

CLAIMS RESOLUTION TRIBUNAL

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

Certified Award

to Claimants [REDACTED 1] and [REDACTED 2]¹

in re Account of Rosa Keller

Claim Numbers: 002468/EZ; 200088/EZ

Award Amount: 47,400.00 Swiss Francs

This Certified Award is based upon the claims of [REDACTED 1] (“Claimant [REDACTED 1]”) and [REDACTED 2] (“Claimant [REDACTED 2]”) (together the “Claimants”), to the account of Rosa Keller (the “Account Owner”) at the Solothurn branch of the [REDACTED] (the “Bank”).

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

Information Provided by the Claimants

The Claimants submitted Claim Forms and Initial Questionnaires identifying the Account Owner, Rosa Keller, as their mother, who was born in 1896 in Poland, and in 1919 was married to [REDACTED], who was born in 1886 in Poland. The Claimants stated that their parents, who were Jewish, lived in Tarnobrzeg, Poland, where they owned a shop, until 1939. The Claimants stated that their family fled towards the Russian border in 1939, and that all their property was confiscated by the Nazis. Claimant [REDACTED 2] stated that his mother remained in hiding in different places in Poland and Russia from 1939 to 1945. Claimant [REDACTED 1] stated that between 1939 and 1944 his father was hidden by a Polish family.

Claimant [REDACTED 1] stated that his mother moved to Germany after the Second World War, and that in 1948 she immigrated to Israel, where she died in 1974. The Claimants could

¹ Claimant [REDACTED 2] provided his name and some of his relatives’ names only in Hebrew characters in the claim form. For the purpose of this written decision, the CRT has transliterated these names into Latin characters. However, to match names provided in the claim form with names contained in the banks’ databases, the CRT has used a database created by Yad Vashem, Israel, which provided different variations in Latin characters for each of the names.

not recall the exact date on which their mother left Poland and moved to Germany. The Claimants stated that their father died in 1962 in Israel.

Claimant [REDACTED 2] indicated that his brother, [REDACTED 1], who was born in December 1920, lives in New York, the United States. Claimant [REDACTED 1] indicated that his brother, [REDACTED 2], who was born in 1925, lives in Israel.

Information Available in the Bank Records

The bank record consists of a ledger card. According to this record, the sole account owner was Rosa Keller. The bank record does not indicate when the account at issue was opened or the type of account. However, the record shows that the account was transferred to a suspense account, which is a grouping of open and dormant accounts, on 4 September 1944. The bank record also indicates that the account had a balance of 69.35 Swiss Francs on the date of its transfer. The account remains open and dormant.

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 discretion of the CRT. In this case, the CRT determines it appropriate to join the claims of Claimant [REDACTED 1] and of Claimant [REDACTED 2] in one proceeding.

Identification of the Account Owner

The Claimants have plausibly identified the Account Owner. Their mother's name matches the published name of the Account Owner. In addition, the CRT notes that Claimant [REDACTED 2] filed an Initial Questionnaire with the Court in 1999, asserting his entitlement to a Swiss bank account owned by Rosa Keller, prior to the publication in February 2001 of the list of accounts determined by ICEP to be probably or possibly those of Victims of Nazi Persecution (the "ICEP List"). This indicates that Claimant [REDACTED 2] has based his present claim not simply on the fact that a person identified on the ICEP List as owning a Swiss bank account bears the same name as his relative's, but rather on a direct family relationship that was known to him before the publication of the ICEP list. It also indicates that the Claimant had reason to believe that his relative owned a Swiss bank account prior to the publication of the ICEP List. This supports the credibility of the information provided by Claimant [REDACTED 2].

Status of the Account Owner as a Victim of Nazi Persecution

The Claimants have made a plausible showing that the Account Owner was a Victim of Nazi Persecution. The Claimants stated that the Account Owner was Jewish, and that she escaped from the Nazis by hiding in Poland.

The Claimants' Relationship to the Account Owner

The Claimants have plausibly demonstrated that they are the sons of the Account Owner. There is no information to indicate that the Account Owner has other surviving heirs.

The Issue of Who Received the Proceeds

The bank records indicate that the account remains open and dormant.

Basis for the Award

The CRT has determined that an Award may be made in favor of the Claimants. First, the claim is admissible in accordance with the criteria contained in Article 23 of the Rules. Second, the Claimants have plausibly demonstrated that the Account Owner was their mother, and that relationship justifies an Award. Finally, the CRT has determined that it is plausible that neither the Account Owner, nor her heirs, received the proceeds of the claimed account.

Amount of the Award

The bank records indicate that the value of the account as of 4 September 1944 was 69.35 Swiss Francs. According to Article 35 of the Rules, if the amount in an unknown account type was less than 3,950.00 Swiss Francs, and in the absence of plausible evidence to the contrary, the amount in the account shall be determined to be 3,950.00 Swiss Francs. The present value of the amount of the award is determined by multiplying the balance as determined by Article 35 by a factor of 12, in accordance with Article 37(1) of the Rules. Consequently, the total award amount in this case is 47,400.00 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 30,810.00 Swiss Francs.

Division of the Award

The Claimants are the sons of the Account Owner. According to Article 29 of the Rules, each is entitled to one-half of the award amount.

Scope of the Award

The Claimants should be aware that, pursuant to Article 25 of the Rules, the CRT will carry out further research on their claims claim to determine whether there are additional Swiss bank accounts to which they 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

December 31, 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:¹

- 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;²
- 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.³

¹ 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

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.

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

³ 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).