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Addendum to the

FINAL REPORT

ON

EXTERNAL RESEARCH

commissioned by

the

**INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON
HOLOCAUST ERA INSURANCE CLAIMS**

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1. General

In February 2004 the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) commissioned supplementary research in Hungary, Poland, and Romania, countries for which a large number of claims has been received, but for which little significant information was gathered during the main phase of research in 1999-2003 (hereafter 'Phase I'). The research included also Hungarian and Romanian records available on microfilm at the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem.

The research, which occurred over three months for Hungary and Poland and six weeks for Romania, did not yield large quantities of additional records, with the exception of a list of some 1,000 insurance policyholders whose policies were transferred from Czech insurance companies to the Hungarian company Fonciere General in 1939 (RG Z170-172, discussed in more detail below). The list is an inventory of a specific Fonciere portfolio, defined by geography rather than specific exposure to Holocaust-era persecution. As such, in contrast to many record groups reviewed during Phase I, the appearance of a policy on this list does not necessarily constitute prima facie evidence of Holocaust-era confiscation or despoilment.

2. Research in Hungary

Following a February 2004 meeting with Dr. Lajos Gecsenyi, director general of the Hungarian National Archives, a new research effort was initiated which concentrated on series of files not perused during Phase I. The research yielded the following results:

Hungarian National Archives, Budapest

- RG Z170-172, Insurance Company "Fonciere General"

List of 1,009 policyholders, whose policies with the Merkur Insurance Company in Prague and other Czechoslovak companies were taken over by "Fonciere General" in 1939 as a result of pre-WWII territorial changes.

- RG Z 936, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, box 9, file 17

Research of this holding yielded 15 Holocaust era life insurance policies. Most probably these are policies found in concentration camps in Germany by US authorities, and forwarded to the Hungarian Government in 1948 (see letter by the US Political Adviser for Germany to the US Legation in Budapest, September 3, 1948 [NARA, RG 84 (US Legation in Budapest), entry 2691, box 158, file 711.9]).

- RG: List of confiscated securities and insurance policies

The holding provided names of 4 Holocaust era life insurance policies.

The list of researched record groups in which no information on Holocaust era insurance policies has been located is to be found in Appendix A.

3. Research in Israel

The entire series of microfilmed records of confiscation of Jewish assets in Hungary (kept at the Yad Vashem Archives as microfilms JM 3741- 3927), only a sample of which was researched during Phase I, was perused in greater detail. The series has not provided additional information on Holocaust era insurance policies.

In addition, a series of microfilmed, WWII-era Romanian records, recently received from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and also kept at the Yad Vashem Archives, was examined, but did not yield any relevant information. From this record group, the following holdings (all of them from the Romanian State Archives in Bucharest) have been researched¹:

- RG 25.003M, Selected Records of the Romanian Ministry of Defence
- RG 25.004M, Selected Records of the Romanian Information Service (“Securitate”)
- RG 25.012M, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- RG 25.013M, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Military Cabinet

These records provided no additional information in regard to Holocaust era insurance policies.

4. Research in Poland

The supplementary research in Poland concentrated on the post-war archives of the Polish Ministry of Finance (record groups 1595 and 386) kept at the Archiwum Akt Nowych (Central Archives of Modern Records, or AAN) in Warsaw. Although subject to extensive research during Phase I, this holding, as indicated by research in archives in Israel and elsewhere, and by evidence collected in the United States, seemed to hold the most promise of possible success if subjected to additional scrutiny.

The research, executed by the staff of the AAN under agreement between ICHEIC and the Head Office of [Polish] State Archives, located information on some 30 Holocaust era life insurance policies. As during Phase I, this information did not refer to residents of Poland in its pre-WWII borders but to policyholders who resided in eastern parts of Germany, which were incorporated into Poland in 1945.

