

# CLAIMS RESOLUTION TRIBUNAL

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

## **Certified Award**

to Claimant Franz Alfred Tabak  
acting on behalf of himself and of Isabel Bianchedi

## **in re Account of Ernestine and Maximilian Tabak**

Claim Numbers: 216345/MBC; 216346/MBC

Award Amount: 47,400.00 Swiss Francs

This Certified Award is based upon the claims of Franz Alfred Tabak (the “Claimant”) to the account of Ernestine and Maximilian Tabak (the “Account Owners”) at the Zurich branch of the [REDACTED] (the “Bank”).

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

## **Information Provided by the Claimant**

The Claimant submitted two Claim Forms identifying the Account Owners as his father, Maximilian Tabak, and his mother, Ernestine Tabak, née Abt. The Claimant indicated that his father, who was a doctor, was born in Sadagura, Bucovina (Romania), on 19 August 1898 and died in San Miguel, Argentina, on 18 July 1966. The Claimant indicated that his mother was a French teacher and was born in Vienna, Austria on 1 April 1905 and died in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 14 April 1998. The Claimant further indicated that his parents, who were Jewish, lived at Fasangasse 36 in Vienna from June 1929 to June 1938. The Claimant indicated that after the Nazi annexation of Austria in March 1938 (the “*Anschluss*”), his father’s car was confiscated by the Nazis and he had to report to the Gestapo. The Claimant’s mother was forced by the Nazis to clean the streets. The Claimant stated that in June 1938 his parents managed to flee to Zurich, Switzerland, where they lived at Bolleystrasse 8, until they moved to Argentina in August 1938. The Claimant stated that his father traveled several times to Switzerland between 1932 and 1936, and the Claimant submitted his father’s passport, which bears customs entry and exit stamps, and decisions by both the Swiss Federal authorities and the Zurich Cantonal authorities allowing the Claimant’s father to stay in Switzerland until 20 August 1938. In support of his claims, the Claimant submitted documents, including his parents’ birth and death certificates. Finally, the Claimant indicated that he and his sister Isabel Bianchedi are their parents’ only children, and that they were both born in Vienna, he on 9 November 1935, and she on 18 July 1933.

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

The bank records consist of a list of account owners and a printout from the Bank's database. According to these records, the Account Owners were Dr. Maximilian Tabak and Frau Ernestine Tabak, who resided at Fasangasse 36, Vienna. The Account Owners held an account of unknown type numbered 19898. The bank records show that the account was closed in November 1949, but they do not indicate to whom the account was paid or the value of the account at the time 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 (the "ICEP Investigation") 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**

### Joinder of Claims

According to Article 37(1) of the Rules Governing the Claims Resolution Process, as amended (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 Claimant's claims in one proceeding.

### Identification of the Account Owners

The Claimant has plausibly identified the Account Owners. His parents' names match the published names of the Account Owners. The Claimant indicated that his parents resided at Fasangasse 36, Vienna, which exactly matches unpublished information about the Account Owners contained in the bank documents. The Claimant also indicated that his father was a medical doctor, which is consistent with the unpublished title, "Dr.," of Account Owner Maximilian Tabak.

The CRT notes that Isabel Bianchedi filed an Initial Questionnaire with the Court in 1999 asserting her entitlement to a Swiss bank account owned by Ernestine Tabak, 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's sister, whom he represents, 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 and his sister had reason to believe that their 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 Owners as Victims of Nazi Persecution

The Claimant has made a plausible showing that the Account Owners were Victims of Nazi Persecution. The Claimant stated that his parents were Jewish, and that they lived in Nazi-

controlled Austria until they fled in June 1938.

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

The Claimant has plausibly demonstrated that he is related to the Account Owners by submitting documents showing that he and his sister are the Account Owners' only children and heirs.

#### The Issue of Who Received the Proceeds

Given that the Account Owners fled Austria in 1938, that the Account Owners' account was closed in 1949, at a time when the Account Owners would likely not have been able to obtain information about their accounts from the Bank due to the Swiss banks' practice of withholding or misstating account information in response to inquiries by account owners or their heirs, and the application of Presumptions (h) and (j) as provided in Article 28 of the Rules (see Appendix A), 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, 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 18 of the Rules. Second, the Claimant has plausibly demonstrated that the Account Owners were his parents, 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

In this case, the Account Owners held one account of unknown type. Pursuant to Article 29 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 an account of an unknown type was 3,950.00 Swiss Francs. The present value of this amount is calculated by multiplying it by a factor of 12, in accordance with Article 31(1) of the Rules, to produce a total award amount of 47,400.00 Swiss Francs.

#### Division of the Award

The Claimant is representing his sister in these proceedings. According to Article 23 of the Rules, the Claimant's sister is entitled to receive one-half of any payment made to the Claimant.

#### **Scope of the Award**

The Claimant should be aware that, pursuant to Article 20 of the Rules, the CRT will carry out further research on his claims to determine whether there are additional Swiss bank accounts to

which he 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  
March 11, 2003

## 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 of Eminent Persons, Report on Dormant Accounts of Victims of Nazi Persecution in Swiss Banks (1999)

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(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).