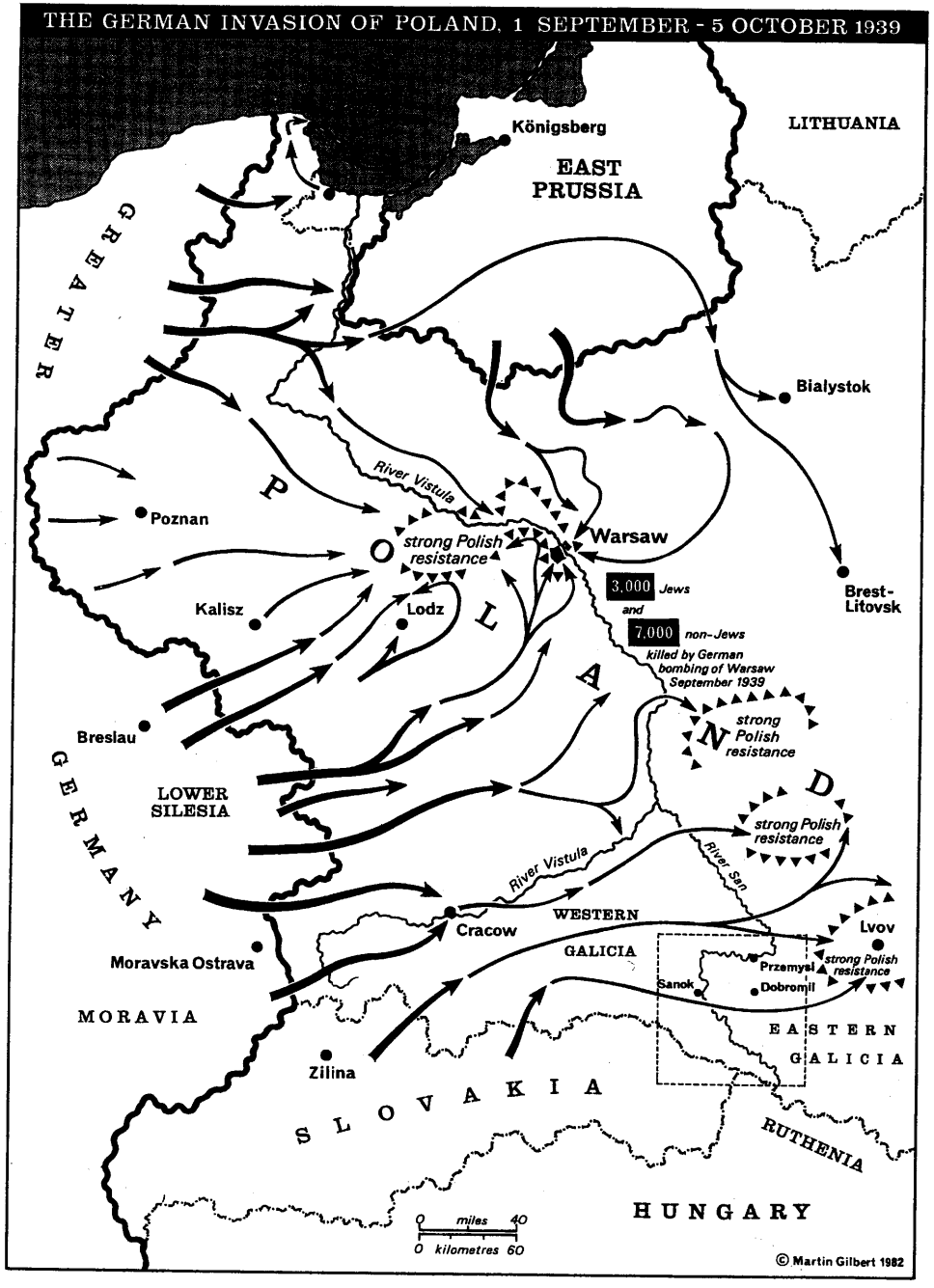
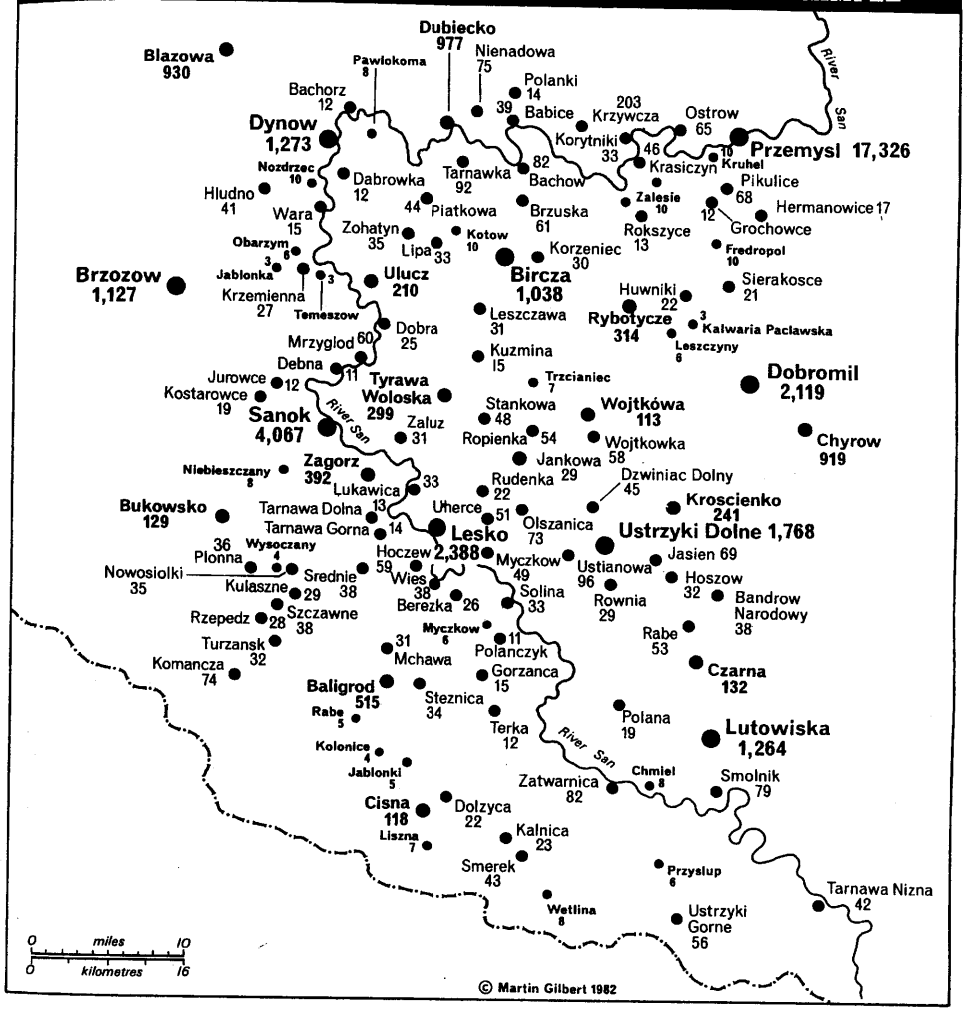
Map 26 Gilbert, Martin: Atlas of the Holocaust

