



# DECEMBER 2010

## ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

### ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

◆ Last year our annual business meeting was held on December 13, 2009, at Restauration Walden (Choriner Str. 35, Prenzlauer Berg). The previous year was reviewed, executive committee officers were elected for 2010, and plans were made for the coming year. The officers are: ANN WERTHEIMER (chair), PAM SELWYN (vice chair), DAVID MACBRYDE (secretary), ALAN BENSON (treasurer), JANE HARTMANN-ZEILBERGER (assistant treasurer), ISABEL COLE and ANITA MAGE (associates).

◆ DAVID MACBRYDE continues as mailing list administrator. Contact DAVID at [davidmacbryde@web.de](mailto:davidmacbryde@web.de) to make any changes in your address or to add someone to the mailing list. He is also the person to contact if you would like to announce something that you are publishing, performing or exhibiting.

◆ JON WOLFE continues as our web master: [www.avaberlin.org](http://www.avaberlin.org)

◆ KAREN AXELRAD continues to photograph, and now to film, AVA-Berlin events. And thanks to KAREN we always have an up-to-date information leaflet. Please see KAREN's links throughout this report.

◆ ANN WERTHEIMER continues as liaison to the United for Peace and Justice coalition, which we joined in 2006. As a local group with no employees, AVA-Berlin pays \$50 dues a year to UfPJ. See: [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org) for details.

◆ The dues for full membership with voting rights in AVA-Berlin are still €30 per year, or a self-assessed smaller amount if necessary. Check our web site for details.

◆ American Voices Abroad Berlin now has a Facebook page thanks to FLORIAN SCHIEDHELM, KAREN AXELRAD and ISABEL COLE. If you

have a Facebook account, please consider becoming a fan of AVA-Berlin. We'll be continuously updating our Facebook page with links to events, articles, petitions, etc. of interest to our membership. This way, while our mailing list remains low volume, you'll have the option of tapping into a broader flow of information as well. And if there's something you think people should know about, this will provide a place to share it - just post the information on our wall (or e-mail us) and if it's appropriate we will include it in our updates. We do reserve the right to remove unconstructive posts.

◆ Our Stammtisch on the first Thursday of every month continued at the Seerose, Mehringdamm 47 in Kreuzberg.

◆ AVA-Berlin has a new daughter: **Ava's Transatlantic Green Salon**. Who is Ava? Call her the figurative grande dame of the salon. Ava's Transatlantic Green Salon continues AVA-Berlin's tradition of critical yet non-dogmatic discourse. Go to the first item in OUR OWN AVA-BERLIN PROJECTS below for a description of the evening that launched the salon. See: <http://avasgreensalon.wordpress.com> for details:

Ava's Transatlantic Green Salon is an informal, Berlin-based forum on sustainability. We aim to create connections – within Berlin and on a transatlantic level – among people who are working on these issues or interested in becoming more active or informed. Many Americans are keenly interested in European approaches to sustainable living (and vice versa!), but language barriers and knowledge gaps often impede dialogue. This is where we hope to help.

Our blog covers sustainability-related articles, events and initiatives with brief summaries in German and English.

Public salon events held at various Berlin loca-

tions will offer German and American perspectives on specific sustainability issues or initiatives. We aim to reach an audience of experts and non-experts alike who are encouraged to contribute toward a lively discussion. Discussions will be documented and archived (see Salon Archive) as an ongoing resource.

To whatever extent possible – we are a volunteer, no-budget operation! – we will facilitate networking between Germans and Americans active in the sustainability field. We are eager to cooperate with initiatives in the field, whether by exchanging links, sharing information, cross-publicizing or collaborating on events. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact us!

