

Eugeniu Neamtu

Sentencing Remarks

EN, you are now aged 59. I have to sentence you for the murder on 20th February 2026 of Gheorge Trica (GT), an offence of which you were convicted by a jury earlier this week.

The facts can be shortly stated.

You and he are both Romanian. You lived at a shared address in Walthamstow with 6 other Romanian males.

That evening the 2 of you were at that address with a number of your other house mates. You had both been drinking. You and GT got into an argument about the exceptionally trivial fact that he was asking you to repay £5 which you owed him, which you refused to do, evidently because you maintained that you didn't have it. Harsh words were exchanged between the 2 of you in the course of which I accept GT made a very insulting remark towards you.

It is clear that you lost your temper, you picked up a knife and using, as Dr Fegan Earl told the jury 'towards severe force,' you stabbed GT once in the chest, the knife penetrating his heart. He died at the scene.

You then discarded the knife in bushes outside the house.

In prepared statements that you gave the police you claimed that you had been acting in self defence, GT having pushed you down the stairs and threatened to kill you.

That was the tenor of your defence albeit you opted not to give evidence, but the jury saw through it.

So far as the present matter is concerned, you have shown absolutely no remorse.

An extremely serious aggravating feature of your case is that you have a previous conviction for murder in Romania, committed by you in 2006, of which you were convicted in 2007, for which you received a sentence of 15 years imprisonment. At the same time a 3 year suspended sentence for aggravated theft was implemented to run consecutively such that you were not released until 2023.

It appears that you came to this country as a visitor in September 2023 and that your leave to remain here expired on 14th March 2024, and that you submitted an ETA application in March 2025 which was granted. Such an application requires a person to declare any convictions and sentence and must be refused where an applicant has received a custodial sentence of in excess of 12 months. The overwhelming inference must be that you failed to disclose your convictions in Romania. Furthermore, you admitted to the Home Office that you had come here to work, which you were not permitted to do, although that is what you were in fact doing. The upshot of all of this is that at the time you committed this murder you were clearly here illegally.

Although it is submitted on your behalf that the incident that led to that conviction occurred a long time ago, the force in that point is greatly diminished by the fact that you spent the next 17 years or so in prison.

Moreover, the fact that you killed another man within only 2-3 years of your release from prison, in my judgment underlines yet further how dangerous an individual you are.

What is also noteworthy is the fact that the 2006 offence was factually remarkably similar to this offence involving as it did your use in drink (a feature of this case) of a kitchen knife in a domestic setting, over a row about money.

As you will be aware, the only sentence which I can pass on you is one of life imprisonment. I am required to fix the minimum term which you will in any event be required to serve before you will be eligible to be considered for parole.

Under paragraph 2 of schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020 the starting point in a case of murder is a whole life order where the seriousness of the offence is exceptionally high, Cases that normally fall within that paragraph include a murder by an offender previously convicted of murder.

The statute is silent as to whether this includes foreign convictions. It is submitted on your behalf that it does not. Reliance is placed in this regard on the case of **Sanders** 2006 EWCA Crim 1842 in which an automatic life sentence had been imposed under the provisions of s. 109 Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000, for a second serious offence where the previous qualifying offence had been committed in Germany and the defendant had been sentenced by a court martial in Germany.

The CACD held that the sentence was unlawful because s.109 referred in terms to the previous qualifying conviction being in any part of the UK for a serious offence committed in England and Wales.

In my judgment this is not an analogous situation, there being no such restrictive wording in schedule 21.

That said, the case of **Stewart and others** 2022 EWCA Crim 1063, the CACD made it clear that whole life sentences were a sentence of last resort, reserved for cases of extreme gravity and of exceptional seriousness.

In my judgment this case does not fall into that category.

Mr Hynes has submitted on your behalf that in any event the finding of the court in Romania, where the law in relation to murder is different from here, is arguably consistent with what under our system of law might amount only to manslaughter as opposed to murder.

With respect to his argument I do not agree. The finding of the Romanian court was that you were not acting in self defence having taken up a knife, and struck your victim with force inflicting multiple stab wounds in vital areas of the body, namely, the chest area. In my judgment whilst the court there did not find as a fact that you necessarily intended to kill your victim, it must by inference have concluded that you intended to cause him really serious injury, which, whilst not a component of murder in Romanian law is of course an element of the law of murder here.

Under paragraph 3 of schedule 21, the starting point for the minimum term is 30 years in a case where the seriousness of the offence (or the combination of the offence and one or more offences associated with it) is particularly high.

I take this to be a reference to the facts of the offence and I do not consider that this offence can be so described.

Paragraph 4 of the schedule provides for a 25 year starting point in a case where a knife used in the killing has been taken to the scene.

The prosecution submit that that is the position here and that you did not pick up the knife in the kitchen, as asserted to the police in your prepared statement. but were already in possession of it, having brought it with you from elsewhere in the house. They base that assertion on the evidence of Florin Caldararu who was cooking in the kitchen shortly before the killing and who stated that he did not see you there.

So far as this aspect of the case is concerned, I have considered the various authorities cited in Archbold at paragraphs 5A-866 and 867.

Any conclusion in this regard is necessarily fact specific. A significant evidential difficulty with which I have been faced in relation to this aspect of the case is the fact there were no eye witnesses to the stabbing itself and you yourself chose not to give evidence. Accordingly, there is a complete absence of evidence as to when you picked up the knife, where from and how far you travelled with it, and for how long, within what was clearly a small house before you used it.

Whilst I reject your account that you went in the kitchen to wash your face and picked the knife up whilst doing so, absent any other evidence on the point, in my judgment it does not necessarily follow that there was any material premeditation in what you did in the sense of having pre-armed yourself for any significant time or having travelled any significant distance within the house before using it.

Against that background I find myself unable to be sure that the case does fall within paragraph 4, and I therefore agree with your counsel that it is a case with a 15 year starting point.

Dr Fegan Earl stated that the attack did not involve any sort of sustained assault but rather that it consisted of a single stab wound to the heart. That being the case it is submitted by your counsel that I could not be sure that there was an intention to kill. In what was the briefest of attacks, I accept that that is just possible. However, given that in the case in Romania you also stabbed your victim in the chest with a kitchen knife, with fatal consequences, in my judgment you cannot but have been aware of the very likely consequence of so acting on this occasion.

In terms of aggravating features I do accept the submission of the prosecution that GT was a vulnerable victim given that he was very substantially in drink when you stabbed him.

Whilst the fact that you threw the knife over the balcony after you had stabbed GT can also be so regarded, I accept that you did that in a moment of panic and I take on board that it was you who, having done so, contacted the police.

The 3 major aggravating features here are:

1. Your use of a knife;
2. The fact that you killed GT in his own home where he could and should have expected to be safe;
3. The fact that this is a second man whom you stabbed to death in remarkably similar circumstances to the first killing, and not that long after you had been released from your sentence for that offence.

Taken together these factors necessarily require a very significant uplift in the starting point.

The sentence of the court is one of life imprisonment.

The minimum term will be 27 years.

Less 179 days on remand, i.e. 26 years and 186 days.

Surcharge.

Forfeiture and destruction of the knife.