

CASE No. 9

THE ZYKLON B CASE**TRIAL OF BRUNO TESCH AND TWO OTHERS**

BRITISH MILITARY COURT, HAMBURG,
1ST-8TH MARCH, 1946

Complicity of German industrialists in the murder of interned allied civilians by means of poison gas.

Bruno Tesch was owner of a firm which arranged for the supply of poison gas intended for the extermination of vermin, and among the customers of the firm were the S.S. Karl Weinbacher was Tesch's Procurist or second-in-command. Joachim Drosihn was the firm's first gassing technician. These three were accused of having supplied poison gas used for killing allied nationals interned in concentration camps, knowing that it was so to be used. The Defence claimed that the accused did not know of the use to which the gas was to be put ; for Drosihn it was also pleaded that the supply of gas was beyond his control. Tesch and Weinbacher were condemned to death. Drosihn was acquitted.

A. OUTLINE OF THE PROCEEDINGS**1. THE COURT**

The Court consisted of Brigadier R. B. L. Persse, as President, and, as members, Lt. Col. Sir Geoffrey Palmer, Bart., Coldstream Gds., and Major S. M. Johnstone, Royal Tank Regt.

Capt. H. S. Marshall was Waiting Member.

C. L. Stirling, Esq., C.B.E., Barrister-at-Law, Deputy Judge Advocate General, was Judge Advocate.

Major G. I. D. Draper, Irish Guards, Judge Advocate General's Branch, HQ. B.A.O.R., was Prosecutor.

Three German Counsel appeared on behalf of the accused: Dr. O. Zippel, Dr. C. Stumme and Dr. A. Stegemann defended Tesch, Weinbacher and Drosihn respectively.

2. THE CHARGE

The accused, Bruno Tesch, Joachim Drosihn and Karl Weinbacher, were charged with a war crime in that they "at Hamburg, Germany, between 1st January, 1941, and 31st March, 1945, in violation of the laws and usages of war did supply poison gas used for the extermination of allied nationals interned in concentration camps well knowing that the said gas was to be so used." The accused pleaded not guilty.

3. THE CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION

The prosecuting Counsel, in his opening address, stated that Dr. Bruno Tesch was by 1942 the sole owner of a firm known as Tesch and Stabenow, whose activities were divided into three main categories. In the first place, it distributed certain types of gas and gassing equipment for disinfecting various public buildings, including Wehrmacht barracks and S.S. concentration camps. Secondly, it provided, where required, expert technicians to carry out these gassing operations. Lastly, Dr. Tesch and Dr. Drosihn, the firm's senior gassing technician, carried out instruction for the Wehrmacht and the S.S. in the use of the gas which the firm supplied. The predominant importance of these gassing operations in war-time lay in their value in the extermination of lice.

The chief gas involved was Zyklon B, a highly dangerous poison gas, 99 per cent. of which was prussic acid. The gas was manufactured by another firm. Tesch and Stabenow had the exclusive agency for the supply of the gas east of the River Elbe, but the Zyklon B itself went directly from the manufacturers to the customer.

The contention for the Prosecution was that from 1941 to 1945 Zyklon B was being supplied as a direct result of orders accepted by the accused's firm, Tesch and Stabenow. On that basis, the Zyklon B was going in vast quantities to the largest concentration camps in Germany east of the Elbe. In these same camps the S.S. Totenkopfverbände were, from 1942 to 1945, systematically exterminating human beings to an estimated total of six million, of whom four and a half million were exterminated by the use of Zyklon B in one camp alone, known as Auschwitz/Birkenau. In these concentration camps were a vast number of people from the occupied territories of Europe, including Czechs, Russians, Poles, French, Dutch and Belgians, and people from neutral countries and from the United States. The Prosecutor also claimed that over a period of time the three accused got to know of this wholesale extermination of human beings in the eastern concentration camps by the S.S. using Zyklon B gas, and that, having acquired this knowledge, they continued to arrange supplies of the gas to these customers in the S.S. in ever-increasing quantities, until in the early months of 1944 the consignment per month to Auschwitz concentration camp was nearly two tons.

