

# CLAIMS RESOLUTION TRIBUNAL

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In re Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation  
Case No. CV96-4849

## **Certified Award**

to Claimant [REDACTED]

## **in re Accounts of Daniel Brenner**

Claim Numbers: 207085/EZ; 601417/EZ<sup>1</sup>

Award Amount: 181,680.00 Swiss Francs

This Certified Award is based upon the claim of [REDACTED], née [REDACTED], (the “Claimant”) to the accounts of Daniel Brenner (the “Account Owner”) at the Zurich branch of the [REDACTED] (the “Bank”).

All awards are published, but where a claimant has requested confidentiality, as in this case, the names of the claimant, any relatives of the claimant other than the account owner, and the bank have been redacted.

## **Information Provided by the Claimant**

The Claimant submitted an Initial Questionnaire to the Court in 1999, a Claim Form to the CRT, and a claim to the Holocaust Claims Processing Office (“HCPO”) identifying the Account Owner as her father, Daniel Brenner, who was born on 14 September 1889 in Tarnow, Poland and was married in about 1920 to Cäcilie [REDACTED], who was born on 24 November 1898. The Claimant stated that Daniel and Cäcilie Brenner, who were Jewish, had two daughters, one of whom is the Claimant, who was born on 26 January 1924 in Berlin, Germany. The Claimant stated that, until 1938, her father owned a retail and wholesale sweater business located at Alte Schönhauserstrasse 19 in Berlin, where he also resided with his family. In 1938, he returned to Tarnow, from where he was later deported and murdered by the Nazis. The Claimant stated that after her father was deported, she, her mother and sister were sent to a slave labor camp in Krakow, Poland, where her mother and sister perished. The Claimant was sent to a number of forced labor camps in Poland and Germany and was eventually liberated in 1945 from a German forced labor camp.

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<sup>1</sup> The Claimant submitted a claim, numbered B-00471 in December 1997, to the Holocaust Claims Processing Office (“HCPO”) of the New York State Banking Department. This claim was referred by the HCPO to the CRT and has been assigned Claim Number 601417.

The Claimant stated that her mother's brother, [REDACTED], lived in Davos, Switzerland, and that he helped her parents open a bank account in the Zurich branch of the Bank prior to the War. The Claimant also stated that her mother had a good friend in Krakow whose name was [REDACTED]. In support of her claim, the Claimant submitted a copy of her birth certificate indicating that she is the daughter of Daniel and Cäcilie Brenner.

### **Information Available in the Bank Records**

The bank records consist of a power of attorney form (identical to the form submitted by the Claimant) and printouts from the Bank's database. According to these records, the Account Owner was Daniel Brenner and the Power of Attorney Holder was Cäcilie Brenner of Tarnow, Poland. The Account Owner requested the Bank to send all correspondence to a person named [REDACTED]. The bank records indicate that the Account Owner held a custody account<sup>2</sup> and a demand deposit account. Both of the accounts were opened in 1933, when the power of attorney form was signed. The demand deposit account was closed on 11 February 1939. The bank records do not show when the custody account was closed, who closed the account, or the amount in the account on the date of its closure.

The auditors who carried out the investigation of this bank to identify accounts of Victims of Nazi Persecution pursuant to instructions of the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons ("ICEP" or the "ICEP Investigation") did not find the custody account in the Bank's system of open accounts, and they therefore presumed that it was closed. These auditors indicated that there was no evidence of activity on this account after 1945. There is no evidence in the bank records that the Account Owner, the Power of Attorney Holder or his heirs closed either account and received the proceeds themselves.

### **The CRT's Analysis**

#### Joinder of Claims

According to Article 43(1) of the Rules Governing the Claims Resolution Process (the "Rules"), claims to the same or related accounts may be joined in one proceeding at the CRT's discretion. In this case, the CRT determines it appropriate to join the two claims of the Claimant in one proceeding.

#### Identification of the Account Owner

The Claimant has plausibly identified the Account Owner. The names and one of the places of residence of her father and mother matches the published names and residence of the Account

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<sup>2</sup> The bank records contain a power of attorney form that references a "*Titeldepot*," which is a custody account. Such forms were typically used by the Bank at the time regardless of whether the account in question was in fact a custody account. Although this power of attorney form therefore does not necessarily demonstrate that the Account Owner held a custody account, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the CRT concludes that it is plausible that he held such an account.

Owner and Power of Attorney Holder contained in the bank records. Moreover, the Claimant identified the branch at which her parents opened their bank account, which matches unpublished information about the account contained in the bank records. The Claimant also identified her mother's friend, [REDACTED], which is the unpublished name identified for correspondence in the bank records.

