

CLAIMS RESOLUTION TRIBUNAL

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

Certified Award

to Claimant [REDACTED]

in re Account of Geza Kövesi and Irma Pick

Claim Number: 201234/SJ

Award Amount: 156,000.00 Swiss Francs

This Certified Award is based upon the claim of [REDACTED], née [REDACTED], (the “Claimant”) to the account of Geza Kövesi. This Award is to the account of Geza Kövesi (“Account Owner Kövesi”) and Irma Pick (“Account Owner Pick”) (together the “Account Owners”) at 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 Claim identifying Account Owner Kövesi as her paternal uncle, who was Jewish and was born in Hungary. [REDACTED], the Claimant’s father, who was born on 11 January 1893 in Felsozsid, Hungary, was the brother of Geza Kövesi. According to the Claimant, [REDACTED] and Geza Kövesi owned a silk and wool factory in Budapest, Hungary called *Imperial Silk & Wool Factory*. The Claimant added that *Imperial Silk & Wool Factory* was one of the largest textile companies in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the Claimant stated that her father was planning to open a factory in England and that he needed a Swiss bank account in order to facilitate that expansion. The Claimant added that her parents and other relatives often talked about Swiss bank accounts and that, in fact, the Claimant, as a small child, had accompanied her parents on trips to Switzerland. The Claimant specifically remembers visiting the Bank in Zurich and possibly other banks. The Claimant stated that the beneficial owners of the accounts were Geza Kövesi and her father, who were brother and business partners. The Claimant added that her parents were very wealthy until their apartment was looted by German troops at the end of 1944. The Claimant could not recall specific biographical details about her uncle, but added that her parents, her brother and her grandmother were all captured and murdered by the Nazis in 1944; she was the lone survivor because she hid in the countryside until the end of the War.

In support of her claim, the Claimant submitted a copy of her family tree, as well as copies of her parents' wedding and death certificates, and her own birth certificate. The Claimant indicated that she was born on 26 January 1935 in Budapest, Hungary.

The Claimant previously submitted an Initial Questionnaire with the Court in 1999, and ATAG Ernst & Young claim form in 1998, asserting her entitlement to a Swiss bank account owned by her father, [REDACTED] or the *Imperial Silk & Wool Factory*.

Information Available in the Bank Records

The bank records consist of a joint account opening card and printouts from the Bank's database. According to these records, the Account Owners were Geza Kövesi and Irma Pick who resided in Budapest, Hungary. The bank records indicate that the Account Owner held a custody account numbered 1788, at the London and Zurich branches of the Bank. Additionally, the bank records indicate that the Account Owner requested the Bank to "hold mail" regarding the account. The bank records indicate that the account was opened on 18 May 1933. The bank records do not show when the account at issue was closed, or to whom it was paid, nor do these records indicate the value of this account.

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 this 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 Owners or their heirs closed the account and received the proceeds themselves.

The CRT's Analysis

Identification of the Account Owner

The Claimant has plausibly identified the Account Owner. Her uncle's name matches the published name of Account Owner Kövesi. Additionally, the Claimant informed the CRT in a telephone conversation that her uncle was from Budapest, which also matches published information contained in the bank records. Though the Claimant did not identify Account Owner Pick, the Claimant was only nine years old when she was orphaned as a result of her parents being murdered. As a result, it is plausible that there are people and events that the Claimant cannot recollect. In support of her claim, the Claimant submitted documents, including a copy of her family tree, as well as copies of her parents' wedding and death certificates and her own birth certificate. The CRT notes that there are no other claims submitted to this account.

The CRT also notes that the Claimant filed an Initial Questionnaire with the Court in 1999 and ATAG Ernst & Young claim form in 1998, asserting her entitlement to a Swiss bank account owned by her father, [REDACTED], or his company, the *Imperial Silk & Wool Factory* in Budapest, Hungary. This claim was submitted 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 not simply on the fact that an individual identified on the ICEP List as owning a Swiss bank account bears the same name as her relative, but rather 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 Account Owner Kövesi and his brother, who was the beneficial owner of the account, were Jewish, and that their entire family was murdered by the Nazis.

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 he is her uncle. There is no information to indicate that the Account Owner has other surviving heirs.

The Issue of Who Received the Proceeds

Given the application of Presumptions (h) and (j) contained in Appendix A,¹ the CRT concludes that it is plausible that the account proceeds were not paid to the Account Owners or their heirs. Based on its precedent and the Rules Governing the Claims Resolution Process (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.

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 Account Owner Kövesi was her uncle, and that relationship justifies an Award. Finally, the CRT has determined that it is plausible that neither the Account Owners nor their heirs received the proceeds of the claimed account.

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. The present value of this amount is calculated

¹ An expanded version of Appendix A appears on the CRT II website -- www.crt-ii.org.

by multiplying it by a factor of 12, in accordance with Article 37(1) of the Rules, to produce a total award amount of 156,000.00 Swiss Francs.

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 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 101,400.00 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

November 26, 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).