The accused Weinbacher was a "Procurist"; when Tesch was absent he was fully empowered and authorised to do all acts on behalf of his principal which his principal could have done. His position was of great importance, since his principal would travel on the business of the firm for as many as 200 days in the year.

The case for the Prosecution was that knowingly to supply a commodity to a branch of the State which was using that commodity for the mass extermination of Allied civilian nationals was a war crime, and that the people who did it were war criminals for putting the means to commit the crime into the hands of those who actually carried it out. The action of the accused was in violation of Article 46 of the Hague Regulations of 1907, to which the German government and Great Britain were both parties.

4. THE EVIDENCE FOR THE PROSECUTION

Emil Sehm, a former bookkeeper and accountant employed by Tesch and Stabenow, supplied information, regarding the legitimate business activities of the firm and the positions of the three accused therein, which substantially bore out the opening statements of the Prosecutor on these points. He went on to state that in the Autumn of 1942 he saw in the files of the firm's registry one of the reports, dictated by Tesch, which gave accounts of his business journeys. In this travel report, Tesch recorded an interview with leading members of the Wehrmacht, during which he was told that the burial, after shooting, of Jews in increasing numbers was proving more and more unhygienic, and that it was proposed to kill them with prussic acid. Dr. Tesch, when asked for his views, had proposed to use the same method, involving the release of prussic acid gas in an enclosed space, as was used in the extermination of vermin. He undertook to train the S.S. men in this new method of killing human beings.

Sehm had written down a note of these facts and taken it away with him, but had burnt it the next day on the advice of an old friend, named Wilhelm Pook, to whom he had related what he had seen.

Dr. Marx, a German Barrister practising since 1934, who was called upon to define the status of a Procurist in German law, said :

"The procurist had the right to act in the name and on behalf of the firm. He is a man who, out of all the others mentioned in the law who have also the right to act on behalf of the firm, has most of these rights. He has the right to act on behalf of the firm and to conclude any transactions or any sort of act on behalf of the firm, and to conclude any transactions or any sort of legal proceedings in which the firm might find itself involved. One can say that anybody who has any sort of transactions with a man who holds the 'Procura' and who is called the Procurist is in exactly the same position as if he had had that transaction with the head of the firm."

Erna Biagini, a former stenographer of the firm, who was also in charge of the registry, claimed to have read, in "approximately 1942," a travel report of Dr. Tesch which stated that Zyklon B could be used for killing human beings as well as vermin.

Anna Uenzelmann, a former stenographer of the firm, said that in about June 1942 Tesch, after he had dictated a travel report on returning from Berlin, had told her that Zyklon B was being used for gassing human beings, and had appeared to be as terrified and shocked about the matter as she was.

Karl Ruehmling, who had been a bookkeeper and assistant gassing master with the firm, said that Zyklon B was sent by the concern to the concentration camps at Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and Neuengamme, but Auschwitz was sent the largest consignments.

Alfred Zaun, who was in charge of the firm's bookkeeping, said that, in his opinion, Auschwitz of all the concentration camps had received the most Zyklon B during the war.

Wilhelm Bahr, an ex-medical orderly at Neuengamme, described a prussic acid course which he had attended in the S.S. Hospital at Oranienburg in

1942, and which Dr. Tesch had conducted. He said that he himself had gassed two hundred Russian prisoners of war in Neuengamme in 1942, using prussic acid gas, but that it was not Dr. Tesch who had taught him the procedure which he had applied.

Perry Broad, who had been a Rottenführer in the Kommandatur of the Auschwitz camp from June 1942 until early 1945, described how persons were gassed there with Zyklon B. The people being gassed, to his knowledge, at Auschwitz and Birkenau were German deportees, Jews from Belgium, Holland, France, North Italy, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and Gypsies.

Dr. Bendel, who had been a prisoner at Auschwitz and had acted as a doctor to the inmates, said that from February 1944 to January 1945 a million people had been killed there by Zyklon B.

