

# CLAIMS RESOLUTION TRIBUNAL

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

## **Certified Award**

to Claimant [REDACTED]  
also acting on behalf of [REDACTED]

## **in re Account of Leon Kuhn**

Claim Number: 214802/ES

Award Amount: 47,400.00 Swiss Francs

This Certified Award is based upon the claim of [REDACTED], née [REDACTED], (the “Claimant”) to the account of Leon Kuhn (the “Account Owner”) at the Basel 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 a Claim Form and an Initial Questionnaire identifying the Account Owner as her late first husband, Leon Kuhn, who was born on 7 June 1908 in Krakow, Poland, and was married to the Claimant on 18 March 1938 in Antwerp, Belgium. The couple had one daughter, [REDACTED]. The Claimant stated that her late husband, who was Jewish, was a furrier. The Claimant further stated that in 1939 her husband, fearing the Nazis, sent 56,000.00 Belgian Francs to Switzerland for safekeeping. The Claimant asserted that the transaction was arranged by a Belgian bank in Brussels. The Claimant stated that in either 1943 or 1944, Leon Kuhn was deported from Antwerp to a concentration camp, where he perished.

The Claimant submitted her marriage certificate, indicating that Leon Kuhn was her husband. The Claimant indicated that she was born on 2 February 1915 in Viseldesus, Romania. The Claimant is representing [REDACTED], née [REDACTED], her daughter, who was born on 18 December 1942 in Antwerp. The Claimant previously submitted an Initial Questionnaire with the Court in 1999, asserting her entitlement to a Swiss bank account owned by Leon Kuhn, and providing information about Leon Kuhn that is identical to the information in her Claim Form.

## **Information Available in the Bank Record**

The bank record consists of a printout from the Bank's database. According to this record, the Account Owner was Leon Kuhn, whose place of residence was unknown. The bank record indicates that the Account Owner held an account of an unknown type. The account was transferred to a suspense account on an unknown date and remains open today. The amount in the account on 2 November 1998 was 20.00 Swiss Francs.

## **The CRT's Analysis**

### Identification of the Account Owner

The Claimant has plausibly identified the Account Owner. Her late husband's name matches the unpublished name of the Account Owner. In support of her claim, the Claimant submitted her marriage certificate, identifying her late husband as Leon Kuhn.

The CRT notes that the Claimant filed an Initial Questionnaire with the Court in 1999, asserting her entitlement to a Swiss bank account owned by Leon Kuhn, 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 the Claimant has based her present claim on a direct family relationship that was known to her before the publication of the ICEP List. It also indicates that the Claimant had reason to believe that her relative owned a Swiss bank account prior to the publication of the ICEP List. This supports the credibility of the information provided by the Claimant.

### 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 that he perished in a concentration camp.

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

The Claimant has plausibly demonstrated that she is related to the Account Owner by submitting documents demonstrating that she was his wife.

### The Issue of Who Received the Proceeds

The bank record indicates the account was transferred to a suspense account and remains open and dormant.

### 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 Governing the

Claims Resolution Process (the “Rules”). Second, the Claimant has plausibly demonstrated that the Account Owner was her husband, and that relationship justifies an Award. Finally, the CRT has determined that neither the Account Owner nor his heirs received the proceeds of the claimed account.

#### Amount of the Award

The bank record indicates that the value of the account as of 20 November 1998 was 20.00 Swiss Francs. In accordance with Article 37(1) of the Rules, this amount is increased by an adjustment of 905.00 Swiss Francs, which reflects standardized bank fees charged to the unknown account type between 1945 and 2 November 1998. The total 1945 value of the account is therefore 925.00 Swiss Francs. According to Article 35 of the Rules, if the amount in an account of unknown type was less than 3,950.00, in the absence of plausible evidence to the contrary, the amount in the account shall be determined to be 3,950.00. Though the Claimant asserted that in 1939 her husband sent 56,000.00 Belgian Francs to Switzerland in a transaction arranged by a Belgian bank. Where the bank records show no value or a value below the average value, the CRT concludes that the average value applies, unless there is persuasive evidence to the contrary. In this case, there is no evidence that would suggest the use of a different value than the average value. Accordingly, the CRT concludes that there is no plausible evidence to contradict the use of the presumed account value of 3,950.00 Swiss Francs to value the account.

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, to produce a total award amount of 47,400.00 Swiss Francs.

#### Division of the Award

According to Article 29 of the Rules, if the Account Owner’s spouse and a descendant of the Account Owner have both submitted a claim, the spouse and the descendant shall each receive one-half of the Award amount.

#### Initial Payment

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 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, however, the Claimant is age 75 or over and is therefore entitled to receive 100% of her share of total award amount. Accordingly, the initial payment amount is 39,105.00 Swiss Francs, which is comprised of 100% of Claimant [REDACTED]'s portion of the award (23,700.00 Swiss Francs) and 65% of [REDACTED]'s portion of the award (15,405.00 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

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:<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).