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Austrian women at Ravensbrück

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Seventy-five years ago, Ravensbrück concentration camp was liberated in the spring days of late April.

Ravensbrück was the main women's concentration camp of the Nazi regime from 1939 onward – just 80 kilometers from Berlin, and yet a different world. 120,000 women were deported there from over 30 countries, including Poland, the Soviet Union, Hungary and France. 22,000 were from Germany and Austria, and from 1942 they included many opponents of the regime. Around 28,000 women perished at Ravensbrück.

In the final days of the war, most of the inmates were sent on the infamous death marches, away from the advancing Red Army troops. It was mainly the gravely ill prisoners who witnessed the liberation of Ravensbrück on 30 April 1945.

Upon their return, the Austrian women survivors joined together to form the “Ravensbrück Camp Community” – united forever by their memories of the hellish ordeal they had suffered and survived together.

One of them was Antonia Bruha, whose baby was wrenched from her arms during an interrogation. When she saw her daughter again, she was four years old and did not recognize her mother, who had been scarred by her time in the concentration camp. She later wrote a book entitled “I was not a Heroine”, in which she describes her life in the Resistance. Toni Bruha died in 2006. We must remember her and all of the other courageous women.

The National Fund has been closely associated with the “women of Ravensbrück” since its establishment 25 years ago – not only by recognizing them as victims, but also by continuing to uphold their memory.

