

AMERICAN VOICES ABROAD BERLIN: ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR (Ann Wertheimer), December 11, 2005 – December 10, 2006

On December 11, 2005, AVA Berlin held its annual business meeting at the Offenbach Stuben and elected the following seven Executive Committee (EC) officers for 2006: ANN WERTHEIMER (chair), PAM SELWYN (vice-chair), DAVID MACBRYDE (secretary), ALAN BENSON (treasurer), JANE HARTMANN-ZEILBERGER (assistant treasurer), COLIN KING and ISABEL COLE.

On December 10, 2006, we meet again, this time at Restauration Walden, to review this past year, to elect EC officers for 2007 and to discuss the future of AVA Berlin. You received notice of this event two months in advance so that you could reserve this date on your calendar. You have been asked to suggest items for the agenda and have received the final agenda several days in advance of the meeting.

All members-in-good-standing – that is, all who have paid their dues – have both active and passive voting rights; that is, all members-in-good-standing may vote and may run for office. But EVERYONE may attend, discuss and plan. Who knows, attendance at this meeting may be the first step in becoming more active in AVA Berlin during 2007.

I have divided the following report into five categories: organizational matters, letters written and petitions signed, events supported and/or publicized, our own AVA Berlin projects, and our modest contributions to civil society. Please make any corrections or additions. It is long and, I hope, interesting. It is a detailed record of what AVA Berlin did this year.

A brief note about meetings: Why only one business meeting a year? Because, as you can read in the report itself (section 1, point 2), the executive committee decided to make projects the basis of our group's activities. This decision was taken in response to several informal requests from the membership. After looking around at other organizations, we found that many have limited business meetings (often tedious or confrontational) to a bare minimum in order to concentrate on activities. We hope that this procedure can continue in the new year.

Finally, about all the things that went wrong this year, or that didn't happen at all – I hope that 2007 will be more productive. A group like AVA Berlin is easy to call into being but difficult to mobilize. But I, for one, am determined to try.

Submitted by Ann Wertheimer, December 10, 2006
Chair, American Voices Abroad Berlin

► ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. AVA Berlin started collecting dues, 30 euros per year, or a self-assessed smaller amount if necessary. All paid up members have both passive and active voting rights at the general membership meeting(s). Details in Treasurer's report.

2. We agreed on an informal procedure to approve AVA Berlin projects. This is our suggested alternative to frequent business meetings. We hope that this streamlined procedure will encourage some who have not been active in AVA to participate:

The AVA Berlin Executive Committee (EC) has now set up an easy, direct procedure for anyone who is considering organizing an AVA Berlin project. Just write an email to any member of the EC describing the project - what it is, how long it is to run and if you will need any help from our treasury. AVA Berlin projects might include an exhibition, a reading, a campaign - any project suitable for AVA Berlin.

The EC will try to approve the project as quickly as possible. If the project proves too difficult for us to handle in cyberspace, we will deal with it at the next regular EC meeting, always one hour before the regular Stammtisch on the first Thursday of the month.

3. We agreed on what we send out to our mailing list and what we don't:

3a. All AVA Berlin mail comes from our mailing list administrator DAVID MACBRYDE (many, many thanks!) or, in an emergency, from PAM SELWYN or ALAN BENSON, Dave's back-ups. No one else is authorized to send our mail, and all mail has the return address: AVA-Berlin email list. The messages include our logo. Any mail with a different return address, or without the logo, is not from us. GOAVA mailings are not from us.

3b. We DO NOT usually forward to the list any of the dozens of interesting articles that we come across every week. If you feel that you are not getting enough information, we suggest that you subscribe to www.truthout.org.

