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## CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST PETER LEIDERITZ, GESTAPO CHIEF IN KOŁOMYJA, AND HIS WIFE ANNELIESE

### Summary

Following the war, Peter Leideritz, Gestapo Chief in Kołomyja, was tried before the Polish courts for his role in orchestrating the extermination of the Jewish population within his jurisdiction. His wife, Anneliese, faced charges related to crimes against Jews as well. Both were sentenced to death, although Anneliese's sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. This case study examines the post-war legal proceedings concerning crimes committed by the Germans in the county starosty of Kołomyja, located in the Galicia District of the General Governorate. It presents the couple's profiles, details their activities, and traces the course of the trials across various courts, with particular emphasis on the defence strategies employed by the Leideritzes.

### Keywords

Extermination operations • crimes against Jews • trials and prosecution of German war criminals in Poland • Kołomyja • Galicia District of the General Governorate • Peter Leideritz • Anneliese Leideritz

In 1947, Peter Leideritz, Chief of the Kołomyja (Kolomyia) Field Unit of the Security Police and SD, reporting to the Commander's Office in Lviv (previously Lwów), appeared before the District Court in Warsaw. He was responsible, among other things, for supervising the extermination of the Jewish population in his area of jurisdiction. A year later, his wife Anneliese was also tried, accused of, among other things, murdering and abusing Jews. The text, which is a case study devoted to the issue of post-war reckoning for crimes committed by the Germans in one of the occupation-era counties they created in the South-Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, presents the activity of the defendants and the course of their trials, with particular emphasis on their chosen defence strategy.

Peter Leideritz has drawn the attention of historians researching the extermination of Galician Jews. In their studies on the course of the extermination campaign in the Eastern Lesser Poland region, scholars such as Dieter Pohl,<sup>1</sup> Thomas Sandkühler,<sup>2</sup> and Dieter Schenk,<sup>3</sup> among others, have addressed his role.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, the most comprehensive account of Leideritz's life in existing historiography has been provided by George Eisen, who dedicated a substantial section of his monograph to the Leideritz couple in the context of the fate of Hungarian Jews deported by Hungarian authorities to Eastern Lesser Poland from Carpathian Ruthenia after its annexation.<sup>5</sup> The historian also attempted to describe Leideritz's post-war trial and the fate of his wife, but he presumably did not familiarise himself in detail with the trial documentation produced by the "people's" Polish justice system.

Leideritz conducted his criminal activity in the German-established county starosty in Kołomyja (*Kreishauptmannschaft Kolomea*), which was part of the Galicia District of the General Governorate, established after the Third Reich invaded

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<sup>1</sup> D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, München, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> T. Sandkühler, „Endlösung“ in Galizien. *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiative von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944*, Bonn, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> D. Schenk, *Noc morderców: Kaźń polskich profesorów we Lwowie i Holocaust w Galicji Wschodniej*, Cracow, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, München, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder: 1941 Rehearsal for the Hungarian Holocaust*, West Lafayette, IN, 2023.

the Soviet Union. It is worth noting that the defendant's area of activity covered a territory that had been under Soviet occupation since 1939 and which, in June 1941, found itself in the path of Hungarian troops allied with the Third Reich. The German administration did not take control of this territory until August 1941.

The German-occupied county starosty in Kołomyja initially encompassed the area of three pre-war Polish counties within their August 1939 borders – Kołomyja, Śniatyn, and Kosów.<sup>6</sup> In April 1942, its area was expanded to include the pre-war county of Horodenka.<sup>7</sup> The area, like the entire South-Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, was characterised by rich social diversity and served as a unique cultural, ethnic and national melting pot. It was inhabited mainly by Ukrainians. Jews, like Poles, were concentrated primarily in urban centres. The largest of these in the area of interest to us was Kołomyja, inhabited by Jews, who in 1931 constituted 42.42 per cent of the town's population (over 14,000 out of a total population of approximately 34,000), followed by Poles (36.85 per cent) and Ukrainians (18.39 per cent).<sup>8</sup> The German security apparatus, responsible for implementing the Third Reich's criminal policy towards the local population, began its activity with the establishment of an occupation-imposed administration. From 1 September 1941, the aforementioned field unit of the Lwów-based Security Police and SD Commander's Office operated in Kołomyja, under the command of Leideritz. His deputy was Erwin Gay.<sup>9</sup> The organisational structure of the field unit was analogous to the structure of the Commander's Office of the Security Police and the Security Service (*Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*, KdS) in Lwów.<sup>10</sup> It was divided into four departments. From the perspective of the deed of indictment, the most important was Department IV – the Gestapo, divided into four subsections – Communists, Ukrainians, Poles and Jews, and

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<sup>6</sup> M. du Prel, *Das Generalgouvernement*, Würzburg, 1942, pp. 384–385.

<sup>7</sup> W. Bonusiak, *Małopolska Wschodnia pod rządami Trzeciej Rzeszy*, Rzeszów, 1990, p. 19; G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach drugiej wojny światowej: Położenie ludności, polityka okupantów, działalność podziemia*, Cracow, 1994, pp. 64–65; *Amtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement auf Grund der Summarischen Bevölkerungsaufnahme am 1. März 1943*, Krakau, 1943.

<sup>8</sup> *Drugi powszechny spis ludności z dn. 9 XII 1931 r. Województwo stanisławowskie*, Warsaw, 1938, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Ch.B. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942*, Lincoln–Jerusalem, 2004, p. 349.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the structure of the Security Police and the Security Service in the General Governorate, see A. Ramme, *Slużba bezpieczeństwa SS*, Warsaw, 1984, pp. 151–167.

Counter-intelligence subsections.<sup>11</sup> Leideritz is specifically associated with the activities of the Gestapo in this area. Although he was the head of the entire field unit, witnesses in their statements and testimonies mostly refer to the head of the Gestapo, which clearly results from the witnesses' straightforward identification of the KdS structures with the Gestapo.