◆ AVA-Berlin has become an official film partner of realez.tv. See [www.realez.tv/blog/ava-berlin](http://www.realez.tv/blog/ava-berlin) for details. Here is the description of AVA-Berlin on realez.tv in case you ever need to send someone a text like this:

*AVA-Berlin is a politically progressive group of U.S. Americans who live at least part of the year in Berlin. We are independent of all political parties, both in the United States and Germany. We began as an anti-Iraq-War group in 2003 and are opposed, in principle, to preventive war and the Patriot Act. AVA-Berlin has been active in issues concerning former or active members of the US armed forces and is an official member group of United for Peace and Justice.*

*Over the last few years AVA-Berlin has expanded its activities to include many other issues, in 2009, for example, public health care options. For copies of our public letters and FAQs concerning health care from our 2009 annual report, please go to our website at [www.avaberlin.org](http://www.avaberlin.org)*

*AVA-Berlin has been active in U.S. electoral politics through its voter registration work at Berlin venues. Together with DOUGLAS HILLMER we have also investigated the complexities of electronic voting. We often invite expert speakers, and in the past have hosted, among many others, STEVEN HILL, THOMAS POWERS and AMY GOODMAN.*

## LETTERS WRITTEN AND PETITIONS SIGNED BY AVA-BERLIN

◆ On March 14, CAROLYN PRESCOTT and ANN

WERTHEIMER wrote this letter to the entire mailing list:

*The health care reform bill is still alive and headed for a vote within the next week or so. Although not as far-reaching as many of us had hoped, the bill has real merit. It is expected to cover 34 million uninsured, to eliminate pre-existing condition clauses, close the gap in the Medicare drug program, and eventually control the spiraling costs of health care spending. It will also provide a basis for future changes and improvements.*

*Passing a health care bill will also affirm and strengthen the Obama administration against a powerful right-wing backlash. If health care doesn't pass, the administration is unlikely to be able to be effective in other critical areas such as environmental protection, energy policy and foreign relations, to name but a few.*

*Many Democrats are moving into the Yes column for this bill, but unfortunately many are afraid that a vote for a health care bill will damage their re-election chances. In the next few days, their offices will be virtually under siege from those who listen to Beck, Hannity, etc. If you would like to counter this onslaught with a powerful positive message, contact your Senators and Representatives and emphasize that health care reform is so important to you that you are calling them from Germany.*

◆ On April 2, AVA-Berlin joined IPPNW (Internationale Ärzte zur Verhinderung eines Atomkrieges) - Ärzte in sozialer Verantwortung, PAX CHRISTI (Internationale Katholische Friedensbewegung - Deutsche Sektion), GEW (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft), MAYORS FOR PEACE, and many other groups in signing the following "Appell an die Bundesregierung" ([www.frieden-mitmachen.de/33/fuer\\_eine\\_zukunft\\_ohne\\_atomwaffen](http://www.frieden-mitmachen.de/33/fuer_eine_zukunft_ohne_atomwaffen)).

### **Für eine Zukunft ohne Atomwaffen!**

*Mutige Schritte hin zu einer atomwaffenfreien Welt sind jetzt möglich und notwendig. Mit dem Bekenntnis des amerikanischen Präsidenten Obama in Prag zu einer Welt ohne Atomwaffen gibt es heute die einmalige Chance, die Atomwaffenstaaten auf konkrete Schritte zur atomaren Abrüstung zu verpflichten. Im fünfundsiebzigsten Jahr nach den Atombombenabwürfen auf Hiroshima und Nagasaki entspricht Obamas Abrüstungsappell den Friedenswünschen der Menschen.*

*Die deutsche Bundesregierung bekennt sich im*

*Koalitionsvertrag zur atomaren Abrüstung. Sie muss jetzt Taten folgen lassen für ein atomwaffenfreies Deutschland, für eine atomwaffenfreie Welt.*

## OUR OWN AVA-BERLIN PROJECTS

◆ **Ava's Transatlantic Green Salon**, our Berlin-American forum for dialogue on sustainability issues, was launched on October 7 with "Europe Energized?" at the Henry-Ford-Bau at the Freie Universität Berlin, a connection brought about by FLORIAN SCHIEDHELM. U.S. political writer STEVEN HILL and German Green HANS-JOSEF FELL discussed the challenges of sustainable energy policy – and politics – in the U.S. and Germany.