3c. We DO NOT usually forward mail from other political groups to our mailing list. But we DO RECOMMEND that you subscribe to the lists of some of the many progressive groups in the United States, especially those involved in formulating positions, writing to representatives and senators, and organizing events. Some of these groups are:

Act For Change www.workingforchange.com
After Downing Street www.afterdowningstreet.org
the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) www.aclu.org
Code Pink www.codepinkalert.org
Common Cause www.commoncause.org
Move On www.moveon.org
Not in Our Name www.notinourname.net
People for the American Way www.pfaw.org
Progressive Democrats of America www.pdamerica.org
True Majority www.truemajority.org
United for Peace and Justice www.unitedforpeace.org

3d. We DO NOT ASK YOU FOR MONEY except for AVA Berlin dues or on behalf of an AVA-coalition project - for example, the mailing to raise funds for the legal defense of the conscientious objector (Augustin Aguayo) sponsored by the AVA coalition military project.

3e. We DO SEND ANNOUNCEMENTS (yes, sometimes at regrettably short notice) ABOUT EVENTS HERE IN BERLIN, for example about the Einstein Forum's American Voices series or about the Forum of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung. We FORWARD SUGGESTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL AVA BERLIN MEMBERS. And we FORWARD INVITATIONS FROM OTHER GROUPS TO AVA, most recently from the Democrats Abroad Berlin and from the Berlin section of Attac.

3f. We DO PASS ON PETITIONS AND OPEN LETTERS for you to sign from other organizations if we think they are especially well thought-out. A good example of one of our composite mailings is the message you received on April 24 with the subject line: US-Iranian (non-)relations and more. This email included a link to the After Downing Street petition as well as an announcement of a discussion about Iran, personal suggestions from several AVA Berlin members and more. It's worth re-reading if you skipped it!

3g. We DO PASS ON TO YOU LETTERS THAT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF AVA BERLIN HAS COMPOSED AND PETITIONS THAT IT HAS SIGNED on behalf of AVA Berlin. And of course WE REMIND YOU of our STAMMTICH on the first Thursday of every month at BARCOMI'S DELI, Sophienstr. 21, 8 pm, behind the Hackesche Höfe in Mitte.

3h. Finally, we DO PASS ON TO YOU ANY DECISIONS THAT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS TAKEN as well as INFORMATION about what AVA Berlin is doing - for example, DEMONSTRATIONS or VIGILS, the VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN, AVA FILM NIGHTS or any other activities. And, of course, we will remind you well in advance of our year-end business meeting.

By the way, our mailing list has over 300 valid addresses of US-Americans living in Berlin or the vicinity, which at the moment stretches to Frankfurt/Oder and Quedlinburg!

4. We have a new American Voices Abroad Berlin banner, which was made, as usual, by MARIANNA TOLAND-HANKOW. We still have a few other banners, plus our original 'We Say No' flag. A few banners have disappeared, so if you know where they might be, please send a note to members-berlin@americanvoicesabroad.net. KAREN AXELRAD revised our AVA Berlin leaflet, improving the logo and the general layout, and adding newer photos. Karen also continues to update her photo gallery with a record of AVA Berlin events:

<http://www.pbase.com/karenaxe>. The photo record goes back to the demonstrations, vigils and the filibuster of 2003.

5. Our website, www.americanvoicesabroad.net/berlin, was mastered by AARON RICHARDSON, who continues in absentia, if that term means anything at all in these days of cyberspace. Aaron, who has returned to the U.S., possibly for good, is being temporarily assisted by KAREN AXELRAD and FLORIAN SCHIEDHELM. Anyone out there able to help with the web site, please contact Aaron at aaronrichardson@yahoo.com.

6. In November, American Voices Abroad Berlin joined the United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) coalition. One does not get anything from such membership except the satisfaction of being in solidarity with the peace movement in the United States. You can look up our name at www.unitedforpeace.org and click on their *member groups directory*. Then click *Germany*.

7. ANN WERTHEIMER continued as liaison to the AVA coalition via the liaisons list.

8. And many thanks to SHELAGH FOREMAN of Cambridge Peace Action (Cambridge, MA). In the past, Cambridge Peace Action has read our messages at national demonstrations in Washington, D.C. If we had a 'sister' organization, and if Cambridge Peace Action had one, we would be naturals. Shelagh is the real sister of our own JOAN KLAKOW.

