

CLAIMS RESOLUTION TRIBUNAL

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

Certified Award

to Claimant [REDACTED]

in re Account of Alexander Fürst

Claim Number: 213115/ME

Award Amount: 25,680.00 Swiss Francs

This Certified Award is based upon the claim of [REDACTED], née [REDACTED] (the “Claimant”) to the account of Alexander Fürst (the “Account Owner”) 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 and an Initial Questionnaire identifying the Account Owner as her maternal grandfather, Akos (Alexander) Fürst, who was born on 31 August 1877 in Debresin, Hungary, the son of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. According to the Claimant, her grandfather was a businessman and a world-champion jockey, who remained unmarried his entire life. The documents submitted by the Claimant indicate that her grandfather was a practicing Christian who was considered fully Jewish by the Nazis because both of his parents were Jewish. He had one child, [REDACTED] born on 24 June 1905 in Vienna, with [REDACTED], to whom he was not married.

The Claimant’s submissions indicate that her grandfather lived in Vienna from 1903 until 1906, before returning to Hungary. However, he kept an address at the Hotel Post, on Fleischmarkt, in Vienna, Austria until 1938. The Claimant explained that her grandfather had arranged to flee from Vienna after the German occupation in 1938, but when the time came for him to meet the Claimant and the Claimant’s mother (his daughter), he never arrived and was never heard from again.

The Claimant submitted an *Abstammungsbescheid* (“Certificate of Origin”) from the Director of the *Reichssippenamt* (“Nazi Bureau of Kinship”) dated 12 September 1944 in Berlin, issued for [REDACTED], and identifying her father as Akos (Alexander) Fürst and indicating that he

resided in Vienna. The *Abstammungsbescheid* classifies [REDACTED] as a Jewish *Mischling* because of her Jewish grandparents. The Claimant stated that she was born on 7 September 1930.

Information Available in the Bank Records

The bank records consist of an account registry card. According to this record, the Account Owner was Alexander Fürst, who resided in Vienna, and had been a client of the Bank since at least 1935. The bank record indicates that the Account Owner held a demand deposit account denominated in Pounds Sterling, which was closed on 20 April 1938 unknown to whom. The bank record further indicates that the Account Owner held a demand deposit account (not numbered) that was closed on 10 July 1937, a custody account numbered 46533 that was closed on 10 July 1937, a custody account numbered 29223 that was closed 24 September 1937, a custody account numbered 3839 that was closed on 25 September 1937, and a safe deposit box numbered 1909 that was closed on 25 September 1937. The amounts in the accounts on the dates of their closures are unknown. There is no evidence in the bank record that the Account Owner or his heirs closed the accounts and received the proceeds themselves.

The CRT's Analysis

Identification of the Account Owner

The Claimant has plausibly identified the Account Owner. Her grandfather's name matches the published name and country of residence of the Account Owner. The Claimant identified one of her grandfather's cities of residence as Vienna, which matches unpublished information about the Account Owner contained in the bank records. Furthermore, she has indicated that her grandfather maintained the address in Vienna at the same time the Account Owner used a Vienna address in dealing with the Bank.

Moreover, 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 Alexander Fürst, prior to the publication in February 2001 of the list of accounts determined 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 a person 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 plausibly shown that the Account Owner was a Victim of Nazi Persecution. The Claimant stated that the Account Owner was Jewish and provided documents from the Nazi Party and the Nazi Regime stating that the Nazis considered her grandfather to be Jewish. She

also indicated that he was in Vienna at the time of the German occupation, and that he disappeared shortly before he was due to flee to safety and was never heard from again.

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 her mother was the child of Alexander Fürst. There is no information to indicate that the Account Owner had other surviving heirs.

The Issue of Who Received the Proceeds

Based on its precedent and the Rules Governing the Claims Resolution Process (the "Rules"), CRT applies presumptions to determine whether Account Owners or their heirs received the proceeds of their accounts. These presumptions are contained in Appendix A.¹ Regarding the demand deposit account closed 20 April 1938, the CRT concludes that Presumptions (a) and (j) apply, and it is therefore plausible that the account proceeds were not paid to the Account Owner or his heirs.

Regarding the safe deposit box, the three custody accounts, and the demand deposit account closed in 1937, the CRT has decided not to reach a decision at this time, pending further consideration as to whether or not the Account Owner or his heirs received the proceeds of those 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 the Account Owner was her grandfather, 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 An expanded version of the Appendix A appears on the CRT II website – www.crt-ii.org

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 for 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).