It is worth introducing Peter Leideritz. He was the son of Philip and Elizabeth, née Eitenmüller, and was born on 5 January 1911 in Kirsch-Beerfurth in Hessen, in the Darmstadt Administrative Region. He completed secondary school in his hometown and passed his school-leaving examinations. Before the outbreak of the war, he did not serve in the German army.<sup>12</sup> According to the findings of American investigators who interrogated him after his arrest, Leideritz joined the NSDAP Storm Troopers (Sturmabteilung, SA) in 1932. In February 1932, he also joined the NSDAP. He pursued a career in the police service. In 1933, he joined the Landespolizei as a police cadet. In 1935, he was employed as a police officer in Darmstadt. In 1936, he was transferred to the Schutzpolizei in Frankfurt am Main, where he served until the spring of 1939, after which he returned to Darmstadt, but now as a Gestapo functionary. After training in Berlin in early 1941, he was transferred to the Sicherheitspolizei in Lublin, and then, in early autumn, to Lwów, where he was entrusted with organising the Sicherheitspolizei office. In September 1941, Leideritz took over as head of the Kołomyja field unit of the Security Police and SD Commander's Office in Lwów.<sup>13</sup> At that time, he already held the rank of SS-Obersturmführer.<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that, like the heads of other branches operating in the Galicia District, he was a member of the

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<sup>11</sup> The field unit headed by Leideritz was divided into the following divisions: I – personnel, II – property management, IV – Gestapo, V – Criminal Police. However, no SD unit was established because the area was considered of little interest from a political intelligence perspective (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, hereinafter AIPN], 2586/270, Copy of the indictment in the criminal proceedings against Herbert Härtel *et al.* before the Regional Court in Darmstadt in 1966–1967, pp. 166–167).

<sup>12</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Case files related to Piotr Leideritz *et al.*, Minutes of the main hearing held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw in the proceedings against Piotr Leideritz *et al.*, 17 November 1947, pp. 155.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Part 2, Memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Counterintelligence Corps of the United States Armed Forces concerning Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 16 August 1946, p. 516; D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 417.

<sup>14</sup> D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 417.

Special Assignment Task Force (*Einsatzkommando zur besonderen Verwendung*), which, under the command of Eberhard Schöngarth, operated in the summer of 1941 in Eastern Lesser Poland, where it was regarded as a kind of death squad. The most important perpetrators of the extermination operation in the region came from it – including Hans Krüger, the head of the Gestapo in Stanisławów, who held a position equivalent to that of Peter Leideritz in Kołomyja.<sup>15</sup> Between 15 and 25 functionaries served in the field unit commanded by Leideritz.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that the Grenzpolizei station in Śniatyn, where several German functionaries served under the command of an officer named Sachsem, was also subordinate to this unit.<sup>17</sup>

### The Extermination of Jews from the German-Occupied County of Kołomyja

As already mentioned, Leideritz is most heavily incriminated by the extermination of the Jewish population in the county starosty of Kołomyja. One of the cornerstones of the German occupiers' policy was the liquidation of the Jewish community and all those considered by the Germans to be Jews. From the very first days of the German occupation, the Jewish population in the area under Leideritz's control was subjected to widespread repression and terror. Jews were regularly physically and psychologically humiliated, and their property was looted. Over the following weeks and months, the German policy towards Jews developed into a regular extermination operation. It began with mass executions, which were initially carried out in a forest complex a few kilometres from Kołomyja, near the village of Szeparowce. It was there that, on the orders of Peter Leideritz, around 3,000 Jews were murdered on 12 October 1941. In the months that followed, similar executions were conducted repeatedly, resulting in the deaths of anywhere from several hundred to several thousand people.<sup>18</sup> Jews were also executed by

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<sup>15</sup> D. Schenk, *Noc morderców*, pp. 225–226.

<sup>16</sup> AIPN, 2586/270, Copy of the indictment in the criminal proceedings against Herbert Härtel *et al.* before the Regional Court in Darmstadt in 1966–1967, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach*, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> T. Polin, "Kołomyja," in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe. Part A*, ed. M. Dean, Bloomington–Indianapolis, 2012, p. 792.

shooting in other locations, including the Jewish cemetery, where several hundred members of the local Jewish intelligentsia were killed in November 1941 and January 1942.<sup>19</sup> Equally criminal acts – organised, supervised, and often carried out by the Kołomyja field unit – also occurred in towns such as Kosów, Horodenka, and Śniatyn.<sup>20</sup>

In March 1942, the Germans established a ghetto in Kolomyia, and in April, they began deporting its inhabitants to the extermination camp in Bełżec. These deportations were coordinated by the German county starosty, which worked closely with the Kołomyja field unit of the Security Police and SD, headed by Leideritz. The deportations were extremely bloody, often accompanied by executions conducted on the spot. On 3 and 7 April, a total of over 6,000 Jews were deported from the town and the surrounding areas,<sup>21</sup> on 7 September, another 4,769 from Kołomyja, and about 300 people were murdered on the spot.<sup>22</sup> One of the largest transports to the extermination camp in Bełżec departed from Kołomyja on 10 September 1942, carrying 8,205 Jews from Kołomyja, Kutry, Kosów, Śniatyn, Horodenka, and Zabłotów. The final transport from Kołomyja to Bełżec took place on 11 October, carrying approximately 4,000 people. During this operation, around 100 Jews were also executed on the spot.<sup>23</sup> In December 1942, a significant part of the remaining Jews in the Kołomyja ghetto were murdered, and in February 1943, the ghetto was completely liquidated.<sup>24</sup> According to Lubov Solovka's and Svitlana Orishko's findings, the vast majority of the more than 50,000 Jews who found themselves in Kołomyja may have perished there.<sup>25</sup> It is estimated that between

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<sup>19</sup> L. Solovka and S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000... Holokost yevreiv Prykarpattia yak skladova etnode-mohrafichnoi Katastrofy Skhidnoi Halychyny*, Ivano-Frankivsk, 2019, p. 171.