► LETTERS WRITTEN AND PETITIONS SIGNED

1. In January, the EC wrote this letter to Angela Merkel before her trip to Washington:

Sehr geehrte Frau Bundeskanzlerin!

Als eine Gruppe von in Berlin lebenden US-amerikanischen Staatsbürgern und Staatsbürgerinnen sind wir sehr besorgt über den Verlauf des Irakkriegs und über die Mißachtung der Menschenrechte durch unsere jetzige Regierung. Wir freuen uns deswegen sehr, dass Sie die Verhältnisse im US-Gefangenenlager Guantanamo Bay kritisieren bzw. dessen Schließung fordern, und dass Sie sagen, dass Mittel und Wege gefunden werden müssen, einen anderen Umgang mit den Gefangenen zu finden. Wir hoffen, dass Sie am kommenden Wochenende in Washington an die Genfer Konventionen erinnern werden, die von der US-Regierung als altmodisch ('quaint') bezeichnet wurden.

Wir hoffen auch, dass Sie sich in Europa und in den Vereinigten Staaten dafür einsetzen werden, dass Verstöße gegen Menschenrechtskonventionen, insbesondere bezüglich geheimer Gefangenenlager, Folter, CIA-Flüge und Verschleppungen, unverzüglich untersucht und geahndet werden. Eine Verbesserung der zur Zeit leider angeschlagenen Beziehungen zwischen den Vereinigten Staaten und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland darf nicht auf Kosten der Menschenrechte und des Völkerrechts geschehen.

Mit den besten Wünschen für eine erfolgreiche Reise verbleiben wir hochachtungsvoll,

American Voices Abroad Berlin*
Ann Wertheimer und Pamela Selwyn (für den Vorstand)

*American Voices Abroad Berlin ist unabhängig von Parteien, Regierungen, Wirtschaftsinteressen, und Ideologien. Was uns verbindet ist die Ablehnung präventiver Kriege und die Verteidigung der Bürgerrechte in den Vereinigten Staaten.

2. In March, we signed this petition sent out by the Ökumensches Zentrum (Pastor Kranz) and thus became part of the Trägerkreis:

Im dritten Jahr der Besatzung: Rückzug der europäischen Truppen aus dem Irak !

Die Invasion des Irak im März 2003 hat das Völkerrecht verletzt und den internationalen Terrorismus gefördert. Über 100.000 Tote sind seitdem im Irak zu beklagen. Die Besatzungsmächte werden immer mehr in schwere Menschenrechtsverletzungen bis hin zu Folter und geheimen Gefängnissen verwickelt.

Noch immer haben dort 16 europäische Staaten Truppen im Einsatz, fünf haben ihre Truppen inzwischen wieder abgezogen. Mit meiner Unterschrift setze ich mich für den Rückzug aller europäischen Truppen aus dem Irak und das Ende jeglicher Unterstützung für das Besatzungsregime ein.

Ich fordere die Europäische Union auf, in diesem Sinne auf die europäischen Regierungen einzuwirken. Der Europarat muß Verstöße gegen die Menschenrechtskonvention in den Mitgliedsländern unverzüglich untersuchen und ahnden.

3. During the spring, the Military Project of the international AVA coalition became involved in the organizing of a hearing on peace initiatives at the European Parliament, specifically concerning military war resisters. We supported this aspect of the international project, headed by ELSA RASSBACH and MICHAEL MCGEE (Strasbourg), by writing the following welcome letter to CINDY SHEEHAN, who was scheduled to testify at the hearing. (As you may remember, Cindy was unable to fly to Europe because of injuries sustained during an anti-war demonstration in NYC.) This letter was then signed by many other groups in the AVA coalition. (We later covered some of the costs incurred by the Deutsche Friedensrat when they sponsored an event at St. Bart's where Cindy Sheehan would have spoken.)

Greetings, Cindy Sheehan!

We, Americans living abroad, want to thank you for coming here this week. We thank you for your great dedication.

We hope that all those here today, and all those who could not come personally but are here in spirit, will give you the strength to continue to deliver your message.

We also want you to know about the concerned and informed Europeans among whom we live who overwhelmingly view this war as wrong.

