II. **Jurisdiction and Powers of the INM**

by James Stimson

1. In seeking to define the scope and powers of the INM, no small consideration ought to be given to the fact that the INM is a war court.

2. The controlling features of a war court of this kind are well known. Although a court in the broad sense of the term, it does not belong to the judicial branch of government, being an agency of the executive power called into existence by special order of the head of the executive or of its military representative as Commander-in-Chief. By analogy with court martial, it has no common law power whatsoever, having only such powers "as vested in it by express statute or may be derived from military usage," and belongs to the class of minor courts "of special and limited jurisdiction and scope whose competency cannot be stretched by implication..." (William Winthrop, *Military Law and Precedents*, paragraphs 54-55, Second Edition, Washington, published by the War Department).

3. Created for a special purpose, for the trial of specific offenses and specific offenders, having only as much power as has been granted its composition usually of military men, a Military Commission may, however, consist in part of civilians, at the discretion of the authority creating it; its action is commonly even more summary than that of a regular court martial.

4. That the INM as a joint military commission, in conformity with the above principles, draws all its powers from the instrument to which it owes its existence, is clearly enunciated in the London Agreement of August 8, 1945. Article 2 of the agreement reads: "The constitution, jurisdiction and functions of the International Military Tribunal shall be those set out..."
in the Charter annexed to this Agreement, which Charter shall form an
integral part of this Agreement." This wording seems conclusive. It stresses
exclusively without ambiguity that the source of the powers and of the law governing the
IMT is to be sought in the instrument by which it was created to the exclusion
of any other source.

The exclusiveness of the Charter as a source of both procedural and
substantive law of the Tribunal is affirmed in one of the first sections of
the instrument. Indeed, the right of challenging, recognized before courts-
martial and military commissions, is expressly denied by Article 5 of the
Charter to the prosecution as well as to the defendants and their counsel;
this is a clear demonstration of the will of the framers of the Agreement and
Charter to confer upon judges, prosecution and defendants, only such rights
and powers as expressly granted, without allowing general principles of domestic
or international law to stretch these express grants to override them or
conflict with them.

(3) Without engaging in a detailed recollection of the difficulties,
insufficiencies and shortcomings of international law which have motivated and
required the establishment of a special international instrument setting up
the IMT, it is necessary to recall three basic problems which were
intended to be solved:

a) To create an international court to deal with a specific
class of war crimes, namely, those whose offenses,
according to the Nuremberg Declaration of November 1, 1945,
had no particular geographical location;
b) To not set too completely or to mitigate the scope of
application of certain traditional and out-dated defenses
currently admitted in international law, such as "heads of
state," "imperial orders," "acts of state," whose impact
would have assured impunity precisely to those who bore the
responsibility of instigating, initiating and organizing the
whole process of aggression and atrocities;
a) To set up, by a special international agreement, new norms of substantive international criminal law enabling the projected trial body to reach and to mete out punishment for the whole intricate process by which the Nazi top-echelon, in seizing power and consolidating it through a regime of terror within Germany, as a means and an integral part of a master plan to carry out the same process of destruction of human liberties and democratic ways of life far beyond the German borders through wars of aggression and devices of wholesale annihilation or weakening of peoples and racial groups.

It thus follows that, while pertaining by its structure of the character of a joint military commission, and while it is not without precedent, at least in the form of abortive drafts and provisions inserted into international treaties (Stimson Opines, War Criminals, Their Prosecution and Punishment, N.Y., 1944, p. 92 ff, the IMT, incontrovertibly, presents a character of novelty. It is novel in that it is called to apply international criminal provisions derogatory to certain prevailing concepts of international law, for instance, proclaiming and enforcing personal criminal responsibility instead of collective civil liability of a state responsible for crimes committed against nationals of another country in the carrying out of a war of aggression; also, responsibility for reprehensible acts committed by Germany against her own nationals, while its sovereign right to legislate and to make regulations within her boundaries was not denied by the society of nations. It is obvious that, for the application of such unprecedented concepts of international criminal law, the judges of the International Military Tribunal cannot look to previously those prevailing principles, rules and views which the international agreement creating the tribunal sought to set aside or override.