The remaining Prosecution witnesses were a member of a British war crimes investigation team, who identified pre-trial statements made by the accused ; Wilhelm Pook and his wife ; and five more employees of Tesch and Stabenow. The evidence of Pook and his wife supported that of Sehm to a degree, though not in every detail, but the fact that they had discussed the events of 1942 between his and their giving evidence was recognised by the Judge Advocate to be "undoubtedly unfortunate."

The Prosecution, acting in accordance with Regulation 8(i) (a) of the Royal Warrant, submitted to the Court a sworn affidavit in which Dr. Diels, a former high-ranking German government official, stated that it was common knowledge in 1943 in Germany that gas was being used for killing people.

Among various other documents⁽¹⁾ Dr. Tesch's S.S. subscription card was produced before the Court ; the Defence pointed out, however, that this did not prove that Dr. Tesch had been an active member of the S.S.

5. THE OPENING STATEMENTS OF DEFENCE COUNSEL

(i) *Counsel for Tesch*

Before calling Tesch to the witness-box, his Counsel stated that he intended to prove to the court, first, that Tesch had no knowledge of the killing of human beings by means of Zyklon B ; secondly, that Zyklon B was delivered only for normal purposes of disinfection and for medical reasons ; thirdly, that parts of gas chambers were sold only for the purpose of exterminating vermin ; fourthly, that concentration camps got the gas only in amounts which were quite normal in relation to the number of inhabitants, and only for killing vermin ; and fifthly, that instruction courses were held only according to the relevant laws and regulations, and again only for the purpose of teaching the method of exterminating vermin.

(ii) *Counsel for Weinbacher*

Dr. Stumme, defending Weinbacher, said that by the evidence which he would call, he would try to prove that Weinbacher had no knowledge of any note or report by Dr. Tesch to the effect that human beings were being killed by poison gas, and that until the capitulation of Germany he never

⁽¹⁾ Of the various documents admitted as evidence in the trial (including five affidavits, and the pre-trial statements by all of the accused) the Secretariat of the United Nations War Crimes Commission has only been able to examine an extract from the affidavit of Dr. Diels.

had any reason to believe that Zyklon B was being used for any other purpose than the destruction of vermin.

(iii) *Counsel for Drosihn*

Counsel for Drosihn set out to prove, by the evidence which he called, first, that Dr. Drosihn had nothing to do with the business concerning the supply of gas ; secondly, that, being on journeys for considerable periods, he had only a very scanty knowledge of the activities of the business ; thirdly, that he heard about the gassing of human beings only after the capitulation of Germany ; and fourthly, that he never carried out instruction either in concentration camps or for S.S. personnel.

6. THE EVIDENCE FOR THE DEFENCE

(i) *Dr. Tesch*

All three accused gave evidence on oath. Dr. Tesch stated that he had heard nothing and had known nothing about human beings being killed in concentration camps with prussic acid. He denied ever having attended any conference, or having been approached by any official or military authority on the subject, or having written in any document that human beings should be killed by prussic acid. He specifically denied that he had made the remarks referred to by Anna Uenzelmann. He had never been to Auschwitz himself and had had no reason to believe that the camps were incorrectly run.

He did not think that deliveries to Auschwitz were very high because it was a large camp and, further, it " administered more camps in the General Government of Poland." He could not remember Dr. Drosihn ever having instructed S.S. men. Although the witness had paid subscriptions to both the S.S. and the Nazi Party, he had never been an active member of either. He thought that the passage in the travel report which Erna Biagini had read might have been a record of an answer put to him by a pupil.

Drosihn, stated Tesch, was a technical expert and was not concerned with the administration of the firm or the office. Weinbacher, however, had complete control when Tesch was away from the office.