<sup>20</sup> "Śniatyn – akcja „Reinhardt”" <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/sniatyn-akcja-reinhardt/> (accessed 28 October 2024); "Kosów – akcja „Reinhardt”" <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/kosow-akcja-reinhardt/> (accessed 28 October 2024); "Horodenka – akcja „Reinhardt”" <https://teatrnn.pl/ar/horodenka-akcja-reinhardt/> (accessed 28 October 2024).

<sup>21</sup> R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, Lublin, 2010, pp. 113, 237.

<sup>22</sup> *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, vol. 9: *Polen. Generalgouvernement August 1941–1945*, ed. K.P. Friedrich, München, 2014, p. 431.

<sup>23</sup> *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, eds. G. Miron and S. Shulhani, Jerusalem, 2009, p. 335.

<sup>24</sup> T. Berenstein, "Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie Galicja (1941–1943)," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 3 (1967), p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> L. Solovka and S. Oryshko, *150 iz 150 000...*, p. 175.

several dozen and just over 200 Jews from Kołomyja and nearby towns survived the German occupation in hiding.<sup>26</sup>

All security police units in the Galicia District followed a similar pattern in their extermination of the region's Jewish community, but historians agree that the units led by Leideritz and the aforementioned Hans Krüger in Stanisławów carried out this task with particular zeal.<sup>27</sup> According to Dieter Pohl, the area of the German-occupied county starosty in Kołomyja was the territory within the Galicia District where the plan for the "final solution of the Jewish question" was carried out with remarkable consistency, and the units under Leideritz's command were highly effective in implementing this murderous policy.<sup>28</sup> This was probably due to several complementary factors. First of all, there were no enterprises in this area that were important for the German war effort, which is why the Germans had little interest in keeping Jewish forced labourers alive.<sup>29</sup> Leideritz's character traits – his radicalism, tendency towards brutality, and desire for personal gain at the expense of the exterminated Jewish population – were also significant factors. There is no doubt that he took part in the operations in person. Schlomo Tager, a survivor of the extermination of the Jews of Kołomyja, testified that in September 1942, during one of the deportations to the death camp in Bełżec, he saw Leideritz join German and Ukrainian policemen as they dragged Jews from their homes and gathered them in the town square. Leideritz personally took part in selecting individuals for deportation.<sup>30</sup>

Peter Leideritz was not only directly responsible for overseeing the extermination of Jews from Kołomyja and nearby towns and villages – many of whom had been concentrated in Kołomyja on their way to the Holocaust – but also led a kind of death squad that operated throughout the occupied county starosty, carrying out mass executions of local Jews. One such operation involving Leideritz took place on 4–5 December 1941 in Horodenka, where the Germans shot approximately 2,500 people in a forest complex near the village of Siemakowce. Witness testimonies – including those of Leideritz's subordinates – offer harrow-

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<sup>26</sup> A. Weiss, "Kołomyja," in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 2, ed. I. Gutman, New York – London, 1990, p. 814; T. Polin, "Kołomyja," p. 793.

<sup>27</sup> D. Schenk, *Noc morderców*, pp. 272, 276; G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder*, p. 135.

<sup>28</sup> D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung*, p. 251.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>30</sup> Yad Vashem Archives (hereinafter AYV), O.3/2143, Testimony of Schlomo Tager, 2 July 1960.

ing accounts of the executions. Alfred Kiefer, who participated in many of them, stated that shooting a thousand Jews typically took around four hours. When one group of executioners grew tired, Leideritz would assign replacements to ensure the operation continued “smoothly.” Although the Gestapo chief generally oversaw the process to maintain its efficiency, Kiefer testified that Leideritz personally took part in at least two executions and shot Jews himself.<sup>31</sup>

Anti-Jewish operations conducted in Kołomyja followed a similar pattern. The ghetto quarter was tightly surrounded, and Jews were brutally expelled from it and gathered in a designated assembly point. From there, the detainees were taken to the local prison and, the next day, transported to the extermination camp in Bełżec or led to the forest in Szeparowce, where the execution took place. Each time, these operations were an opportunity for the Germans to loot the victims’ property. As Albert Warmann, another of Leideritz’s subordinates, testified, the officers committed various types of extortion, especially during the Jews’ stay in prison. He confessed that he had taken bribes from prisoners, who were lured by the hope of being freed. In this way, German functionaries received gold watches, jewellery and other valuables. If Warmann’s testimony is to be believed, he himself was able to release about a hundred people from prison in exchange for various gifts, but, as he pointed out, it is highly likely that they were killed shortly afterwards in subsequent stages of extermination.<sup>32</sup> There is no doubt that a similar practice also applied to Leideritz, as confirmed by the number of valuables confiscated from his home shortly after his arrest, as discussed later in this article.

### A Reckoning for Peter Leideritz’s Crimes

After the war ended, Peter Leideritz hid under the assumed name of Peter Lewald. In his home region, near the town of Kirch Beerfurth, he worked as a farmhand in one of the small villages. He was recognised by several Jews, who informed the American occupation authorities about Leideritz’s criminal past.<sup>33</sup> On 7 August 1946, he was arrested by the Americans and extradited to Poland in

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<sup>31</sup> AIPN, GK, 164/584, vol. 2, Files concerning the case of Peter Leideritz *et al.*, Copy of the report from the interrogation of Alfred Kiefer on 31 May 1946, no date, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Copy of the report from the interrogation of Albert Warmann, no date, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> D. Schenk, *Noc morderców*, p. 156.