We stand at your side, millions of Americans, whether in the United States or living overseas, with millions of Europeans, laughing with you, crying with you, and, hopefully, working with you to end this war.

4. The EC supported a letter from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to Condoleezza Rice, US Secretary of State:

Dear Madam Secretary:

Torture. Government kidnapping. Indefinite detention.

These are not ideas we associate with the United States of America. They do not represent who we are as Americans. By promoting and condoning these practices in our military and intelligence forces, your administration has broken faith with the American values of freedom and fairness.

Last week marked two years since the world first saw the terrible images from Abu Ghraib prison. As human rights experts from around the world gather in Geneva to condemn torture, the U.S. must stand by its own time-honored principles.

Widespread evidence, including over 100,000 government documents released to the ACLU under the Freedom of Information Act, shows a systemic pattern of torture and abuse of detainees in U.S. custody.

These acts go against our most cherished American ideals. When our leaders promote torture and fail to hold themselves accountable for illegal abuses, they no longer speak for me or for the America in which I believe.

We demand our country back.

To restore humanity, to defend the rule of law and to end one of the saddest chapters in American history, our government must:

- * reverse the policies that permit torture and abuse, and honor the universal obligations that prohibit torture
- * hold accountable all individuals, regardless of rank or high office, who have authorized, condoned or committed torture or abuse
- * end the practice of secret C.I.A. kidnappings and the transport of individuals to secret detention facilities or to countries where torture is common
- * grant full access at detention facilities to the Red Cross, human rights experts and legal representatives
- * appoint an outside special counsel to investigate and prosecute as necessary all government officials who developed or implemented the policies behind the abuse of detainees in U.S. custody in Afghanistan, Guantánamo, Iraq and in secret facilities
- * conduct a full review and assessment of torture and abuse in jails and other detention facilities at home and abroad

As an American, I will not stand for torture. The universal prohibition against torture must be upheld, and enforced, today.

5. In May, AVA Berlin joined the After Downing Street Coalition and signed this letter concerning an attack on Iran:

Dear President Bush and Vice President Cheney,

We write to you from all over the United States and all over the world to urge you to obey both international and U.S. law, which forbid aggressive attacks on other nations. We oppose your proposal to attack Iran. Iran does not possess nuclear weapons, just as Iraq did not

possess nuclear weapons. If Iran had such weapons, that would not justify the use of force, any more than any other nation would be justified in launching a war against the world's greatest possessor of nuclear arms, the United States. The most effective way to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons would be to closely monitor its nuclear energy program, and to improve diplomatic relations -- two tasks made much more difficult by threatening to bomb Iranian territory. We urge you to lead the way to peace, not war, and to begin by making clear that you will not commit the highest international crime by aggressively attacking Iran.

6. In July, in anticipation of Bush's visit to Stralsund, AVA Berlin (thank you, ISABEL COLE) wrote the following letter to Frau Merkel. This is what we mean when we say that, while we wish to show solidarity with German peace groups, we prefer to express ourselves in our own way rather than adopt prepared statements, with which we may not always completely agree.

Sehr geehrte Frau Bundeskanzlerin,

als US-amerikanische Staatsbürger in Deutschland, die vom Anfang an gegen die Kriegspolitik von George W. Bush aktiv Stellung bezogen haben, schauen wir dem bevorstehenden Besuch Bushs in Stralsund mit gemischten Gefühlen entgegen. Einerseits begrüßen wir die Intensivierung des deutsch-amerikanischen Dialogs. Andererseits möchten wir zu bedenken geben, daß Sie nun mit einem Präsidenten in Dialog treten, dessen Politik inzwischen nur noch von einer Minderheit seiner Bevölkerung unterstützt wird. Wir möchten Sie bitten, nicht nur im Interesse des deutschen Volkes, sondern auch im Interesse des Großteils der amerikanischen Bevölkerung in Stralsund dezidiert für die friedliche Lösung internationaler Konflikte (z. B. mit dem Iran) sowie für die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte auf internationaler Ebene einzutreten. Wir haben Ihre kritische Haltung in Bezug auf die rechtswidrigen Umstände in Guantanamo sowie im Fall al-Masri begrüßt und hoffen, daß Sie sich auch bei dieser Gelegenheit gegen menschenrechtsverachtende Politik Stellung beziehen werden.