Map 27

THE GERMAN INVASION OF POLAND, 1 SEPTEMBER - 5 OCTOBER 1939



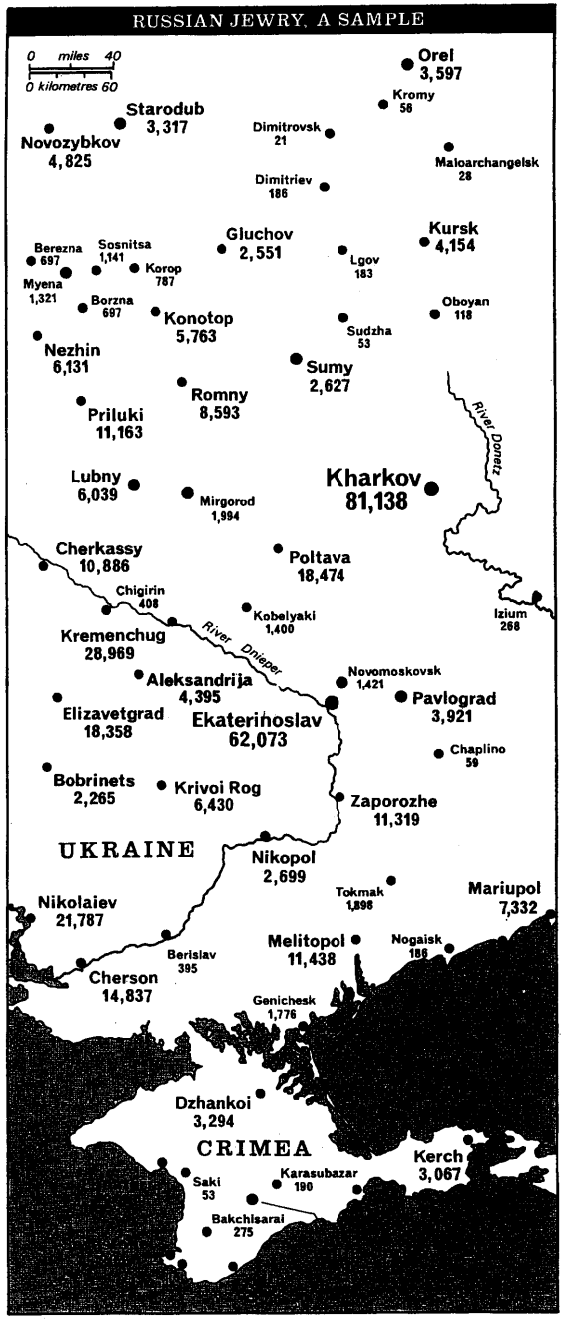
THE JEWS OF RURAL POLAND ON THE EVE OF WAR: A SAMPLE



On 1 September 1939 the German army invaded Poland, advancing across a land where Jews had lived for over 800 years. The map above shows the number of Jews living in a small area of Poland, which in September 1939, was on one of the lines of advance of the German army as it drove through Poland.

The map on the left shows the main line of advance of the German army: the thicker arrows show the advance in the first five days of September, the thinner arrows, the advance in the next two weeks.

Rapid though the German advance was, the Polish forces fought with skill and bravery at many points, checking the German forces in a series of fierce battles. During the fighting, more than sixty thousand Polish soldiers were killed, of whom some 6,000 were Jews. In addition 3,000 Jewish civilians were among those killed during the bombing of Warsaw.



On 22 June 1941 German forces invaded the Soviet Union. As they advanced they moved through areas of dense Jewish settlement, in which lived more than 2,700,000 Jews as well as several hundred thousand Jewish refugees from western Poland.

The figures shown here *(left)* of the number of Jews in some of the cities, towns and villages of western Russia are taken from the Soviet census of 1926. In cities such as Kharkov Jews constituted more than 20 per cent of the total population, and between 1926 and the outbreak of war, the Jewish population of most of the towns shown here had increased. Some had almost doubled: there were as many as 150,000 Jews in Kharkov on the eve of the German invasion. In the Crimea, ancient Jewish communities dating back to Greek and Roman times, and Jewish collective farms set up in the 1920s, existed side by side.

The Jews of several towns shown on the left-hand map had lived through the pogroms in Tsarist times *(page 14)*. Many more had been the victims of the massacres of 1918 and 1919, which had claimed 85,000 lives *(page 15)*. Some of the towns, such as Starodub, had taken a lead in organizing Jewish self-defence during that period. Others, a few years later, had been at the centre of the famine region, when millions of Soviet citizens had perished.

During the early 1920s tens of thousands of Russian Jews had emigrated, some to avoid Communist persecution, others to escape the all-pervading poverty. But the majority had no choice but to remain in their homes and with their families, working in shops and offices, tilling the fields, and simply trying to exist in the harsh world of Stalinism.

Hitler had other plans for these millions of Jews. He wanted them neither as subjects, nor as slaves. He had made his plans before the German invasion: in May 1941, at Pretzsch, in Saxony, special mobile killing squads, the 'Einsatzgruppen', were set up. Each squad had been allocated a particular area of the Soviet Union for its future activities. Thus Einsatzgruppe A was to be responsible for the murder of Jews in the Baltic States, while Einsatzgruppe D was to work in the Ukraine and the Crimea.