December of that year. While awaiting further action by the Polish judiciary, he was placed in the Warsaw-Mokotów detention centre on Rakowiecka Street. It was not until 23 July 1947 that charges were brought against him – two main counts in total. The first, under Article 1 of the Decree issued by the Polish Committee of National Liberation on 31 August 1944, concerning “The Punishment of Fascist-Hitlerite Criminals Guilty of Murder and Ill-Treatment of the Civilian Population and Prisoners of War, and the Punishment of Traitors of the Polish Nation,” was based on the findings that “between 1941 and 1944 in Kołomyja [...] he participated in the mass murder of Polish citizens, and in particular in the murder of the local Jewish population.” The second count, under Article 4 of the same Decree, concerned his involvement in a criminal organisation identified as the Geheime Staatspolizei (*Gestapo*). Along with Leideritz, four other war criminals extradited to Poland during the same period from the American and British occupation zones of Germany also faced charges: Franciszek Schauer – a Gestapo officer in Lwów, Eryk Buder – who served, among other things, as a guard in Lwów, Filip Spang – a prison guard, and Paweł Simon, who during the occupation was, among other things, a guard at the concentration camp in Heddernheim.<sup>34</sup>

During the preparations for the trial, as with other trials of this kind, an announcement was published in the media calling for witnesses who could testify in the case to come forward. The announcement, entitled “Kto zna tych zbrodniarzy” (Who Knows These Criminals?), was published, among other outlets, in the Katowice-based *Dziennik Zachodni* newspaper on 29 July 1947. Among those who volunteered to testify about the crimes of the accused was Ludmiła Kulczycka – according to her testimony, her brother and father were arrested on Leideritz’s orders and murdered by the Gestapo. In a letter addressed to the District Court in Warsaw, Kulczycka stated that he had also been responsible for the public execution of nine young men from the Baudienst, who were accused of deliberately damaging a road compactor used in street construction. This incident was one of the few instances in which Leideritz’s crimes against persons of Polish nationality were explicitly mentioned during the proceedings.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Deed of indictment against Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 23 July 1947, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from Ludmiła Kulczycka to the District Court in Warsaw, 31 July 1947, pp. 80–82.

It is important to note that the field unit under his command also carried out operations against the Polish population. However, the German terror was applied selectively, with its victims largely drawn from the broadly defined Polish intelligentsia and people active in underground resistance organisations. The Ukrainian population was also affected by repression. It is estimated that during the occupation, no fewer than 340 people were arrested in the area under Leideritz's control, of whom about 100 were killed. From the end of 1943, public executions were also commonplace in Kołomyja county, resulting in the deaths of at least 181 people, the vast majority of whom were Ukrainians.<sup>36</sup>

The trial of the five defendants before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw was brief, commencing at 10:30 a.m. on 17 November 1947. The proceedings were presided over by Judge M. Dubikowski, with lay judges T. Zalewski and A. Wiśniewski. Deputy Prosecutor Zofia Rudziewicz presented the indictment, while Juliusz Ryteń served as court-appointed defence counsel for the accused.<sup>37</sup>

After reading the indictment, Leideritz stated that he did not plead guilty. He said, among other things: "I did not belong to the Gestapo, only to the Sicherheit-polizei, [serving] as a border police commissioner. [...] I did not participate in the mass murders of the Polish and Jewish populations in Kołomyja."<sup>38</sup> However, during an earlier interrogation, he admitted that he had served in the Gestapo.<sup>39</sup> He consistently denied that he had participated in the murders of Jews. Initially, he claimed that the border police unit he commanded carried out only standard operations to secure the border with Romania and controlled traffic on it. During the trial, he repeatedly tried to prove that he was not in Kołomyja at the time of the extermination operations mentioned by the witnesses and that he had twice travelled to Germany for a three-month recuperative leave after contracting typhus.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> S. Siekierka, H. Komański, and E. Różański, *Ludobójstwo dokonane przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich na Polakach w województwie stanisławowskim 1939–1946*, Wrocław, [2008], pp. 233, 250, 314, 638, 643, 649; G. Mazur, *Pokucie w latach*, p. 144.

<sup>37</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Minutes of the main hearing in the case of Leideritz *et al.*, held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw, 17 November 1947, p. 154.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155–156.

<sup>39</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Peter Leideritz, 8 May 1947, p. 649.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 650–651; AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Minutes of the main hearing in the case of Leideritz *et al.*, held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw, 17 November 1947, p. 159.

However, Leideritz's line of defence could not withstand the incriminating witness statements. It is worth noting that the court found them to be credible. Not only were they Holocaust survivors who had experienced the cruelty of German functionaries, but they were also well-off, educated persons who had held positions of public trust before the war. A total of seven witnesses testified against Leideritz in court. In addition, the testimonies of two people who were unable to appear in court – Dawid Likwornik and Józef Horowitz – were read out.

The witness testimonies left no doubt regarding the defendant's guilt. Paula Axellrad, née Heimer, testified that the defendant had overseen all operations targeting the Jewish population of Kołomyja and had personally supervised the deportation of Jews to the extermination camp in Bełżec in April 1942. During this operation, the Germans set fire to a part of the ghetto – presumably to prevent Jews from hiding in pre-prepared shelters. Axellrad further stated that Leideritz killed several persons during the operation and that she witnessed him "throwing people alive into the fire."<sup>41</sup> She emphasised his brutal treatment of those marked for deportation, particularly anyone who attempted to step out of line. One such victim was her brother-in-law, whom Leideritz, the head of the Kołomyja Gestapo, "beat to a pulp."<sup>42</sup>

The defendant consistently adhered to his chosen line of defence, claiming: "I did not personally kill anyone, nor did I lead this operation. Throughout the entire period, I was solely responsible for border service matters."<sup>43</sup>

Testifying as a witness, defence attorney Markus Audnej confirmed that Leideritz had played a central role in the anti-Jewish operations conducted by the Germans in Kołomyja. He further emphasised that Leideritz bore responsibility for the executions carried out in the forest near the village of Szeparowce in the autumn of 1941.<sup>44</sup>

In his closing statement, the defendant appealed to the court for a fair sentence. The trial concluded at approximately 4 p.m., with Leideritz found guilty on both

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<sup>41</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Minutes of the main hearing in the case of Leideritz *et al.*, held before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw, 17 November 1947, p. 159.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>44</sup> The witness mistakenly dated the executions to September 1941; the largest execution in the aforementioned forest complex took place on 12 October 1941.

