

Greetings from the Conference Organizers

The organizers of “1945-2015: German American Encounters in Bavaria”—a conference hosted by the Regensburg European American Forum (REAF) in cooperation with the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial and Museum—welcome you to the Upper Palatinate region of Bavaria. We welcome you to the University of Regensburg, the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial and Museum, and to the City of Regensburg. These places are more than locations for our academic exchanges and discussions throughout the three days of our conference. The international conference focuses on the space(s) of Bavaria in order to explore the dynamics, impacts, and implications of German-American encounters since the end of World War II—for these spaces and beyond. It views the Upper Palatinate and Bavaria neither as a homogeneous entity nor as an area of resistant-to-change rootedness but rather as one particular local realm which, as a contact zone between Germans and Americans, has become the stage and mirror of transnational processes and trajectories.

The 8th of May 2015 marked the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. The date serves as a potent memory trigger that highlights the convergence of past, present, and future. The 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe might well be one of the last anniversaries to see the actual participation of contemporary witnesses and historical agents. At a crucial moment of generational change, the year 2015 endorses the significance of processes of memory, commemoration, and memorialization looking back to victims and traumas, to moments of fear and to moments of hope, to collective narratives and to individual hi/stories generated by the war and its reverberations until today. The 8th of May 1945 focalizes a key moment of German-American encounters in which instants of wartime clashes, liberations, and visions of future interactions converge. Between 1945 and 2015, multiple places and diverse spaces have experienced this crucial moment and its aftermath. Between 1945 and 2015, multiple spaces and diverse places have been German-American contact zones and sites of multiple political, cultural, and social negotiations.

In the course of the conference we will be convening at three different locations that reflect and embody the scope and agenda as well as the perspectives, the emotions, and the responsibilities of our meeting's theme: we will set out in the Old Town of Regensburg (in the former Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut); we will travel to the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial and Museum; we will conclude the conference at the University of Regensburg.

We would like to extend special words of gratitude to all contributors to the conference program, our sponsors, the conference staff, and especially the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial and Museum. We are looking forward to an intellectually stimulating conference, thoughtful discussions, and an engaging experience.

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