(ii) *Karl Weinbacher*

This accused, giving evidence on oath, said that his work was, briefly, to look after the current business affairs in the absence of Dr. Tesch, seeing to the incoming and the outgoing mail, answering any queries, and confirming any orders received. He read some of Dr. Tesch's travel reports but not all, because there were too many ; in particular, he had not read any dealing with the possibility of destroying Jews with Zyklon B. Dr. Tesch had not mentioned any such possibility to him, nor had the witness heard during the war that Jews were being gassed. He had never been inside a concentration camp, nor had he received unfavourable reports during the war about such camps. He, too, stated that Drosihn had nothing to do with the business management. He could not agree that the S.S. would necessarily come to Dr. Tesch for advice on the extermination of human beings with Zyklon B, since, although Dr. Tesch was an expert on the use of the gas, there were plenty of books available on prussic acid.

(iii) *Dr. Drosihn*

Drosihn claimed that his part in the activities of the firm consisted in collaborating on scientific issues, being in charge of the gassing, for instance, of ships in Hamburg docks, and examining delousing chambers to see whether they were working correctly. He spent about 150 to 200 days a year in travelling on business. He had been to check the working of the delousing chambers in Sachsenhausen and Ravensbruck and had been to Neuengamme; but had neither been to Auschwitz, nor given instructions to the S.S. in any place. He knew nothing of the size of consignments of gas to Auschwitz. Contrary to Tesch's evidence, the witness claimed to have reported to him once that he had seen happening in the camps things that were contrary to human dignity.

(iv) *The Remaining Defence Witnesses*

Nine other witnesses called by the Defence did not add very substantially to the evidence before the Court. The subjects covered by their remarks included the character of Dr. Tesch, and the extent of general knowledge in Germany concerning the killing of Jews. *Inter alia*, they were called to prove that Zyklon B was widely used for the legitimate purpose of killing vermin. These witnesses were two Medical Officers from Hamburg, a doctor and two chemists employed by the German Hygiene Institute, a retired professor of the same institute, the Manager of the Disinfection Institute of Hamburg, a stenotypist formally employed by Tesch and Stabenow, and Dr. Stumme, one of the Defence Counsel, who gave evidence regarding the German law regarding State secrets.

7. THE CLOSING ADDRESSES OF THE DEFENCE COUNSEL

(i) *Counsel for Tesch*

In his closing address, Dr. Zippel, dealing with the point of law involved, submitted that, since the charge was not one of destroying human life but only of supplying the means of doing so, such action would only be contrary to the laws and usages of war if the means supplied were necessarily intended to kill human beings. To supply a material which also had quite legitimate purposes was no war crime.⁽²⁾

Turning to the facts, Counsel claimed that while supplies of Zyklon B to the S.S. were large, it was the duty of the S.S. to see that the state of health in the eastern provinces was kept at a high level, and it was concerned not only with the Wehrmacht itself, but also with the state of health of those parts of the eastern provinces whose population was repatriated to Germany before the entry of Germany into war with Russia. Supplies were not too great to have been used wholly for legitimate purposes. Since 1944 the S.S. had had unlimited permission to use the gas for the destruction of vermin and the prevention of epidemics. He submitted that even in the concentration camps the gas was, at least at the beginning, used only for its legitimate purpose.

(2) The English translation of Dr. Zippel's speech subsequently contains the following passage: "I have two duties to perform. The first would be to try to prove that Tesch supplied this gas not knowing for what purposes it might be used. My second duty is that, even if he knew something about it, still the laws of this procedure would not suffice to find him guilty."

Counsel then questioned whether the Zyklon B used at Auschwitz for killing human beings had been supplied by Tesch and Stabenow. The fact that Auschwitz was situated in the district for which the firm were the agents could not be decisive, for other firms were able to supply that district, especially since during the war the boundaries of the districts were not so much respected as before. Further, the S.S. had been active all over the occupied territories during the war and had had various means of securing the gas. So many people were killed by gassing in Auschwitz that the S.S. must necessarily have used sources other than Tesch and Stabenow.