Als regierungskritische US-Bürger vertreten wir Positionen, die inzwischen auch in unserer Heimat keine Randerscheinung mehr sind. Wir fordern von unserer Regierung:

- einen raschen, verantwortungsvoll gestalteten Abzug US-amerikanischer Truppen aus dem Irak
- eine friedliche Lösung des Konflikts mit dem Iran
- die Schließung des Guantanamo-Gefangenenlagers und die rechtmäßige Behandlung der dort Inhaftierten
- die Untersuchung US-amerikanische Kriegsverbrechen in dem Irak und in Afghanistan, sowie die Bestrafung der Verantwortlichen
- Achtung vor internationalen Institutionen und Abkommen
- die Einstellung von rechtswidrigen „extraordinary renditions“ (Auslieferungen) seitens der CIA
- Anerkennung und mehr Rechte für Kriegsdienstverweigerer
- faire, transparente Wahlen in den USA
- die Einstellung von rechtswidrigen Beobachtungs- und Intelligenzmaßnahmen, die die Bürgerrechte der eigenen Bevölkerung verletzen
- eine verantwortliche Energie- und Umweltpolitik, die der Gefahr der schwindenden Ressourcen und der drohenden Klimakatastrophe entgegenwirkt

Sehr geehrte Frau Bundeskanzlerin, wir bitten Sie, in Stralsund auch auf unsere Stimmen zu hören!

Hochachtungsvoll,

der Vorstand, American Voices Abroad Berlin*

*American Voices Abroad ist ein internationaler Verband mehrerer Gruppen, die sich zu Beginn des Irak-Krieges zusammen gefunden haben. Wir sind unabhängig von Parteien, Regierungen, Wirtschaftsinteressen und Ideologien. Uns verbindet die Ablehnung präventiver Kriege, erweiterte Kriegshandlungen und Besetzung im Irak so wie die Einschränkungen der Bürgerrechte in den Vereinigten Staaten (Patriot Act).

7. In August, the EC supported this call for peace. It appeared in several newspapers in German (entitled “Kein Krieg” in the TAZ and Die Zeit) and was signed by many, including

SUSAN NEIMAN, Director of the Einstein Forum (Potsdam), NAVID KERMANI, writer (Cologne), CEM ÖZDEMİR, member of the European Parliament for the Greens (Berlin/Brussels), and DANIEL BOYARIN, Chair of the Department of Talmudic Culture (Berkeley). The call is also being supported by Medico International.

No War!

We, Jews and Muslims, artists and scholars, citizens of the world, deplore the violence, militarization and shedding of innocent blood now taking place between Israel and its Arabic/Muslim neighbours in the Middle East. We refuse to allow our respective cultural and religious traditions to be hijacked into a grand-scale military conflict, one determined by transparent geo-political and geo-economic interests, in which the ancient clichés of good and evil are being cynically assigned to Western and Islamic civilisations. Those who take the time to review our histories will remember that Islamic, Jewish, Christian and other traditions in the Middle East have for centuries been intimately intertwined. In the midst of the presently evolving catastrophe, we call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for the continuation of this fruitful and respectful interchange, which we are sure will endure.

We, the undersigned, regard the current violent polarisation between the so-called West and the Islamic world as a perversion of our respective traditions.