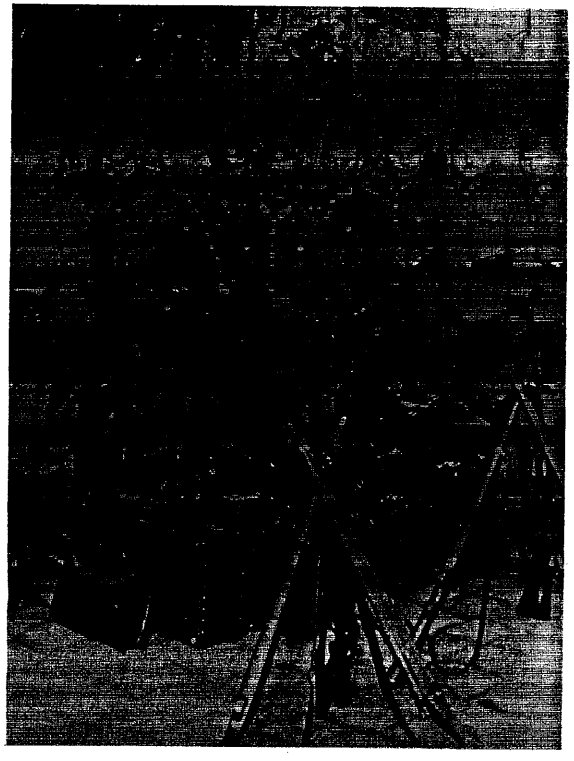
Just as the German army was confident that it could defeat the Soviet Union, and conquer all of western Russia, so the SS was convinced that it could, by mass executions on the spot, 'solve' the Jewish question in

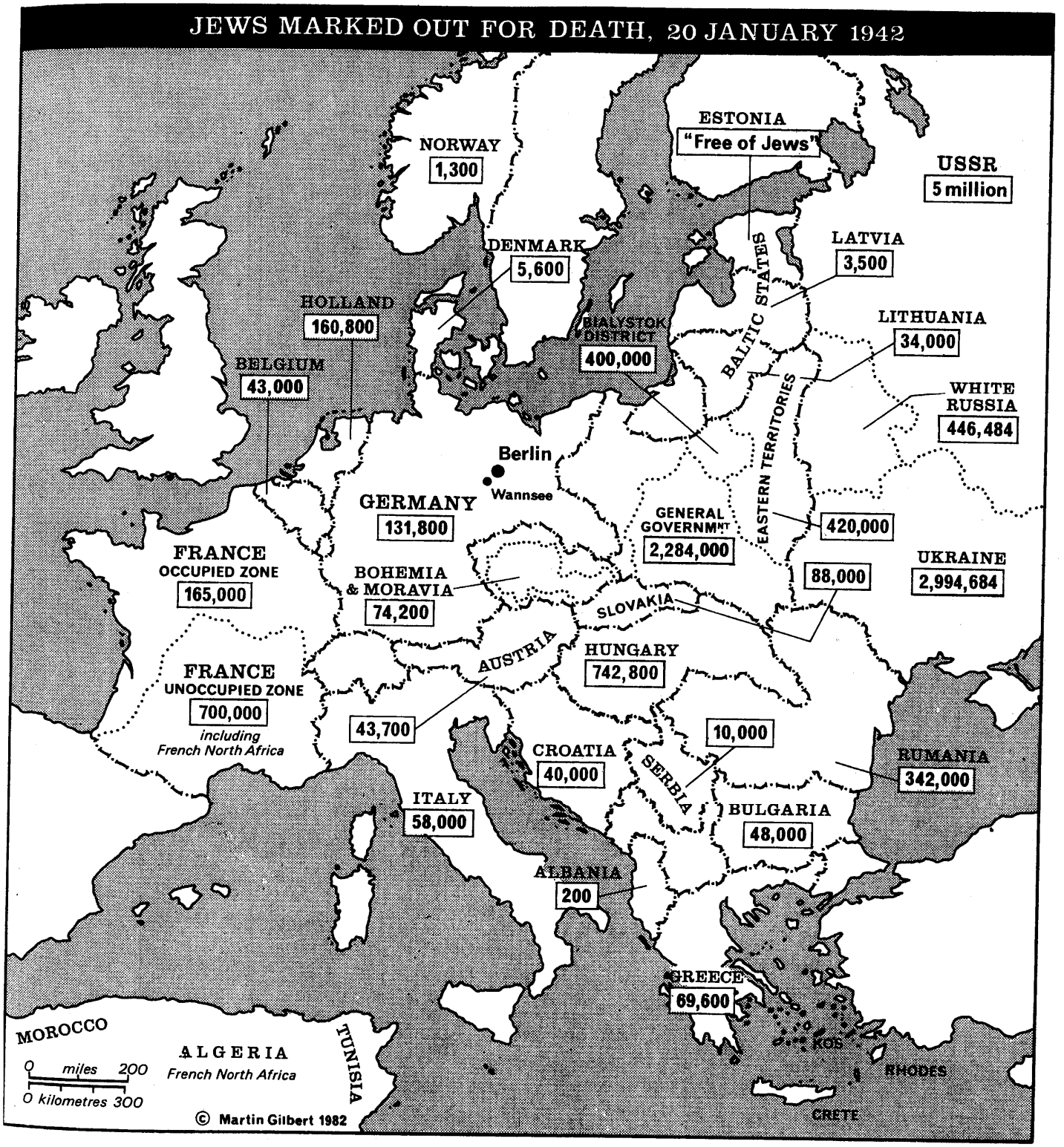
Russia, by murdering all the Jews it could catch. No family was to be spared. Nor were any resources to be wasted in setting up ghettos, nor in the deportation of Jews to distant camps or murder sites. The killing was to be done in the towns and villages, at the moment of military victory.