Counsel observed that the witnesses who were called to prove that Dr. Tesch knew about the unlawful use of his gas had given different versions as to how he must or should have known about such use. He proceeded also to throw doubts on the reliability of Sehm, for instance, in view of a statement of his, denied by many other witnesses, that the files of the firm in which he had found the travel report were kept under lock and key. Miss Biagini had denied that she saw anything in this report about a conference with the High Command of the Wehrmacht or any propositions made by Dr. Tesch to this authority. None of the typists who could have typed the travel report in question knew of it or of any rumour in the office regarding it. Under the existing war-time regulations of secrecy, it seemed impossible that a man as careful as Tesch should have dictated a report on an interview with the High Command on such a secret matter, placed the report where anyone in the office could read it, as was the case with all travel reports, and then discussed the facts with his employees. Dr. Tesch had been shown to be a fair and honest man, and his concentration on his work explained why he had not heard any rumour which may have circulated Germany concerning the gassing of human beings. Regarding the large supplies of gas to Auschwitz in particular, Counsel submitted that Dr. Tesch was too busy to be expected to know what individual customers bought, and in any case the supply of Zyklon was not as important to the firm as were its gassing activities. Furthermore, Dr. Tesch had regarded Auschwitz as a transit camp needing therefore unusually frequent delousing. Counsel concluded that Dr. Tesch knew nothing of the gassing of human beings either in Auschwitz or Neuengamme.

(ii) *Counsel for Weinbacher*

In his closing address, Dr. Stumme submitted that it had become clear during the trial that Weinbacher did not know that Zyklon B had been used for the killing of human beings. Not one of the witnesses could say really that Weinbacher had any knowledge of a travel report or any observation of Dr. Tesch that human beings had been killed by Zyklon B, or that Dr. Tesch had conversations with Weinbacher on such a subject. Nor had the trial shown that Weinbacher should have had reasonable suspicion, or grounds for suspicion, that Zyklon B had been used for the killing of human beings. Even if Dr. Tesch had written such a travel report as the one alleged, Weinbacher need not have read it, because he was a busy man, and witnesses had shown that many of the travel reports were filed and read by no one. Even Sehm claimed to have come across the particular report by accident, and Miss Biagini because she had to file it. He repeated Dr. Zippel's argument that Dr. Tesch would not write a State secret in a

document which all the staff could read. If Sehm had found any other document, it must have been purely by accident ; and no such accident had happened to Weinbacher. In connection with the large supplies of gas which were sent to Auschwitz, Counsel pointed out that Weinbacher had stated on oath that he had never had a summary of supplies to a single customer because this was left to the accountants. In any case, it had been shown that the quantity of Zyklon B needed for the killing of human beings was much smaller than that required for the killing of insects. The quantities of Zyklon B needed for killing half a million or even a million human beings stood in such small proportion to the quantities needed for the killing of insects that it would not have been noticed at all. Therefore, there had been no need for Weinbacher to have grown suspicious, since, claimed Counsel, he knew that Auschwitz was one of the biggest camps and a sort of transit camp. Counsel did not think, therefore, that it was correct to assume that the large quantity of Zyklon going to Auschwitz was any indication of the fact that human beings were being killed there. Supplies for Neuengamme were much lower than those for Auschwitz.

Dr. Stumme did not deal with the law involved, except for stating that Weinbacher, although a procurist, was still only an employee like Sehm and Miss Biagini, against whom no action was being taken, despite the knowledge which they were said to have had.

(iii) *Counsel for Drosihn*

Dr. Stegemann, in his closing address, confined his remarks to what concerned his client exclusively, while claiming the benefit of everything favourable to him which had already been said by the other Counsel. Every witness who was asked had said that the accused had had nothing whatever to do with the firm's business activities. He could not, therefore, for instance, have known of the size of the consignments to Auschwitz. His relatively small salary showed his subordinate position. He was a zoologist, and first technical gassing master to the firm, and spent more than half the year in travelling. When both Tesch and Weinbacher were away, Mr. Zaun had had the power of attorney, not Drosihn.