(i) The exclusiveness of the Charter as source of law runs throughout all its basic provisions. Paramount among these provisions is, unambiguously,
Article 6, in that it defines both the jurisdiction of the IMT and the crimes of which it may take cognizance. In making of the planning, preparation, or waging of a war of aggression a crime against international peace (6.4); in declaring orders against humanity punishable whether committed before or during the war, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the locus of their perpetration, (6.0), the framers of the instrument manifestly aimed at overcoming and discouraging defenses drawn from the so-called ex-facto-causa rule, or from the principle that there cannot be penalty without violation of a pre-existing penal statute, or from the principle of the sovereignty of the state and of its collective civil liability exempting the personal criminal responsibility of those who control its acts.

The whole concept of Article 6, both in spirit and in letter, compels the conclusion that neither prosecution nor defendants nor counsel nor judges may go beyond this newly enacted positive law to extend it or to dilute it by evoking, through even collateral, general principles of domestic law or of international law overriding or conflicting with the provisions of the Charter. The inescapable conclusion is that the Tribunal is bound by the instrument to which it owes its very existence and cannot transcend its limits.

Defenses based upon ex-facto-causa would scarcely be more admissible than the defense of "host of states" or "superior order" completely discarded or admitted with reservation by Articles 7 - 8 of the Charter. An attempt to shelter a defendant behind a rule which was deemed to be a prevailing international concept before the enactment of the Charter, irrespective of the patent fact that the defendants did not give the slightest consideration to principles governing relations between civilized nations, would scarcely be admissible more than an attack upon the fairness of the trial on the ground e.g. of violation of the American constitutional guarantee against self-incrimination, or an attack upon the evidence based upon the ground e.g. of a violation of the Anglo-American rule excluding hearsay evidence.
Just as Articles 17 to 20 circumscribe the trial procedure of the
Tribunal beyond which no judge, no prosecutor and no defendant can go without
expressly violating Article 13 of the instrument, so much has the sub-
stantive law to be applied by the ICT been defined restrictively in Article 6,
and all that evades its provisions, conflicts or is inconsistent with them,
whether invoked as a direct defense or collateral, cannot be admitted.

(5) In outlining the exclusiveness of the Charter as source of law and
powers, we do not mean to say that the judges of the ICT are not invested
with a large discretionary power. The measure of discretion given to them is,
indeed, a very great one. It is in their sense of justice and conscience that
they will have to find the conviction whether or not, within the strictly
defined framework of Arts. 6, there was a violation of international treaties,
agreements or assurances; whether or not there existed a common plan or a
conspiracy to carry out a master plan of world domination through ruthless
biological war, the definition of what constitutes a war of aggression
is left to them; too, the definition of what constitutes an inhuman act or
persecution on political, racial or religious grounds, coming within the radius
of crimes against humanity, is largely a matter of discretion. Again, it is
left to them to define, in accordance with usual standards of criminal law of
civilized nations, who may be considered organizer, leader, instigator, or
accomplice, the important task of proclaiming a group as criminal in character
is also a matter of discretion left to the judges of the ICT.

What we mean to say is that while invested with a large discretion as to
the qualification of the acts declared criminally punishable by the provisions
of the Charter, no judge can allow the injection of issues of law whose result
would tend to overthrow the basic concepts of the Charter, namely, to lead to
the conclusion, even collaterally, that an act made a crime by the Charter is
not legally a crime, or that a power granted by the Charter is not a legal
power, or that the trial procedure prescribed by the Charter may be extended or stretched.

For, to admit this would be tantamount to a denial by the judges of the IMT of the very basis upon which is rested their right to sit as a court representing the conscience of civilized nations.