



Photo: Lund University Library

The Ravensbrück Archive at the University Library

Lund University is home to a hidden treasure comprising unique materials and gripping interviews with survivors of the Ravensbrück concentration camp, collected shortly after their liberation. Digitisation of this important collection is underway to preserve this material and the University wants to share this important piece of history with the world for generations to come.

Ravensbrück, situated approximately 90 km north of Berlin, was a concentration camp primarily for women and children. Between 1939, when the first women were transferred to the camp, and 1945, over 130,000 prisoners passed through Ravensbrück and its satellite camps. Many died. For posterity, testimonials of life and suffering in the camps have been kept in Lund University's Ravensbrück Archive.

The Archive includes more than 500 handwritten interviews with survivors, just after they arrived in Sweden after being liberated. The archive contains not only accounts from Ravensbrück but from many other concentration and labour camps as well. Many of the survivors stayed in Sweden and some emigrated to Israel or the US. Some would never again speak about their experiences.

Zygmunt Łakocinski (1905–1987), a lecturer of Polish at Lund University, worked as an interpreter when more than 21,000 evacuated camp prisoners arrived to southern Sweden, in the so called white buses. Together with the historian Sture Bolin, he formed a committee dedicated to systematically document the experiences of the former concentration camp prisoners. Financial support from the Swedish government helped launch the project in October 1945 and interviews were carried out for a period of one year. In 2004, the Ravensbrück Archive was officially donated to Lund University Library by the heirs of Zygmunt Łakocinski.

In addition to interviews, which are almost entirely in Polish, there are other types of artifacts in the archive, including prisoners' notebooks, diaries, letters, poems, recipes, photographs, drawings. There are also official Nazi documents from the concentration

camp such as lists of prisoners, block books (maps of the camps with lists and registers of the names of those who lived and died in the various buildings), and transcripts of protocols and original documents from the Ravensbrück trial in Hamburg in 1946–47. The Ravensbrück Archive is in every sense a very international archive and provides a critical link to the history of the Holocaust. The library gets requests almost every week from children and grandchildren of survivors around the world who want more information.

Thanks to many generous donations, Lund University Library is in the process of cataloguing and digitising the collection. In the fall of 2017, a webportal will be launched with a searchable database where the original Polish interviews and the English translations will be published side by side.

HELP US TO UNCOVER THE ARCHIVE

Lund University strongly feels an obligation to make this material accessible to the world and spread the knowledge contained within the archive to the public. Plans are underway for the creation of teaching aids as well as a short film as part of a travelling exhibit to bring a voice to the materials.

The total cost of digitisation, the webportal, teaching aids and a short film is estimated at 4 million SEK (\$500 000 USD). So far we have raised 2,8 million SEK (\$350 000 USD) and we need another 1,2 million SEK (\$150 000 USD) to complete the project.

We appreciate any donation, regardless of amount, to make accessible this important piece of history for generations to come. Together we can work for a better world.

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