Both Dr. Tesch and Dr. Drosihn had said that the latter had never instructed S.S. men in the use of Zyklon B, and not even Sehm claimed that he knew anything about the alleged travel report. Drosihn had been away from the office for irregular periods, and was in no position to read Dr. Tesch's travel reports, which were in any case of no interest to him. Counsel denied that there had been general knowledge in Germany before the end of of the war about the gassing of Jews ; his client could not therefore have acquired such knowledge from rumours.

8. THE PROSECUTOR'S CLOSING ADDRESS

In his closing address, the prosecuting Counsel said that the possibility that some firm other than Tesch and Stabenow could have supplied Zyklon B to Auschwitz could be ruled out, as the latter had the monopoly in that area. The essential question was whether the accused knew of the purpose to which their gas was being put. Counsel admitted that the S.S. were under no restrictions as to the use they made of the gas, and that the direct knowledge which was available to Tesch as to that use was of the scantiest,

due to the fear and secrecy in which the S.S. worked. He relied for his case on the evidence of Sehm, Miss Biagini and Miss Uenzelmann.

Counsel said that it was unbelievable that Dr. Tesch did not know that anything wrong went on in the concentration camps. Dr. Drosihn had said without hesitation that he saw things there which were not worthy of human dignity, and that he had said so to Tesch. It was also unbelievable that Dr. Tesch had no knowledge of the amounts of gas being supplied to the S.S. and to Auschwitz in particular, by a firm which was wholly his property. In 1942 and 1943 Auschwitz had been the firm's second largest customer. Dr. Tesch had no reason to believe that Auschwitz was a transit camp, and moreover he was too efficient a man to be duped by the S.S. Counsel completed his case against Tesch by casting doubt on his veracity by showing how contradictions existed between his statements and those of other witnesses on certain details unrelated to the main issue.

Dealing very shortly with Weinbacher's position, Counsel contended that all that Tesch knew must, from the nature of the inner organisation of the business, have also been known by Weinbacher. For 200 days in the year he was in sole control of the firm, with access to all the books, able to read the travel reports, indeed compelled to read the travel reports if he was to carry on the business properly during the periods when his principal was away.

Prosecuting Counsel claimed that Drosihn must to some extent have shared the confidence of Tesch and Weinbacher, even although his activities were confined to the technical side of the firm as opposed to the sales and bookkeeping side.

He concluded that, by supplying gas, knowing that it was to be used for murder, the three accused had made themselves accessories before the fact to that murder.

9. THE SUMMING UP OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE

The Judge Advocate, in summing up the evidence before the Court, pointed out that the latter must be sure of three facts, first, that Allied nationals had been gassed by means of Zyklon B; secondly, that this gas had been supplied by Tesch and Stabenow; and thirdly, that the accused knew that the gas was to be used for the purpose of killing human beings. On points of law he did not think that the Court needed any direction.

After summarising the evidence of the Prosecution witnesses, the Judge Advocate said: "To my mind, although it is entirely a question for you, the real strength of the Prosecution in this case rests rather upon the general proposition that, when you realise what kind of a man Dr. Tesch was, it inevitably follows that he must have known every little thing about his business. The Prosecution ask you to say that the accused and his second-in-command Weinbacher, both competent business men, were sensitive about admitting that they knew at the relevant time of the size of the deliveries of poison gas to Auschwitz. The Prosecution then ask: "Why is it that these competent business men are so sensitive about these particular deliveries? Is it because they themselves knew that such large deliveries could not possibly be going there for the purpose of delousing clothing or for the purpose of disinfecting buildings?"

In Weinbacher's case, there was no direct evidence, either by way of conversation or of anything that he had written among the documents of the firm produced during the trial, which formed any kind of evidence specifically imputing knowledge to Weinbacher as to how Zyklon B was being used at Auschwitz. "But the Prosecution," said the Judge Advocate, "ask you to say that, in his case as in Tesch's case, the real strength of their case is not the individual direct evidence, but the general atmosphere and conditions of the firm itself." The Judge Advocate asked the Court whether or not it was probable that Weinbacher would constantly watch the figures relating to a less profitable activity of the firm, particularly since he received a commission on profits as well as his salary.