counts and sentenced to death.<sup>45</sup> In his closing statement, the defendant appealed to the court for a fair sentence. The trial concluded at approximately 4 p.m., with Leideritz found guilty on both counts and sentenced to death. The Polish Press Agency released a communiqué announcing the verdict. Coverage of the trial appeared on the front page of the 19 November 1947 edition of *Dziennik Zachodni*, under the headline “Morderca tysięcy ludzi skazany na śmierć” (“Murderer of Thousands Sentenced to Death”).<sup>46</sup>

One notable aspect of the trial and its aftermath was the conduct of Juliusz Ryteń, the court-appointed defence attorney. Although he had initially declared his intention to file a cassation appeal, in a statement submitted to the District Court in January 1948, Ryteń wrote that he had found “no grounds for filing the announced cassation appeal.” In the same communication, he requested to be released from his duties as Leideritz’s court-appointed defence attorney. Three days later, he also submitted a request to correct the minutes of the hearing and delete the sentence stating that the defence attorney raised mitigating circumstances, namely that the convicted person “was a victim of the Hitlerite system.” In his justification, he emphasised that he had not uttered these words and could not have uttered them because, “as the court proceedings demonstrated, [Leideritz] himself was part of the Hitlerite system.”<sup>47</sup> His attitude would confirm the existence of certain social pressure exerted on court-appointed defence attorneys not to be overzealous in defending war criminals.<sup>48</sup> However, questions remain as to whether he acted contrary to the interests of the convicted person and whether this complied with the rules of professional ethics applicable to defence attorneys.

Ultimately, Leideritz himself lodged a cassation appeal, which the Supreme Court dismissed in its entirety during a hearing on 4 November 1948. The last

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<sup>45</sup> Four others, along with Leideritz, also received harsh sentences. Franciszek Schauer and Eryk Bud-er were sentenced to death, while Filip Spang and Paweł Simon received life imprisonment (AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, The judgment of the District Court in Warsaw in the case against Peter Leideritz, 17 November 1947, pp. 168–171).

<sup>46</sup> *Dziennik Zachodni*, 19 November 1947.

<sup>47</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Juliusz Ryteń’s statement addressed to the District Court in Warsaw, 16 January 1948, p. 211; *ibid.*, Juliusz Ryteń’s application to the District Court in Warsaw for correction of the hearing minutes, 19 January 1948, p. 210.

<sup>48</sup> A. Dziurok, *Osądzenie przestępstw okresu II wojny światowej przez Specjalny Sąd Karny w Katowicach w latach 1945–1946*, Katowice–Warsaw, 2024, p. 162.

chance to save his life was a plea for clemency to the President of the Republic of Poland, Bolesław Bierut. In it, Leideritz wrote:

Poverty and unemployment led me to join the German police in 1933. During the war in 1939, I was assigned to the border police in Kołomyja. In this position, as a German citizen, I was forced to perform duties that I would have had to perform in any other position. However, above all, I tried to be a human being.<sup>49</sup>

Later in the letter, he listed individuals of Jewish nationality for whom he had allegedly obtained documents enabling them to cross the border, stating that this was done “at personal risk.” Concluding his request, he emphasised:

I know that I bear guilt together with the entire German nation for what the German nation did to other nations under Hitler’s rule. I sincerely regret this. However, I want to prove in my lifetime that I have deserved and still deserve to be called a human being.<sup>50</sup>

It is impossible to say whether, in the face of imminent death, he truly regretted his actions or whether it was merely an attempt to save his life. The District Court in Warsaw rejected his request, stating: “The nature of the crime committed and the intensity of ill will sufficiently weigh in favour of Piotr Leideritz not deserving clemency.”<sup>51</sup> Bierut agreed with this opinion and did not exercise his right to grant clemency.<sup>52</sup> The sentence was carried out on 22 February 1949 in Warsaw.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 1, Peter Leideritz’s request for clemency addressed to the President of Poland, Bolesław Bierut, 6 October 1948, p. 278.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Opinion of the District Court in Warsaw on the petition for clemency filed by Peter Leideritz, 20 November 1948, p. 282.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from the Ministry of Justice to the District Court in Warsaw regarding Piotr Leideritz *et al.*, 10 January 1949, p. 302.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from the District Court Prosecutor to the District Court in Warsaw notifying of the execution of the sentence on Peter Leideritz, 24 February 1949, p. 322.

## The Case of Anneliese Leideritz

The case of Anneliese Leideritz, wife of the head of the Kołomyja Gestapo, was considerably more complex and far less clear-cut. To understand her background, let us begin with some basic biographical details. She was born on 17 January 1915 in Ludwigshafen as Anneliese Dreyer. Her father, Gustaw, was killed in the autumn of 1915 on one of the fronts of World War I. Around 1922, her mother married for the second time, to a businessman named Martin Hein. Anneliese attended a private school in Ludwigshafen, followed by the Catholic Luiseninstitut secondary school in Mannheim. She later began studies at the Higher Commercial School affiliated with the Ursuline Institute. During this time, she remained with her mother and learned how to manage a household. In February 1939, she married Peter Leideritz and relocated to Frankfurt am Main. Together with her husband, she moved to places where he was stationed. She was not politically active and probably did not belong to any political organisations. Only from 1938 onwards was she a member of the Reichsluftschutzbund (National Air Raid Protection League),<sup>54</sup> a paramilitary group founded by Hermann Göring after the Nazis came to power in Germany, which succeeded pre-existing air defence organisations.