► EVENTS SUPPORTED AND/OR PUBLICIZED

1. We advertised and encouraged all AVAers to attend the BARBARA EHRENREICH lecture (February) and the CORNEL WEST lecture (June) sponsored by the Einstein Forum as part of its American Voices Series. The choice of names for their series and our group is, according to the Einstein Forum Director SUSAN NEIMAN, strictly co-incidental. But we like to think that we have the same name because we're on the same wavelength!
2. In February, we contributed a small sum to Clear Blue Water e.V. and publicized their ambitious Black History Month events.
3. We continue to support DAVID KNUTSON (Bridgebuilders) in a long-term project to reestablish Amerika Haus (now closed by the State Department, with the building returned to Berlin) in a new form.
4. We advertised and encouraged all members to attend the monthly forums sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, particularly those concerned with Iran. The forum on March 7 with BAHMAN NIROUMAND, ANDREAS ZUMACH and SHAUL BAKHASH (George Mason University) was even held in English!
5. Codepink delivered their petition to the U.S. embassy on International Women's Day – March 8. A small AVA contingent was there (6-7 people) and PAM SELWYN joined ANNA GYORGY of Women and Life on Earth e.V. in submitting the petition to a representative of the U.S. embassy. (AVA Berlin then contributed a small amount from its treasury to Life on Earth to cover half of their printing costs.
6. A small AVA contingent of 5-6 people responded to the invitation from ATTAC to join them in their vigil against war in Iran (May 6). Thank you, MIRIAM VOLKMANN, for the contact.
7. In July, AVA Berlin publicized Codepink's "Troops Home Fast" in front of the U.S. Embassy. It was a small but effective event. Thank you, MIRIAM VOLKMANN.
8. The EC publicized the Wednesday demonstrations of the BIFNO (Berliner Initiative für Frieden im Nahen Osten). BIFNO called for an immediate unconditional ceasefire in the Middle East. Most of the demonstrators were students, but there were always some older folks to join them. Their demonstrations in front of the Foreign Ministry were non-militaristic

(without any flag-waving) and devoid of any hero worship or manipulative use of victim's pictures (no posters). They seemed to really feel solidarity with civilians on all sides.

9. On September 1, AVA Berlin organized an AVA Berlin info table as part of the DGB's traditional Anti-War Day at Wittenbergplatz. The table was organized by DAVID MACBRYDE (a member of Communications Workers of America AFL-CIO) along with MIRIAM VOLKMANN and JEFF ALLEN.

10. American Voices Abroad Berlin welcomed Cafe Americain, a new 'political salon' to be held on an occasional basis, with events in public and private settings – outside of the framework of AVA Berlin. Cafe Americain aims "to combat political burn-out by exploring issues from refreshing perspectives, encouraging lively yet civilized discussion, and creating a convivial, stimulating atmosphere that fosters new ideas and projects." The first Cafe Americain event, on September 11, was an evening with ROBBIE CONAL, the guerilla poster artist from L.A. at the Gallery Wallywoods in Kreuzberg.

11. As in 2005, AVA Berlin continued to support the efforts of the AVA coalition's Military Project to finance the defense of AGUSTIN AGUAYO, the conscientious objector whose case AVA has supported over the past year. "After admitting it failed to follow its own procedures, the U.S. Army reviewed the case; after many delays, they finally decided to deny Agustin C.O. status again.... His unit is being redeployed to Iraq soon," according to Meredith Wheeler (AVA Southwest France) in April 2006. At the beginning of September Agustin went AWOL. Agustin is now facing a possible seven-year sentence. We hope that the donation made to Agustin's lawyer from the AVA Berlin treasury has been supplemented by private donations generated through our repeated mailings to the AVA Berlin list. Up to date information can be accessed in English from <www.aguayodefense.org> in English or <<http://www.connection-ev.de/usa/aguayo.html>> in German.

Active in Agustin's defense are, among others, our friends at the military counseling network, as well as MEREDITH WHEELER and ELSA RASSBACH of the American Voices Abroad Military Project.

► OUR OWN AVA BERLIN PROJECTS

1. AVA Berlin started early to organize a voter registration campaign for the midterm elections. We worked independently but in cooperation with Democrats Abroad. We tried to fill the gap where non-partisan voter registration is needed, especially at schools, other public institutions and information fairs. This project will continue at least until the elections of 2008. Many, many thanks to ALAN BENSON for his tireless organizing. And thank you, KARA KRULL, for continuing to be available to the press.