STEVEN HILL, Former Director of the Political Reform Program at the New America Foundation and Co-founder of FairVote, is the author of *Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics* (2003) and *10 Steps to Repair American Democracy* (2006). He is travelling Europe this fall to give the Jacquemin Seminar Lecture at the European Commission and present his latest book, *Europe's Promise: Why the European Way Is the Best Hope for an Insecure Age* (2010). According to STEVEN HILL, the cutting-edge solutions for the 21st century are arising in Europe, not the United States, though many Americans still harbor outmoded ideas about "old Europe".

HANS-JOSEF FELL is a Member of the German Bundestag and Energy Policy Speaker for the German Greens. HANS-JOSEF FELL wrote the draft *Renewable Energy Sources Act* (EEG), which was adopted in 2000 in the face of strong political opposition. He was also involved in drafting the law amending the EEG in 2004. The EEG is the foundation for the technological developments in photovoltaics, biogas, wind power and geothermal energy in Germany, which are admired throughout the world. The underlying principle of the EEG has now been copied in dozens of countries.

The discussion was moderated by MIRANDA SCHREUERS, Director of the *Environmental Policy Research Centre* (FFU) at the Freie Universität Berlin. We thank the Centre for hosting this event.

◆ On November 27, AVA-Berlin and Ava's Transatlantic Green Salon were pleased to present *Gasland*,

a documentary by JOSH FOX about fracking, a combination of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, at the One World Film Festival. (In 2009 we 'partnered' *The Most Dangerous Man in America – Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*.)

JOSH FOX's literally explosive film *Gasland* gives voice to the bitter controversy surrounding "fracking", an "unconventional" form of natural gas drilling that has swept the U.S. in recent years. Many regard natural gas as a cleaner fossil fuel and a key part of a more sustainable energy mix that can help wean us off oil. But what are the environmental costs of this "cleaner" fuel? Can regulation ensure a responsible, transparent gas industry in the U.S. and in Europe? And as *Der Spiegel* reports that fracking is being tested in Germany, is *Gasland* possible here? BENJAMIN SCHOLZ from the Initiative für nachhaltige Entwicklung e. V. discussed these and other questions following the film screening.

**On the film:** "The largest domestic natural gas drilling boom in history has swept across the United States. The Halliburton-developed drilling technology of 'fracking' or hydraulic fracturing has unlocked a 'Saudi Arabia of natural gas' just beneath us. But is fracking safe? When filmmaker Josh Fox is asked to lease his land for drilling, he embarks on a cross-country odyssey uncovering a trail of secrets, lies and contamination. A recently drilled nearby Pennsylvania town reports that residents are able to light their drinking water on fire. This is just one of the many absurd and astonishing revelations of a new country called *Gasland*. Part verite travelogue, part expose, part mystery, part bluegrass banjo meltdown, part showdown." [www.gaslandthemovie.com](http://www.gaslandthemovie.com)

## OTHER PEOPLE'S PROJECTS THAT AVA-BERLIN SUPPORTED

◆ On the eve of the Copenhagen Climate Conference, on December 5, 2009, AVA-Berlin advocated responsible environmental policy by participating in the Klimaaktionstag. The *Klima-Allianz*, which included organizations from Attac to the Auswärtiges Amt, sponsored an action at 12 noon at the Brandenburg Gate (Platz des 18. März) in which "politicians" at a negotiating table were gradually "submerged" in a giant aquarium. On the other side of the Brandenburg Gate, Greenpeace held a vigil. See KAREN AXELRAD's photos at [www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157622942121432](http://www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157622942121432)

◆ On May 9, AVA-Berlin took part in events at the newly opened Tempelhofer Feld: See DAVID MACBRYDE's lovely invitation to the event: [www.sds-international.net/Berlin-Tempelhof-Field-9May2010+Future](http://www.sds-international.net/Berlin-Tempelhof-Field-9May2010+Future)

◆ On Saturday, September 18, many AVAers joined the big anti-nuke mass demonstration. See KAREN AXELRAD's photos and video at [www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157624859291307](http://www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157624859291307) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZODNep97Ss&hd=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZODNep97Ss&hd=1).

