

## **How the Geneva Conventions saved the life of Karl Joseph Partsch**

Professor Partsch once told me a story which is worth repeating:

After the end of the Second World War, Partsch was a German POW in the hands of the Allies in Italy, where he had served as an interpreter. Together with other prisoners he was ordered to take part in mine-clearance operations in the port of Genoa. Partsch refused, arguing that according to the 1929 Geneva Convention a POW could not be obliged to take part in such dangerous activities as the clearing of naval mines. The commanding officer accepted this position, and Partsch stayed ashore watching the minesweeper leave the quay. Within minutes the boat hit a mine, and all on board perished.

Professor Partsch never forgot what he owed the Geneva Conventions.

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