

The purpose of the project consists in the verification of opinions concerning the operation of the Special Court in Katowice (Sondergericht Kattowitz). This forum was a criminal court created for the area of Upper Silesia after its conquest by the German army in September 1939. It operated until January 1945. Its jurisdiction *ratione materiae* covered the area of the Katowice administrative district (Regierungsbezirk Kattowitz) and it was subject to the legal regime applicable in the territories incorporated in the Third Reich (eingegliederte Ostgebiete). Its jurisdiction *ratione materiae* covered serious criminal offences (e.g. murder, illegal possession of a weapon), economic offences (e.g. illegal slaughter, black-market trading) and political crimes (e.g. insult to the Reich and its Fuhrer, listening to foreign radio stations). The special court applied German criminal law.

The Katowice special court operated in the specific area of Upper Silesia. Before the war this was a borderland between Poland and Germany, however, Germans had considered it their own for long and during the war they launched a widespread action of enrolment on the German National List. These circumstances allow to put forward a hypothesis, subject to verification, that the judicature of the Katowice special court significantly deviated from the judicial practice of courts deeper inside the Third Reich – for example, regarding a higher percentage of Volksdeutsch and Polish defendants, translating in the legal appraisal of facts – and that its decisions were less severe than the judicature of the remaining special courts established in the Polish territories incorporated in the Reich – for instance in light of the fact that there were no events analogous to the so called bloody Sunday in Bydgoszcz (Bromberger Blutsonntag) and the aspirations to Germanize the local population.

The planned research has a comprehensive character and is directed to all aspects of operation of the Special Court in Katowice. It covers examination of the organization, structure and functioning of the court, its personnel and judicature. The archives relating to that special court are dispersed and located in Poland and Germany. The state of preservation of archives illustrating the judicial practice is downward unique in comparison with the remaining special courts. It is planned to compare the research results on the Katowice special court with other special courts of the Third Reich, especially the ones created in the so called incorporated territories. This will allow to grasp the specificity of the Special Court in Katowice.

Realization of the project will allow to fill a serious gap in science – an issue that has not been scrutinized, although crucial both from the perspective of operation of the occupational system of justice in Poland and policies of the occupier in the specific Upper Silesia region and from the perspective of operation of special courts in the Third Reich.