2. As you all know, G.W. Bush came to Germany in July. Various German peace groups designated July 13-15 as days of protest. JANE HARTMANN-ZEILBERGER and DAVID MACBRYDE were designated to represent AVA Berlin at various organizational meetings.

2a. In this connection, AVA Berlin (ISABEL COLE) organized a contingent (parallel to the German protest) to go to Stralsund on July 14 to give Bush the welcome that he deserves. AVA Berlin invited members of other AVA groups to join us here in Berlin for these three days and offered bed and breakfast.

2b. In anticipation of the Stralsund meeting, ANN WERTHEIMER organized an info table in Zehlendorf Mitte. We worked parallel to the German Friedenskoordination (“Die Koalition der Unwilligen”), distributing our own materials, especially our letter to Frau Merkel (see #6 in letters above.) Many thanks to those who staffed the table (KARA KRULL, DAVID MACBRYDE, PAM SELWYN, ISABEL COLE, JOAN KLAKOW, KAREN AXELRAD and JANE HARTMANN) and to all the others who stopped by to chat.

2c. In this connection, ANN WERTHEIMER organized an AVA Berlin info table at the John F. Kennedy Institute for American Studies (FU) student-sponsored Sommerfest on July 13. Many thanks to KARA KRULL, AARON RICHARDSON and KAREN AXELRAD, and to the students who found the info table an interesting addition to their festivities.

3. On November 29, DOUGLAS HILLMER, our guest speaker this year, talked about electronic voting in the context of election fraud and the U.S. electoral system. About 45 people attended the presentation in the big back room of Max & Moritz in Kreuzberg, many arriving early to have dinner. After a talk lasting about half an hour, there was a lively Q & A. Then, after more orders from the kitchen, discussion continued until late in the evening.

We see this event as a continuation of our speakers series: PHYLLIS BENNIS of the Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C. (July 2003); WILLIAM RIVERS PITT, managing editor of Truthout.org (October 2003); JENNIFER VAN BERGEN of the American Civil Liberties Union, expert on the Patriot Act (November 2003); STEVEN HILL, director of the Policy Reform Project at the New America Foundation, author of “Fixing Elections” and “10 Steps to Repairing American Democracy” (May 2004); SUSAN NEIMAN, Director of the Einstein Forum in Potsdam (December 2004) and author of An Alternative History of Philosophy; TOM HAYDEN, long-time political activist and co-director of No More Sweatshops! (co-sponsored by Democrats Abroad Berlin, May 2005).

► OUR MODEST CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

1. The Stammtisch took place on all 12 first Thursdays at BARCOMI’S, Sophienstrasse 21 in Mitte at 8pm. Barcomi’s is now non-smoking! We thank CYNTHIA BARCOMI and her staff for their hospitality!

2. After writing many personal letters in 2005, AVAers got the good news in March that NPR has come to Berlin at 104.1 on the FM dial. Thanks to DAVID KNUTSON (Bridgebuilders) for his organizing work.

3. AVA Berlin movie nights through the year: NANCY DU PLESSIS’ eye-opening documentary: ‘Get the Fire’; ‘Syriana’; ‘Good Night and Good Luck’!; ‘Iraq for Sale’... thank you PAM SELWYN for the organizing! Many thanks, also, to Miriam Volkmann, who alerted us to several interesting films at unusual venues.

4. Bridgebuilders again invited AVA Berlin to organize an AVA Berlin info table at their July 4th event. But what will DAVID KNUTSON arrange for next year to beat the world cup soccer game that we were able to watch on a large screen?

5. PAM SELWYN represented AVA Berlin on Radio MultiKulti. Pam, in excellent German, was able to review the structure and activities of AVA Berlin in the few minutes available to her between songs.

6. AVA Berlin was pleased to accept the invitation of Democrats Abroad Berlin to setup an info table at their Labor Day picnic at the Britzer Garten on September 3. Another tradition in the making for the American community in Berlin! Hoping for better weather next year.

7. ISABEL COLE hosted a Thanksgiving dinner at her house on November 25. The food and company were excellent, the median age lower than usual.