The Judge Advocate emphasised Drosihn's subordinate position in the firm, and asked whether there was any evidence that he was in a position either to influence the transfer of gas to Auschwitz or to prevent it. If he were not in such a position, no knowledge of the use to which the gas was being put could make him guilty.

10. THE VERDICT

Tesch and Weinbacher were found guilty.

Drosihn was acquitted.

11. THE SENTENCE

Counsel for Tesch, pleading in mitigation of sentence, said that if Tesch did know the use to which the gas was being put, and had consented to it, this happened only under enormous pressure from the S.S. Furthermore, had Tesch not co-operated, the S.S. would certainly have achieved their aims by other means. Tesch was merely an accessory before the fact, and even so, an unimportant one.

Counsel for Weinbacher pleaded that the Court should consider the latter's wife and three children; that he as a business employee might have thought that the ultimate use of the gas was Tesch's responsibility; and that if he had refused to supply Zyklon B the S.S. would immediately have handed him over to the Gestapo.

Nevertheless, subject to confirmation, the two were sentenced to death by hanging.

The sentences were confirmed and carried into effect.

B. NOTES ON THE CASE

1. A QUESTION OF JURISDICTION : THE NATIONALITY OF THE VICTIMS

The Prosecutor specified a number of Allied countries from which, he claimed, many of the persons gassed had originated. Wilhelm Bahr told how he himself had gassed two hundred Russians. Perry Broad mentioned Jews from Belgium, Holland, France, Czechoslovakia and Poland, among those gassed at Auschwitz. The Judge Advocate, in his summing up, stated that "among those unfortunate creatures undoubtedly there were many Allied nationals."

It was not alleged that British citizens were among the victims.

The British claim to jurisdiction over the case could be based primarily on the fact that by the Declaration regarding the defeat of Germany and the assumption of supreme authority with respect to Germany, made in Berlin on the 5th June, 1945, the four Allied Powers occupying Germany have assumed supreme authority therein. They have, therefore, become the local sovereigns in Germany. There is vested, then, in the United Kingdom authorities, administering the British Zone of Germany, the right to try German nationals for crimes of any kind wherever committed. The claim to jurisdiction is the stronger if, as in the present case, the criminal activities of the accused have been committed in the British Zone of Germany, by German residents of this Zone, although, of course, the crimes to which the accused were alleged to be accessories had their effect outside Germany, in Auschwitz, Poland.

British jurisdiction could further be based on either

- (a) the general doctrine called Universality of Jurisdiction over War Crimes, under which every independent State has in International Law jurisdiction to punish pirates and war criminals in its custody regardless of the nationality of the victim or the place where the offence was committed ; or
- (b) the doctrine that the United Kingdom has a direct interest in punishing the perpetrators of crimes if the victim was a national of an ally engaged in a common struggle against a common enemy.

2. QUESTIONS OF SUBSTANTIVE LAW

(i) *The Crime Alleged*

Article 46 of the Hague Convention of 1907, concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, on which the case for the Prosecution was based, provides that " Family honour and rights, individual life and private property, as well as religious convictions and worship must be respected." This Article falls under the section heading, *Military Authority over the Territory of the Hostile State*, and was intended to refer to acts committed by the occupying authorities in occupied territory. In the trial of Tesch, the acts to which the accused were allegedly accessories before the fact were committed mainly at Auschwitz, in occupied Poland.

(ii) *Civilians as war criminals*

The decision of the Military Court in the present case is a clear example of the application of the rule that the provisions of the laws and customs of war are addressed not only to combatants and to members of state and other public authorities, but to anybody who is in a position to assist in their violation.

The activities with which the accused in the present case were charged were commercial transactions conducted by civilians. The Military Court acted on the principle that any civilian who is an accessory to a violation of the laws and customs of war is himself also liable as a war criminal.