#### Status of the Account Owner as a Victim of Nazi Persecution

The Claimant has made a plausible showing that the Account Owner was a Victim of Nazi Persecution. The Claimant stated that the Account Owner was Jewish and perished in the Holocaust.

Moreover, the CRT notes that a database containing the names of victims of Nazi persecution includes a person named Daniel Brenner, and indicates that he resided at Alte Schönhauserstrasse 19 in Berlin, which matches the information about the Account Owner provided by the Claimant. The database is a compilation of names from various sources, including the Yad Vashem Memorial of Israel.

#### The Claimant's Relationship to the Account Owner

The Claimant has plausibly demonstrated that she is related to the Account Owner by submitting documents, including a copy of her birth certificate, demonstrating that she is the daughter of Daniel and Căcilie Brenner. There is no information to indicate that the Account Owner has other surviving heirs.

#### The Issue of Who Received the Proceeds

Regarding the custody account, given the application of Presumption (j) contained in Appendix A,<sup>3</sup> the CRT concludes that it is plausible that the account proceeds were not paid to the Account Owner, the Power of Attorney Holder or their heirs. Based on its precedent and the Rules, the CRT applies presumptions to assist in the determination of whether or not Account Owners or their heirs received the proceeds of their accounts.

Regarding the demand deposit account, given the application of Presumptions (a) and (j) contained in Appendix A, the CRT concludes that it is plausible that the account proceeds were not paid to the Account Owner, the Power of Attorney Holder or their heirs.

#### Basis for the Award

The CRT has determined that an Award may be made in favor of the Claimant. First, the claim is admissible in accordance with the criteria contained in Article 23 of the Rules. Second, the Claimant has plausibly demonstrated that the Account Owner was her father, and that relationship justifies an Award. Finally, the CRT has determined that it is plausible that neither

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<sup>3</sup> An expanded version of Appendix A appears on the CRT II website -- [www.crt-ii.org](http://www.crt-ii.org).

the Account Owner, the Power of Attorney Holder, nor their heirs received the proceeds of the claimed accounts.

### Amount of the Award

Pursuant to Article 35 of the Rules, when the value of an account is unknown, as is the case here, the average value of the same or a similar type of account in 1945 is used to calculate the present value of the account being awarded. Based on the ICEP Investigation, in 1945 the average value of a custody account was 13,000.00 Swiss Francs, and the average value of a demand deposit account was 2,140.00 Swiss Francs. Consequently, the total average value of both accounts is 15,140.00 Swiss Francs. The present value of this amount is calculated by multiplying it by a factor of 12, in accordance with Article 37(1) of the Rules, to produce a total award amount of 181,680.00 Swiss Francs.

Article 37(3)(a) of the Rules provides that where the value of an award is calculated using the value presumptions provided in Article 35 of the Rules, the initial payment to the claimant shall be 65% of the Certified Award, and the claimant may receive a second payment of up to 35% of the Certified Award when so determined by the Court. In this case, the CRT has used the value presumptions of Article 35 of the Rules to calculate the account value, and 65% of the total award amount is 118,092.00 Swiss Francs.

### **Scope of the Award**

The Claimant should be aware that, pursuant to Article 25 of the Rules, the CRT will carry out further research on her claim to determine whether there are additional Swiss bank accounts to which she might be entitled, including research of the Total Accounts Database (consisting of records of 4.1 million Swiss bank accounts which existed between 1933 and 1945).

### **Certification of the Award**

The CRT certifies this Award for approval by the Court and payment by the Special Masters.

Claims Resolution Tribunal

October 24, 2002

## APPENDIX A

In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the Tribunal presumes that neither the Account Owners, the Beneficial Owners, nor their heirs received the proceeds of a claimed Account in cases involving one or more of the following circumstances:<sup>1</sup>

- a) the Account was closed and the Account records show evidence of persecution, or the Account was closed (i) after the imposition of Swiss visa requirements on January 20, 1939, or (ii) after the date of occupation of the country of residence of the Account Owner or Beneficial Owner, and before 1945 or the year in which the freeze of Accounts from the country of residence of the Account Owner or Beneficial Owner was lifted (whichever is later);
- b) the Account was closed after 1955 or ten years after the freeze of Accounts from the country of residence of the Account Owner or Beneficial Owner was lifted (whichever is later);
- c) the balance of the Account was reduced by fees and charges over the period leading up to the closure of the Account and the last known balance of the Account was small;
- d) the Account had been declared in a Nazi census of Jewish assets or other Nazi documentation;
- e) a claim was made to the Account after the Second World War and was not recognized by the bank;
- f) the Account Owner or Beneficial Owner had other Accounts that are open and dormant, suspended, or closed to profits, closed by fees, or closed to Nazi authorities;
- g) the only surviving Account Owner or Beneficial Owner was a child at the time of the Second World War;
- h) the Account Owners, the Beneficial Owners, and/or their heirs would not have been able to obtain information about the Account after the Second World War from the Swiss bank due to the Swiss banks' practice of withholding or misstating account information in their responses to inquiries by Account Owners, Beneficial Owners, and heirs because of the banks' concerns regarding double liability;<sup>2</sup>
- i) the Account Owners, Beneficial Owners, or their heirs resided in a Communist country in Eastern Europe after the War; and/or
- j) there is no indication in the bank records that the Account Owners, Beneficial Owners, or their heirs received the proceeds of the Account.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland - Second World War, Switzerland, National Socialism and the Second World War: Final Report (2002) (hereinafter "Bergier Final Report"); *see also* Independent Committee