Survivors of the Holocaust who testified about events that took place during the occupation in Kołomyja sometimes mentioned Anneliese Leideritz's very hostile attitude towards Jews. References to her also appeared during interrogations conducted by the Americans concerning the crimes committed by her husband. These testimonies led to her also becoming the subject of interest of the American justice system, which was prosecuting German criminals. Like her husband, she was detained by the Americans and extradited to Poland, where she was to be held accountable for her actions during the war. The testimony of three Jewish witnesses interrogated after the war by American investigators in Germany proved crucial in her case. It became one of the pillars of the indictment and was used as the main incriminating evidence against Anneliese Leideritz at all stages of the court proceedings in Poland. It is worth noting that they were the only eyewitnesses to her murders of Jews. The first of them, Aron Windner,

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<sup>54</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/129, The Anneliese Leideritz case files, Testimony of Anneliese Leideritz, 1 August 1946, p. 3.

testified that he saw Leideritz's wife with a pistol in her hand, shooting Jews on the streets of the Kołomyja ghetto during one of the deportation operations. He himself was hiding in a basement at the time, from where he observed one of the streets of the Jewish quarter through a small window. He had no doubt that the people shot by the Gestapo chief's wife died on the spot and that their bodies remained on the street for many hours. He also stated that he saw Leideritz's wife riding on horseback behind a group of Jews being escorted by the Germans to the forest in Szeparowce, where the executions took place. He emphasised that the woman behaved brutally towards them, beating some with a whip and shooting at people with a pistol.<sup>55</sup>

Windner's testimony was corroborated by Toni Herrschkowitz, who also witnessed Anneliese Leideritz riding on horseback behind a column of Jews being led to their execution. "I can swear," he testified, "that I saw the wife of Gestapo chief Leideritz shooting at Jews both during the murders in the forests of Szeparowce and in the ghetto itself." Herrschkowitz, who was hiding in the cellar and probably witnessed the murders in the ghetto from there, did not explain the circumstances in which he witnessed Anneliese shooting at Jews during the execution in a nearby forest complex. He apparently meant the moment when the Jews were being led to the place of execution, and not the events taking place in the forest itself.<sup>56</sup>

The last of the three witnesses testifying in Germany was Leon Wolfberg, whose testimony coincided with that of other survivors. He emphasised that Leideritz's wife actively supported her husband in his criminal activities. Wolfberg reportedly saw her shooting with a revolver at people fleeing the flames after the Germans set fire to the ghetto buildings. It did not matter to her that the victims were women or children. He also saw her escorting a column of Jews on horseback to their execution and beating those who lagged behind. He witnessed her shooting people who had fallen and could not continue walking. He saw her with his own eyes in the ghetto during the liquidation carried out by the Germans in February 1943, during which Wolfberg's wife and two children were killed. "She

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<sup>55</sup> AIPN, GK, 164/584, vol. 1, Files concerning the extradition of Peter and Anneliese Leideritz, Excerpt from the interrogation of Aron Windner, Toni Herrschkowitz, and Leon Wolfberg by the Polish Military Mission in the American occupation zone of Germany in Darmstadt on 31 July 1946, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

never entered the ghetto without a revolver or a whip, and she used them without provocation,”<sup>57</sup> he testified.

In order to rule out the possibility of misidentification of the person referred to in the witness testimonies, American investigators decided to confront them with the detainee. This took place on 1 August 1946 in the Darmstadt prison. All of them recognised Leideritz’s wife and clearly emphasised that they did not doubt that she was responsible for the deeds described in the testimonies.<sup>58</sup>

Anneliese and her husband were undoubtedly responsible for seizing Jewish property. After their arrest, the American authorities confiscated twelve chests filled with valuables, which the Leideritz family had sent from Kołomyja to Germany at the end of the war. They contained, among other things, furs, Persian carpets, bed linen, cutlery, crystalware, porcelain and other valuable items looted from Jews during the occupation.<sup>59</sup> The aforementioned Alfred Kiefer testified that the scale of property looting had grown so immense it began to provoke dissatisfaction among many German functionaries.<sup>60</sup> During her interrogation in Germany, Anneliese testified that she had arrived in Kołomyja with her husband in October 1941. She thus contradicted her husband’s testimony, who tried to prove during the trial that he had arrived in the city only later, and therefore could not have supervised, among other things, the execution conducted in the Szeparowce forest on 12 October 1941, and that he was not present during the extermination operation in Horodenka in December 1941.<sup>61</sup> Anneliese admitted that during her stay in Kołomyja she heard that Jews were being shot, but she did not learn this from her husband, as she never discussed such matters with him. She acknowledged receiving a 6.35 calibre Browning pistol from him, intended solely for her personal protection.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5–8.

<sup>59</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 2, Memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Counterintelligence Corps of the United States Armed Forces concerning Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 16 August 1946, p. 517.

<sup>60</sup> G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder*, p. 150.

<sup>61</sup> However, it is worth noting that she was inconsistent in giving the date of her arrival in Kołomyja. For example, during her interrogation in Poland on 5 March 1948, she testified that she had only been in this town in November 1941 (AIPN, GK, 296/129, Minutes of the interrogation of the accused Anneliese Leideritz, 5 March 1948, p. 180).

<sup>62</sup> During her interrogation in Poland, she clarified that she had received the weapon in the autumn of 1943, but had never used it, and it had always been kept at home (*ibid.*).

It is worth highlighting further inconsistencies in the testimonies of both spouses. During his interrogation by American authorities, Peter categorically denied ever giving his wife a pistol or having seen her with any weapon. Anneliese, for her part, claimed she had never fired a pistol and denied striking anyone with a whip. She asserted complete ignorance regarding the transports of Jews organised by the Germans and emphatically denied ever escorting them on horseback. According to her statement, on the day the fire broke out in the ghetto – around 5 p.m. – she was shopping in the city. She maintained that she was neither carrying a gun nor a whip at the time and observed the blaze from a distance of approximately 300 meters, near the edge of the Jewish quarter. She insisted that no fleeing Jews passed her, nor did she approach the ghetto herself.<sup>63</sup>

While imprisoned in Germany, she adopted a line of defence that she consistently upheld, even after her extradition to Poland. Prior to Leideritz's transfer to the Polish justice system, several German witnesses testified in her favour – among them, two secretaries who had worked at the county starosty in Kołomyja during the occupation, and an entrepreneur who had employed Jewish workers from the local ghetto.<sup>64</sup> Their primary objective was to demonstrate that the defendant had been misidentified. Luise Kaeser, née Schmidt – a secretary at the starosty who had maintained social ties with Leideritz during the war – testified that, based on Leideritz's character, she would not have been capable of committing the deeds attributed to her. Kaeser further noted that another German woman working at the starost's office in Kołomyja, Hertha Abicht, bore a resemblance to Leideritz and had been slated for transfer on disciplinary grounds after firing at Jews during one of the operations in the Jewish quarter. Abicht always dressed very elegantly, behaved arrogantly and, in Kaeser's opinion, was exceptionally "insolent." It was her that witnesses probably mistook for the wife of the head of the Kołomyja Gestapo.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, during her interrogations, Anneliese sought to persuade first the investigators and then the court that her limited equestrian skills rendered her

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<sup>63</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/9, Part 2, Memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Counterintelligence Corps of the United States Armed Forces concerning Peter Leideritz *et al.*, 16 August 1946, pp. 516–518.