Research did uncover a 1946 letter from Polish authorities testifying that, in 1940, the German insurance company Lebensversicherungsgesellschaft A.G. Volksfürsorge in Hamburg assumed some role in regard to 80,000 life insurance policies issued by the Polish bank and insurance company Pocztaowa Kasa Oszczednosciowa (PKO). The policies represented PKO’s portfolio for the western part of Poland, which was

¹ The quoted record group numbers refer to the USHMM and not to the Romanian State Archives.

incorporated into Germany. The document contains no details of individual policies; it is not clear whether documentary evidence of individual policies still exists.²

In addition, the archives of the Polish Embassy/Consulate in Tel Aviv from the 1940s-1960s, which were not available during Phase I, were located at the Archives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw. Some 30% of the files were researched without yielding any significant results.

5. Research in Romania

The supplementary research in Romania took a two-pronged approach: the Romanian State Archives and Archives of the National Bank of Romania.

Following a meeting with Dr. Cristian Bichi, deputy director of the Secretariat of the Bank in May 2004 in Bucharest, a number of WWII-era files from the Bank archives were researched but no relevant information has been located. The following files have been perused:

- RG: Research Service, files 1, 2, 4, 14
- RG: Secretariat of the Direction, files 15, 18, 34, 37, 57, 70, 71

It should be mentioned that some of the records contain important information on Holocaust era assets but not, as already mentioned, pertaining to insurance.

Following the meeting with the representative of the Romanian State Archives in May 2004 in Bucharest, it became possible to research some of its records.

The following files have been researched so far but did not yield any significant results:

- RG: Presidency of the Council of Ministers, files 151, 278, 293, 327, 336, 364, 398, 404, 408, 617, 1279;
- RG 1175, Subsecretariatul de Stat al Romanizarii, Colonizarii si Inventarului (The Sub-Secretariat for Romanization, Colonization and Inventory), files 21, 438.

Additional files of the Sub-Secretariat have been ordered but not yet received due to problems with the state of conservation of the documents. ICHEIC will continue dialogue with Romanian archival and public officials to urge that these records be made accessible as soon as possible.

² **ICHEIC Editorial Note:** Issues of succession of responsibility for these policies are complex. ICHEIC is investigating the relationship between PKO and Volksfürsorge in order to determine the appropriate course of action for claims on PKO policies.

Appendix A

List of researched record groups in Hungary in which no information on Holocaust era life insurance policies has been found.

Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár)

- RG Z 163, National Association of Insurance Companies
- RG Z 173-175, Farmers' Insurance Cooperative (Gazdák Biztosító Szövetkezete)
- RG Z 177 Hungarian General Insurance Company (Hungária Általános Biztosító Rt)
- RG Z 178 Hungarian-French Insurance Company (Magyar Francia Biztosító Rt)
- RG Z 182 Providentia Insurance Company (Providencia Biztosító Rt)

Csongrád County Archives, Szeged (Csongrád Megyei Levéltár)

- RG VI. 102 b, Local Financial Directorate of Szeged 1943-1945
- RG XI. 207, Szeged-Csongrád Savings Bank (Szeged-Csongrádi Takarékpénztár)
- RG XI. 208, Kiskundorozsma Branch of Szeged-Csongrád Savings Bank
- RG XI. 209, Szeged Branch of English-Hungarian Bank (Angol-Magyar Bank Rt.)
- RG XI. 211, Credit Bank of Kiszombor (Kiszombori Hitelszövetkezet)
- RG XI. 217 3, First Hungarian General Insurance Company (Első Magyar Általános Biztosító Társaság)
- RG XI. 218, Szeged Branch of Fonciere General Insurance Institution (Fonciere Általános Biztosító Intézet)
- RG XI. 224, Szeged Branch of Providentia Insurance Company (Providencia Biztosító Rt)
- RG XI. 228, Szeged Branch of Adria Insurance Company (Adria Biztosító Rt.)
- RG XI. 229, Szeged Branch of Trieste General Insurance Company (Trieszti Általános Biztosító Társulat)

Bács Kiskun County Archives, Kecskemét (Bács Kiskun Megyei Levéltár)

- RG XI. 201, English-Hungarian Bank (Angol-Magyar Bank)
- RG XI 239, Fonciere, Life Insurance Department
- RG XI 216, Providencia

Baranya County Archives (Baranya Megyei Levéltár, Pécs)

- RG 941, file 52: Copies of documents from the original RG VI (Inventories of confiscated Jewish property)