

IN THE CROWN COURT AT LEEDS

R.

-v-

MARK ROSS

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. On Tuesday 20th August last year Claudiu Carl Kondor was delivering Amazon packages in the Armley area of Leeds. He was using his silver coloured Ford Transit van in which there were over 70 packages. At 6:40 that evening he left the van unlocked with the engine running in Alliance Street, while he put a few packages through the letter box of a nearby house. You seized the opportunity to steal his van intending to sell it, something, you told the jury, that you had done before and not been caught for, got into the driver's side and drove off. Mr Kondor tried to stop you by opening the passenger door but could not get into the vehicle as you drove away. You accelerated hard and drove to the end of Alliance Street, turning right into Whingate Road causing about 10 packages to be thrown out from the open passenger door to which Mr Kondor was clinging. Another driver at that junction who almost collided with the van, could not believe what she saw, with Mr Kondor between the door to which he was clinging with one hand, with part of his body between the door and inside the van and his legs dangling. He was shouting 'help'. Further down that road another witness, similarly shocked, heard him shouting 'stop'. You were trying to shake him off, increasing your speed along that road which became Heights Drive, ignoring his

pleas and accelerated to 40 then 50 mph in order to get him off the van and drive it away. The speed limit in this built-up area was 20 mph. In Heights Drive there were two sets of cars parked on the nearside of the road. You intentionally drove close to the last of the first set of cars, a Mini One, and Mr Kondor or the door struck the wing mirror of that car but he was not dislodged. Some 140 metres further along the road, by which time you had been driving the stolen van for 45 seconds and were travelling at a speed of 61 mph, you deliberately steered it towards the last of the second set of parked cars and the door of the van struck a Mini Cooper S. Mr Kondor, whose legs were dangling onto the road, was crushed, thrown off the van and tumbled down the road coming to rest on the pavement, as is to be seen in a shocking CCTV recording of the event. He died on the pavement despite attempts at resuscitation. There were 60 areas of injury to his head, body and limbs. There was a fracture to his skull, bleeding over the brain and a large amount of bleeding into the brain stem. His diaphragm was torn, there was complete cutting through of the aorta and multiple rib fractures. He died from those head and chest injuries within seconds of being crushed.

2. Claudiu Kondor was born in 1982 in Romania. After a difficult and challenging childhood in Romania he went to live in Italy when he was 19 where he worked hard. He came to this country in 2019 and continued to work very hard in construction, as a delivery driver and a security guard and had saved up to enough money to fulfil his ambition of buying his own van just 3 weeks before you killed him. He also worked as a volunteer after the earthquake in Italy when he lived there. He was a man of integrity as well as being a hard worker. He met his fiancée, Mariana Nicoleta Gheorghe, in 2020 and

she describes him as being attentive, protective, caring and determined. They enjoyed a beautiful relationship. He was friendly, helpful and always wanted to do his best. She has been devastated by his death as we heard in her moving victim personal statement, and has had to return to Romania.

3. Although I cannot be sure you intended to kill Mr Kondor, your actions must have terrified him in the last minute of his life, knowing he had to hang on to his speeding van or fall on to the road, as well as causing him considerable physical suffering as he was dragged along the road. You ignored his pleas to stop and callously murdered him thereby not only depriving him of his life but also taking a much loved and hard-working partner away from his fiancée. No court can undo the harm you have caused.
4. You are 32 years age. You had a difficult and troubled childhood and have a history of offending from the age of 13, predominantly for offences of theft and burglary. Although you have committed some offences of relatively minor violence on occasions in the past they do not aggravate the seriousness of the offence of murder. You admitted in evidence that you have stolen vans before on occasions when you have not been caught or convicted. It is clear that, as a mature adult, you have chosen a criminal lifestyle. You have pleaded guilty to other offences committed shortly before the offence of murder. The first was an offence of dishonestly handling a secured Ford Transit van that had been stolen on the evening of 3rd March 2024 from the side of business premises on Selby Business Park in Selby, that you were caught driving on false registration plates in Bradford to which offence, together with offences of driving without a licence and

without insurance, you pleaded guilty at York Crown Court on 5th December 2024. I am unable to sentence you for those offences as there is no information relating to your driving record available today.

5. Some six weeks after you committed that offence, at 4 am on 19th April 2024, you forced entry into the back of a lorry that was parked in services on the M40 motorway and stole boxes of cashmere sweaters which you transferred to another lorry that was displaying false plates. You pleaded guilty to that offence at the Leamington Spa Magistrates Court in September 2024 when in custody in respect of the murder. You have been committed to this court for sentence on that offence.
6. The sentence for murder is fixed by law and is imprisonment for life. Pursuant to s. 321 of the Sentencing Act 2020, the early release provisions will apply and I must fix the minimum term you must serve, taking account of the seriousness of the offence, before consideration can be given to your release on licence. In so doing I must apply the provisions of s. 322 of and Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act when fixing the minimum term. In setting that term I incorporate your additional culpability for the offence of handling the stolen Transit van and theft of the cashmere sweaters and take account of the fact that you will serve the full minimum term under the life sentence as well as having regard to the principle that the sentence is just and proportionate to the totality of your offending.
7. The murder was done for gain, having been committed in furtherance of the offence of theft of Mr Kondor's Transit van and was an offence of particularly high seriousness under the terms of Schedule 21 to the

Sentencing Act. The starting point for the minimum term under the Act is, therefore, 30 years.

8. The offence was aggravated by the following features. Mr Kondor must have been terrified over those last 45 seconds of his life as you ignored his pleas to stop and drove faster, dragging him along the road and causing him mental as well as physical suffering. He was performing a service to the public as a hard-working and conscientious delivery driver. The events that ended with his death were witnessed by others, who were clearly and understandably very upset and traumatised by what they saw. You were also subject to actual or potential criminal proceedings for other offences.
9. In relation to mitigating factors, the most significant is that the killing was not pre-meditated. Although I cannot be sure you intended to kill Mr Kondor, you must have appreciated that your actions would inevitably have caused the gravest of injuries, if not death, so that carries little weight. You had chosen a life of crime and gave no thought to the consequences of your desire to steal the van at any cost. In relation to your plea of guilty to manslaughter, earlier in the proceedings you did not dispute you were driving the van but you dishonestly claimed that you had no knowledge of the presence of Mr Kondor clinging on to the vehicle, so again, little account can be taken of this.
10. Mark Ross, would you stand.

For the offence of theft committed on 19th April 2024 the sentence is one of 6 months' imprisonment to be served concurrently with the

sentence for the offence of murder. I order payment of the statutory surcharge in the appropriate amount.

11. For the murder of Claudiu Kondor the sentence of the court is imprisonment for life. I set the minimum term you must serve at 30 years. To date you have served 203 days in custody on remand in respect of this offence; the sentence, therefore, is one of imprisonment for life with a minimum term to serve from today of 29 years and 162 days. At the expiry of the minimum term it will be for the Parole Board to decide if and when you should be released and the conditions to be attached to the licence. If and when you are released, you will be on licence for the rest of your life, making you liable to be recalled to prison at any time if you breach the terms of your licence and it is revoked.

Mr Justice Goss Kt

14th March 2025