When the German army invaded Russia in June 1941, its advance was so rapid that less than 300,000 Jews were able to escape eastward, to safety beyond the Volga.

The photograph, taken from the personal album of one of the officers in the picture, shows the arrival of a detachment of Einsatzgruppe D in the town of Drohobycz, in the Polish province of Eastern Galicia, which Russia had annexed in October 1939. Part of the task of these killing squads was to recruit local anti-semites, whether Ukrainians, Lithuanians, or Latvians, who could help them to round up, terrorize and destroy each Jewish community, however small. For the work of this particular detachment in Drohobycz itself, see page 67.

The map above shows the regions allocated to the different killing squads, and the initial points of attack of the German army and its Rumanian ally on 22 June 1941.





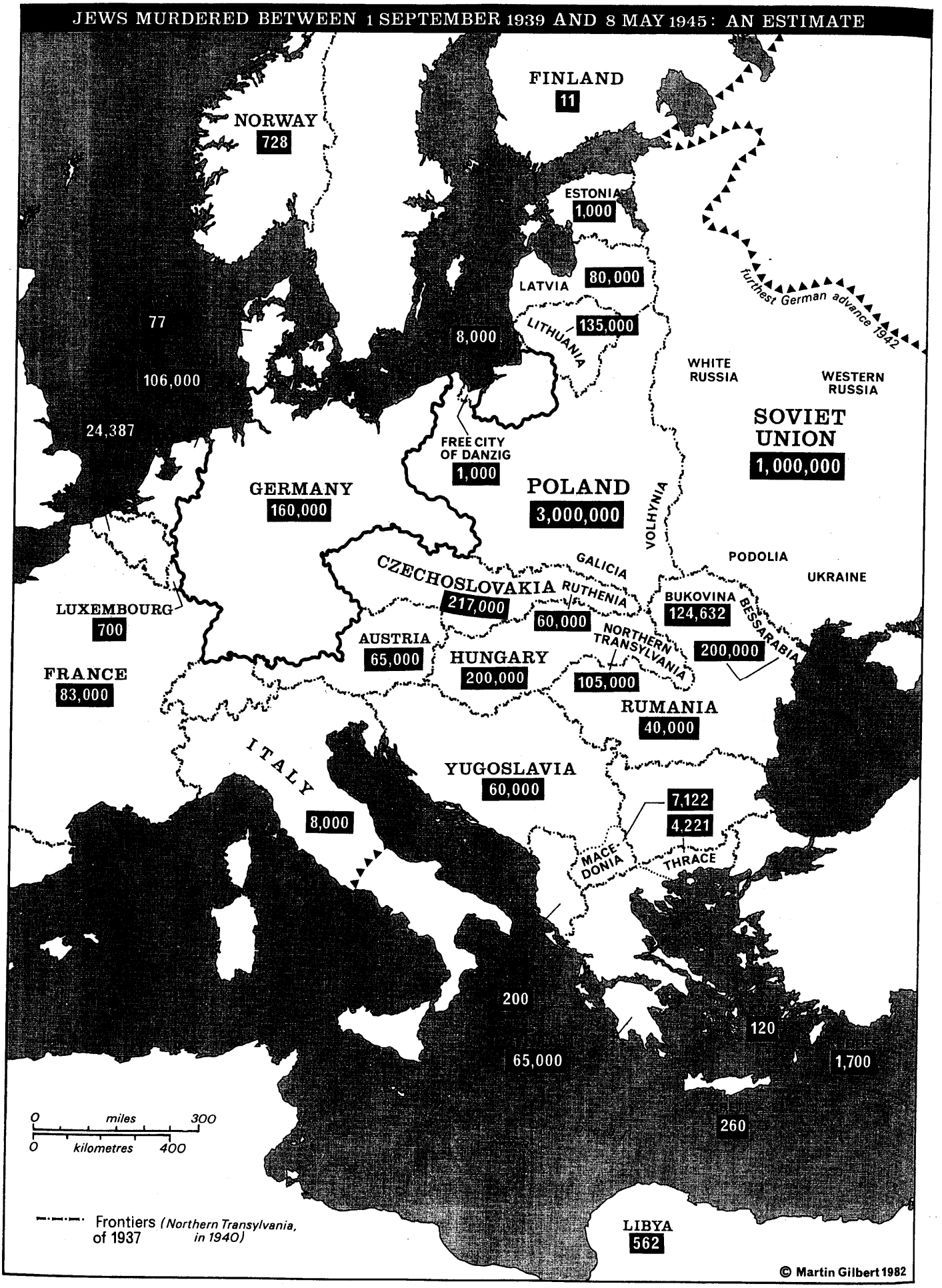
By December 1941 the German armies were masters of Europe, and on 7 December 1941 the Japanese entered the war against the United States and Britain *(opposite, above)*.

