

CLAIMS RESOLUTION TRIBUNAL

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

Certified Award

to Claimant Elchanan Paul Schlessinger and Claimant Mark M. Salton

in re Account of Felix Schlessinger

Claim Numbers: 002082/MG; 204184/MG

Award Amount: 25,680.00 Swiss Francs

This Certified Award is based upon the claim of Elchanan Paul Schlessinger (hereinafter “Claimant Schlessinger”) and the claim of Mark (Max) Salton (Schlessinger) (hereinafter “Claimant Salton”) (together “the Claimants”) to the account of Felix Schlessinger (the “Account Owner”) at the [REDACTED] (the “Bank”).

All awards are published. Where a claimant has not requested confidentiality, as in this case both Claimants have not, only the name of the bank has been redacted.

Information Provided by the Claimant

The Claimants submitted a Claim Form identifying the Account Owner as their father, Felix Yoel Schlessinger, who was born on 18 February 1879 in Mainz, Germany, and was married to Hedwig Schlessinger, née Feuchtwanger on 7 November 1911 in Munich, Germany. The Claimants stated that their father, who was a German citizen, resided between the years 1928 and 1936 at Bismarckstrasse 97/98 in Berlin Charlottenburg, Germany and was working as a Numismatist. Claimant Salton stated that his father had numerous customers in cities all over Switzerland. Claimant Schlessinger stated that in 1936 his father fled to Amsterdam, Holland because he could not continue to work as a Numismatist in Germany as he was Jewish. The Claimants further stated that in 1943, the Nazis deported their father to Westerbork, then to Theresienstadt, and in October 1944 he was sent to Aushwitz where he was murdered.

Claimant Schlessinger submitted a Claim Form with various documents including his own Identity Card and passport, a family tree from his mother’s side, the marriage certificate of his father’s parents, and a document, dated 2 October 1958, from the Dutch authorities indicating that his father came to Amsterdam from Berlin in 1936. Claimant Salton submitted a Claim Form with various documents including his passport, driver’s license, and German passport dated 9 June 1937, an excerpt from a family book, and a court order, dated 19 August 1946, authorizing a name change from Max Schlessinger to Mark Max Salton. Claimant Schlessinger

indicated that he was born on 11 January 1918 in Frankfurt, Germany and Claimant Salton indicated that he was born on 12 January 1914 in Frankfurt.

Information Available in the Bank Record

The bank record consists of a registry card. According to this record, the Account Owner was Felix Schlessinger who was domiciled in Berlin, Germany and was a Numismatist (*Münzenhandlung*). The bank record indicates that the Account Owner held a demand deposit account. According to this record the account was opened on 10 March 1934. The account was closed on 10 July 1937 unknown by whom. The amount in the account on the date of its closure is unknown. There is no evidence in the bank record that the Account Owner or his heirs closed the 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 Claimants in one proceeding.

Identification of the Account Owner

The Claimants have plausibly identified the Account Owner. Their father's name matches the published name of the Account Owner. The Claimants identified their father's city of residence and their father's occupation, which matches unpublished information about the Account Owner contained in the bank record. In support of their claim, Claimant Schlessinger submitted a document, dated 2 October 1958, from the Dutch authorities indicating that his father came to Amsterdam from Berlin. Claimant Salton submitted an excerpt from a family book indicating that his father, Felix Schlessinger, came to Amsterdam from Berlin.

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 Claimant stated that the Account Owner was Jewish and was killed in Auschwitz. Moreover, the CRT notes that a database containing the names of victims of Nazi persecution includes a person named Felix Schlessinger, and indicates that he was domiciled in Berlin and in Amsterdam, 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 Claimants' Relationship to the Account Owner

The Claimants have plausibly demonstrated that they are related to the Account Owner by submitting documents showing that their father's name was Felix Schlessinger. There is no information to indicate that the Account Owner has other surviving heirs.

The Issue of Who Received the Proceeds

The CRT concludes that given the existence of Nazi confiscatory legislation in Germany at this time¹ and the application of Presumption (j) contained in Appendix A,² it is plausible that the account proceeds were not paid to the Account Owner or his 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.

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 Governing the Claims Resolution Process (the "Rules"). Second, the Claimants have plausibly demonstrated that the Account Owner was their father, and that relationship justifies an Award. Finally, the CRT has determined that it is plausible that neither the Account Owner nor his 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 demand deposit account was 2,140.00 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 25,680.00 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 16,692.00 Swiss Francs.

¹ As described in the expanded version of Appendix A (see II.A.1.) that appears on the CRT II website -- www.crt-ii.org.

² An expanded version of Appendix A appears on the CRT II website -- www.crt-ii.org.

Division of the Award

According to Article 29 of the Rules, children of account owners who have submitted a claim are entitled to equal shares of the award. Consequently each of the Claimants would be entitled to one half of the award.

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 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
October 3, 2002

APPENDIX A

In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the Tribunal presumes that neither the Account 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, and before 1945 or the year in which the freeze of Accounts from the country of residence of the Account 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 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 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 was a child at the time of the Second World War;
- h) the Account 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 and heirs because of the banks' concerns regarding double liability;²
- i) the Account 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 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).