<sup>64</sup> G. Eisen, *A Summer of Mass Murder*, p. 151.

<sup>65</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/129, Translation of a letter from Anneliese Leideritz's defence attorney containing a statement by Luise Kaeser, 15 November 1947, p. 39.

incapable of committing the acts she was accused of. As she stated: “I was a very poor rider, and I first got on a horse in the summer of 1942.”<sup>66</sup>

The testimonies collected in Poland and presented during the trial of Anneliese Leideritz offer compelling insights. During prosecutorial interrogations, all witnesses confirmed that they had not witnessed firsthand the criminal acts she was accused of but had instead learned of them through secondary sources. Jonas Axellrad testified as follows:

from friends who are no longer alive, I know that she [Anneliese] urged her husband to destroy people who asked him for protection through her. I also heard that she treated the people who worked in her garden in an inhumane manner. She would walk around with a dog and a whip in her hand and beat the Jews working in the garden [...] or set her wolfhound on them, which would bite them to death.<sup>67</sup>

Paula Axellrad, the wife of Jonas Axellrad, also gave testimony in the case. In the minutes of her interrogation concerning Anneliese, she stated: “I did not personally observe her taking action against Jews; the information I have about her was conveyed to me by others.”<sup>68</sup> During questioning, Maria Krajowska admitted: “I cannot personally say anything about Anneliese Leideritz. I only heard that she treated the Jews brought to work on the Leideritz family’s property inhumanely.”<sup>69</sup> Andrzej Oskar Gotfryd stated the following in his testimony:

I worked as a doctor, and when patients came to me, they always complained that there was no woman worse than the wife of the Gestapo chief. There were cases when young people were assigned to her work, and whoever she did not like was shot or died some other violent death.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the accused Anneliese Leideritz, 5 March 1948, p. 180.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jonas Axellrad, 30 January 1948, p. 157.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Paula Axellrad, 30 January 1948, p. 158.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Krajowska, 21 January 1948, p. 173.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Oskar Andrzej Gotfryd, 1 April 1948, pp. 183–184.

Adolf Markus, who worked as a gardener in the homes of Gestapo functionaries during the German occupation, also had no opportunity to meet the defendant in person. As he testified: “Leideritz was known for her cruelty and for being able to ‘send someone to the other world’ for the slightest thing. Therefore, I avoided her and did not come into direct contact with her.” It was only from the stories of people who worked with him that he learned that she had taken part in operations in the forest near the village of Szeparowce.<sup>71</sup> Krystyna Markus did not personally witness the actions ascribed to the defendant. Her only remark was: “Even the Germans I worked for warned me about Leideritz, saying that [...] she was even worse than her husband.”<sup>72</sup>

On 15 June 1948, the prosecutor filed an indictment against Anneliese Leideritz with the court, which, as in the case of her husband, included two charges. First of all, under Article 1 of the aforementioned August Decree, she was accused of “participation in mass and individual murders of Jews.” The second charge referred to Article 2 of the same legal basis and concerned “acting to the detriment of the Jewish population by beating them with whips, setting dogs on them and unlawfully seizing their property.”<sup>73</sup>

The trial commenced before the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw on 30 December 1948. It was presided over by Judge Karol Sroczyński, with R. Maciejewska and S. Pruś serving as lay judges, and Deputy Prosecutor Zofia Rudziewicz – as in the case of Peter Leideritz – presented the indictment. The court-appointed defence attorney assigned to defend the defendant failed to appear at the trial, so the court appointed Wiesław Szczepański to perform this function. The defendant denied any wrongdoing and consistently upheld the defence strategy she had adopted from the beginning. The previously mentioned witness testimonies offered little new information, though they were notably more emotionally charged than those presented to the prosecutor. Adolf Markus described Anneliese as “the terror of everyone,” while his wife Krystyna recalled that she was known in town as “the jackal woman.” During the trial, the aforementioned accounts given to American investigators were also read out.

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Adolf Markus, 4 February 1948, pp. 201–202.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Krystyna Markus, 4 February 1948, p. 203.

<sup>73</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/130, The Anneliese Leideritz case files, Indictment against Anneliese, 15 June 1948, p. 10.

The court cleared the defendant of the charge under Article 1 of the August Decree but found her guilty of actions harmful to the Jewish population and sentenced her to ten years in prison. In explaining its decision, the court noted several inconsistencies in the witnesses' statements. When deciding on the sentence, the court also took into account that, as the wife of the head of the Gestapo, she was held accountable for numerous actions, assumptions, and grim legends – many of which lacked sufficient evidence or were not attributable to her. Nonetheless, her excessive zeal, role in spreading terror, and displays of greed and cruelty towards the already brutally persecuted Jewish population suggest a significant degree of malice.<sup>74</sup>

Both the prosecutor and the court-appointed defence attorney appealed against the verdict. The cassation hearing before the Supreme Court took place on 20 October 1949. The court upheld the prosecutor's cassation in the part concerning the acquittal under Article 1 of the August Decree and thus overturned the judgment in this respect and referred the case for reconsideration. In its justification, it emphasised, among other things, that the court of first instance had incorrectly assessed the testimony of eyewitnesses to Anneliese Leideritz's criminal activity. The Supreme Court dismissed the defendant's cassation appeal.<sup>75</sup>

The case was referred to the First Criminal Division of the Appellate Court in Warsaw for consideration. On 3 May 1950, the court issued its verdict. Anneliese Leideritz was found guilty of offences under Articles 1 and 2 of the aforementioned decree and sentenced to death.<sup>76</sup> The defendant's lawyer appealed. The case was again referred to the Supreme Court, which, by its judgment of 10 October 1950, quashed the contested judgment and referred the case back to the court of first instance for reconsideration.<sup>77</sup>

The case was last heard by the Fourth Criminal Division of the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw. On 16 March 1951, the court delivered its verdict: Leideritz was once again found guilty and sentenced to death. In the grounds,

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Fifth Criminal Division of the District Court in Warsaw in the case against Anneliese Leideritz of 30 December 1948, p. 171.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, Supreme Court ruling in the Anneliese Leideritz case, 20 October 1949, pp. 206–212.

