



Teacher material

“In times of war, the laws fall silent”?

Activity Plan

1. The students consider the meaning of the words of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) a Roman philosopher and politician: “In times of war, the laws fall silent” (5 min.).
2. The teacher briefly outlines the circumstances of establishing of the Geneva Convention of 27 July 1929 and informs what was the role of that document in 20th century history, especially in times of World War II 1939–1945 (5 min.).
3. The teacher in a concise way, presents the history of the Lamsdorf camps during World War II, as a representative of camps created in the Third Reich (5 min.).
4. Students divide into three groups and receive a set of source materials :
 - **Group I** – living conditions of prisoners of war in captivity (food, health care, hygiene, furnishings) – articles no. 9-13,
 - **Group II** – work of prisoners of war (types of work, pay conditions, time of work, rest) – articles no. 27–34,
 - **Group III** – treatment of prisoners of war (respect of the isolated soldiers’ dignity, enabling cultural activity, religious practices, burial, right of correspondence, punishments for offences) – articles no. 5–6, 35–41, 42–67.
5. The students still in groups are given source materials in a form of fragments of memories of prisoners of war in Lamsdorf, as well as original photographs made in the camp complex in the times of World War II. The students analyze the historical material. On this basis, they interpret the information showing a problem of respecting the international law, covered in the Geneva Convention of 27 July 1929, by the Third Reich and they answer the following questions (20 min.):
 - Group I:**
 - What were the living conditions of prisoners of war in Stalag VIII B (344) Lamsdorf and Stalag 318/VIIIF (344) Lamsdorf like? (Consider aspects such as medical care and sanitary conditions; residential accommodation, and the provision of food)
 - How far did the German military authorities conform to the Geneva Convention regarding the living conditions for prisoners?

Answer the questions by analyzing the historical sources (reports of prisoners, photos taken in Stalags at Lamsdorf). Compare your findings with the records of the Geneva Convention: articles no. 9-13.

Group II:

- Explain what was the work done by prisoners-of-war of Lamsdorf during World War II. What kind of work did they do ? How were they rewarded for this work ? What were the working and resting conditions provided by the camp authorities for POWs?
- How did the German military authorities conform to the Geneva Convention concerning work by the prisoners of war?



Answer the questions by analyzing the historical sources (reports of prisoners, photos taken in Stalags at Lamsdorf). Compare your findings with the records of the Geneva Convention: articles no. 27-34.

Group III:

- In what ways did the German camp authorities treat the prisoners of war staying in Stalag VIII B (344) Lamsdorf and Stalag 318/VIIIF (344) Lamsdorf during World War II? Were all the prisoners-of-war treated equally? What rights were prisoners-of-war isolated in these camps entitled to? What duties did the Geneva Convention impose on the prisoners-of-war?
- How far did the German military authorities conform to the Geneva Convention concerning treatment of the prisoners-of-war?

Students answer these questions by analyzing the sources (reports of prisoners, photos taken in Lamsdorf). They compare their findings with the records of the Geneva Convention: articles no. 5–6, 35–41, 42–67.

6. Representatives of each of the working groups will presented the findings evidence, made together with colleagues, while working with historical sources (15 ').

7. Students return to the arguments put forward at the beginning of the lesson. Again, this time in the context of lessons learned while working with historical sources, considering the meaning of the words of Marcus Tullius Cicero: " In times of war, the laws fall silent" (5').

8. Students shall try to answer question (5 '):

- What actions should be taken to ensure that the laws regarding the treatment of prisoners of war are respected?

Student material

All materials were prepared by the Central Museum of Prisoners-of-War in Łambinowice-Opole.