From Estonia the killing squads reported to Berlin with their usual precision the murder over the previous six months of 229,052 Jews in Latvia and Lithuania *(opposite, below)*. All 1,000 Jews caught in Estonia had also been killed.

At the Wannsee suburb of Berlin, German officials gathered on 20 January 1942 to discuss the final destruction of European Jewry. They also noted, as seen on the map above, what they believed to be the precise number of Jews still to be killed. The 'low' figures for the Baltic States indicate their knowledge that so many thousands had been killed already. At the Wannsee Conference plans were made for what was called the 'Final Solution', to be carried out by means of slave labour for all able-bodied Jews, the separation of men from women, and mass deportation.

In addition to the 300,000 survivors of the concentration camps, over a million and a half European Jews survived Hitler's efforts to destroy them. Some were fortunate, as in Germany, to escape from Europe before the outbreak of war or, as in Hungary, that liberation came before the plans for their destruction could be completed. Others, as in Rumania, were saved when their Government, hitherto anti-Jewish, changed its policy in anticipation of an Allied victory. The Jews of Bulgaria were saved by the courage of the Bulgarian people *(page 153)*. The majority of the Polish Jews shown here survived because they found refuge in 1939 and 1940 in Soviet Central Asia. More than 20,000 French, Belgian and Dutch Jews had found refuge in Switzerland, Spain and Portugal. Denmark's Jews had been smuggled to safety in Sweden *(pages 166-7)*.

Some Jews everywhere, but particularly in France, Belgium, Holland and Italy, survived because the Germans took longer to deport them than time finally allowed: the Allied landings on continental Europe coming while deportations were still in progress. Other Jews all over Europe escaped deportation altogether because they were sheltered by individual non-Jews who risked their own lives to save Jews.


JEWS MURDERED BETWEEN 1 SEPTEMBER 1939 AND 8 MAY 1945: AN ESTIMATE
FINLAND
11
NORWAY
728
ESTONIA
1,000
LATVIA
80,000
LITHUANIA
135,000
77
8,000
106,000
24,387
furthest German advance 1942
WHITE RUSSIA
WESTERN RUSSIA
SOVIET UNION
1,000,000
FREE CITY OF DANZIG
1,000
GERMANY
160,000
POLAND
3,000,000
VOLHYNIA
GALICIA
PODOLIA
UKRAINE
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
217,000
RUTHENIA
60,000
BUKOVINA
124,632
BESSARABIA
200,000
LUXEMBOURG
700
AUSTRIA
65,000
HUNGARY
200,000
NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA
105,000
FRANCE
83,000
RUMANIA
40,000
ITALY
8,000
YUGOSLAVIA
60,000
7,122
4,221
MACEDONIA
THRACE
200
120
65,000
1,700
260
0 miles 300
0 kilometres 400
Frontiers of 1937 (Northern Transylvania, in 1940)
LIBYA
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