<sup>76</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/131, Anneliese Leideritz case files, Judgment of the Appellate Court in Warsaw, 3 May 1950, pp. 165–166.

<sup>77</sup> AIPN, GK, 296/132, Anneliese Leideritz case files, Judgment of the Supreme Court in the Anneliese Leideritz case, 10 October 1950, pp. 6–11.

the court indicated that the consistent, credible and mutually complementary testimonies of many witnesses left no doubt that Anneliese Leideritz had participated in the extermination operation, which was accompanied by the burning of the ghetto in Kołomyja in October 1942, and that she had participated in executions conducted by the Germans in a forest near the village of Szeparowce. The unequivocal identification of the perpetrator by witnesses during the confrontation ruled out the possibility that she had been mistaken for another person. In its reasoning for the judgment, the court devoted a great deal of attention to the Hertha Abicht thread. It emphasised that the witness statements admitted to the trial, which referenced the presence of the woman in Kołomyja, contained many contradictions, which made them unreliable. In conclusion, the court found that “the Hertha Abicht alibi was planted on the defendant during the investigation, and later attempts were made to reinforce it with ad hoc, fictitious and vague witness statements.”<sup>78</sup>

On 22 March 1951, the convicted woman submitted a petition for clemency to Bolesław Bierut, the President of Poland. Following a favourable recommendation from the sentencing court, the President granted the request and commuted her death sentence to life imprisonment.<sup>79</sup>

Anneliese Leideritz served her sentence at the Bydgoszcz-Fordon Penitentiary. In June 1954, in a serious condition and for the second time within a year, she was transferred to the prison hospital in Grudziądz. She died there on 6 July 1954. The autopsy revealed extensive multi-organ tuberculosis.<sup>80</sup>

Finally, it is worth looking at the fate of other functionaries of the German security apparatus who were brought to justice for crimes committed in the German-occupied Kołomyja County. Albert Warmann, head of the Criminal Police Department in Kołomyja, was also tried in Poland. He was handed over to the Polish

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, Judgment of the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw in the case of Anneliese Leideritz, 16 March 1951, pp. 133–146.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter from Anneliese Leideritz to the President of Poland requesting clemency, 22 March 1951, pp. 131–132; *ibid.*, Opinion of the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw on the clemency petition of Anneliese Leideritz, 6 June 1951, p. 184; *ibid.*, Letter from the Clemency Office of the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Poland to the Voivodeship Court for the Capital City of Warsaw regarding the commutation of Anneliese Leideritz’s sentence, 18 August 1951, p. 194.

<sup>80</sup> *Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Bydgoszczy* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Delegation in Bydgoszcz), 49/4015, The medical history of Anneliese Leideritz, p. 4–16.

law enforcement authorities by the British occupation authorities in Germany on 20 December 1946. On 11 August 1948, the District Court in Lublin sentenced him to death. During the same trial, Alfred Kiefer, a Gestapo functionary in Kołomyja, was also sentenced to death. The sentence was executed at Lublin Castle prison on 10 December 1948.<sup>81</sup> Six members of the Kołomyja Gestapo were prosecuted in the Federal Republic of Germany. In July 1967, the Regional Court (*Landgericht*) in Darmstadt delivered its verdicts in the cases of Erwin Gay, Friedrich Knackendöffel, Gerhard Goede, Alois Müller, Eberhard Lorenz Schäfer, and Werner Otto Schwenker. Gerhard Goede received the most severe sentence: life imprisonment.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, during this trial, the court-imposed prison sentences ranged from 3 to 8.5 years.<sup>83</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Peter Leideritz was one of the few – given the scale of crimes committed against Jews in the Galicia District of the General Governorate and the number of German security personnel involved – who stood trial and was held accountable. His role in the extermination of the Jewish population is beyond dispute. The defence strategy he adopted was typical of many war criminals: throughout the proceedings, he clumsily tried to shift the blame away from himself, but the District Court in Warsaw rejected his arguments and sentenced him to death. The question remains whether his wife was held accountable for her actual actions. Perhaps, as the court of first instance adjudicating her case suggested, she was largely held responsible for her husband's crimes and for cultivating a grim legend around herself. Undoubtedly, the prosecution and conviction of a married couple for crimes committed during the war in the occupied territories of Poland was a rare and exceptional occurrence.

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<sup>81</sup> *Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Lublinie* (Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Lublin), 330/226, The Alfred Kiefer and Albert Warmann case files, Judgment in the Alfred Kiefer and Albert Warmann case, 11 August 1948, pp. 33–34; *ibid.*, Indictment, p. 8; *ibid.*, Letter from the President of the Division of the District Court in Lublin to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Poland, 16 February 1949, p. 76.

<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, twice – in 1949 and 1951 – proceedings in his case were conducted by the German public prosecutor's office in Lüneburg, and in both cases the law enforcement authorities decided to close the investigation due to the lack of evidence that he had committed a crime. See A. Eichmüller, *Keine Generalamnestie. Die strafrechtliche Verfolgung von NS-Verbrechen in der frühen Bundesrepublik*, München, 2012, pp. 355–356.

<sup>83</sup> AIPN, 2586/205, Court proceedings documentation of the Regional Court in Darmstadt in the Härtel *et al.* case, Copy of the sentence of the Regional Court in the Darmstadt in the Härtel *et al.* case, 28 July 1967, pp. 1–4.

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