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of Eminent Persons, Report on Dormant Accounts of Victims of Nazi Persecution in Swiss Banks (1999) (hereinafter "ICEP Report"). The CRT has also taken into account, among other things, various laws, acts, decrees, and practices used by the Nazi regime and the governments of Austria, the Sudetenland, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the Free City of Danzig, Poland, the Incorporated Area of Poland, the *Generalgouvernement* of Poland, the Netherlands, Slovakia and France to confiscate Jewish assets held abroad.

<sup>2</sup> See Bergier Final Report at 443-44, 446-49; see also ICEP Report at 81-83.

<sup>3</sup> As described in the Bergier Final Report and the ICEP Report, the Swiss banks destroyed or failed to maintain account transactional records relating to Holocaust-era accounts. There is evidence that this destruction continued after 1996, when Swiss law prohibited destruction of bank records. Bergier Final Report at 40 (stating "[i]n the case of Union Bank of Switzerland . . . , however, documents were being disposed of even after the Federal Decree [of 13 December 1996]"). The wholesale destruction of relevant bank records occurred at a time when the Swiss banks knew that claims were being made against them and would continue to be made for monies deposited by victims of Nazi persecution who died in the Holocaust and that were (i) improperly paid to the Nazis, see Albers v. Credit Suisse, 188 Misc. 229, 67 N.Y.S.2d 239 (N.Y. City Ct. 1946); Bergier Final Report at 443, (ii) that were improperly paid to the Communist controlled governments of Poland and Hungary, see Bergier Final Report at 450 -51, and possibly Romania as well, see Peter Hug and Marc Perrenoud, Assets in Switzerland of Victims of Nazism and the Compensation Agreements with East Bloc Countries (1997), and (iii) that were retained by Swiss Banks for their own use and profit. See Bergier Final Report at 446-49.

"The discussion on "unclaimed cash" persisted throughout the post-war period due to claims for restitution by survivors and heirs of the murdered victims, or restitution organizations acting on their behalf." Id. at 444. Nevertheless, the Swiss Banks continued to destroy records on a massive scale and to obstruct those making claims. ICEP Report, Annex 4 ¶ 5; In re Holocaust Victim Asset Litig., 105 F. Supp.2d 139, 155-56 (E.D.N.Y. 2000). Indeed, "[i]n May 1954, the legal representatives of the big banks co-ordinated their response to heirs [of account holders] so that the banks would have at their disposal a concerted mechanism for deflecting any kind of enquiry." Bergier Final Report at 446. Similarly, "the banks and their Association lobbied against legislation that would have required publication of the names of so called 'heirless assets accounts,' legislation that if enacted and implemented, would have obviated the ICEP investigation and the controversy of the last 30 years." ICEP Report at 15. Indeed, in order to thwart such legislation, the Swiss Bankers Association encouraged Swiss banks to underreport the number of accounts in a 1956 survey. "A meager result from the survey," it said, "will doubtless contribute to the resolution of this matter [the proposed legislation] in our favor." ICEP Report at 90 (quoting a letter from the Swiss Bankers Association to its board members dated June 7, 1956). "To summarize, it is apparent that the claims of surviving Holocaust victims were usually rejected under the pretext of bank secrecy . . . ", Bergier Final Report at 455, or outright deception about the existence of information, while wholesale destruction of bank records continued for over a half century. Under these circumstances, utilizing the fundamental evidentiary principles of United States law that would have applied to Deposited Assets claims had the class action lawsuits been litigated through trial, the CRT draws an adverse inference against the banks where documentary evidence was destroyed or is not provided to assist the claims administrators. See In re Holocaust Victim Asset Litig., 105 F. Supp.2d 139, 152 (E.D.N.Y. 2000); Reilly v. Natwest Markets Group, Inc., 181 F.3d 253, 266-68 (2d Cir. 1999); Kronisch v. United States, 150 F.3d 112, 126-28 (2d Cir. 1998).