◆ AVA-Berlin is always pleased to announce English-language events around the city, especially those at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, the American Academy at Wannsee, and the Heinrich Böll Forum in Mitte.

### OUR OTHER MODEST CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

◆ The STAMMTISCH took place on all first Thursdays (except on October 7 when Ava's Transatlantic Green Salon was launched, see above) at the Seerose at Mehringdamm 47 in Kreuzberg. (See [www.seerose-berlin.de](http://www.seerose-berlin.de) for details.) Our occasional 'themed' Stammtische (see immediately below) were very successful.

◆ At the March 4 Stammtisch, we were pleased to have JESSICA OSENBRUGGE talk to us about "Rights Violations of Indigenous Peoples at the United States/Mexico Border." JESSICA, a supporter, advocate and educator on North American indigenous rights conflicts, works with Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras/Indigenous Alliance Without Borders, based in Tucson, Arizona.

◆ At the April 1 Stammtisch, we enjoyed an informal Meet and Greet with DOUGLAS and KAREN HILLMER from Silver Spring, Maryland. Many of you remembered Doug from his talk about electronic voting and electoral fraud at Max & Moritz in 2006.

◆ On June 3, GRATIA STRYKER-HÄRTEL spoke to us about the current failings of the U.S. prison system. See photos: "Innocence Matters" [www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157621845475653](http://www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157621845475653) taken by KAREN AXELRAD, in support of TROY DAVIS, currently on death row in Georgia.

◆ While voter registration in Berlin is generally handled by the Democrats Abroad, AVA-Berlin is especially happy to help out with venues that require non-partisanship. This year, ALAN BENSON again organized AVA-Berlin's voter registration drive (as well as registration for Democrats Abroad).

◆ July 4th, and the Labor Day picnic (Sunday, September 5) were held at Tempelhof Park. AVA-Berlin joined Bridgebuilders and Democrats Abroad. See KAREN AXELRAD's photos: [www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157624300089541](http://www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157624300089541) and video of the watermelon seed spitting contest: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JA5IIUkm\\_Jw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JA5IIUkm_Jw) and DAVID MACBRYDE's photos of Labor Day: [www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157624845555871](http://www.flickr.com/photos/karenaxe/sets/72157624845555871)

◆ We have kept up our contact with BridgeBuildersBerlin via DAVID KNUTSON. BridgeBuilders was instrumental in bringing National Public Radio (NPR Berlin, UKW 104.1) to Berlin, for which we remain eternally grateful.

◆ DEMOCRATS ABROAD BERLIN is the unofficial name of the Berlin Chapter of Democrats Abroad Germany, the official section of the Democratic Party Committee Abroad in Berlin. We are happy to work with the Dems and with their local chair, NANCY GREEN, and we are happy to publicize their events.

◆ We now are officially listed (!) as a political group on the site published by the U.S. Embassy in Germany. Go to this link: [http://germany.usembassy.gov/germany/american\\_organizations.html](http://germany.usembassy.gov/germany/american_organizations.html) and scroll down to the bottom. The general heading is American Organizations in Germany and the sub-heading is "Political Organizations."

◆ We will soon also appear on the list of English-Speaking Clubs and Associations published by the U.S. Embassy. Here is the present list: [http://germany.usembassy.gov/root/pdfs/acs/berlin\\_clubsandassociations.pdf](http://germany.usembassy.gov/root/pdfs/acs/berlin_clubsandassociations.pdf) We will be included at its next release. The proviso:

*The U.S. Embassy cannot assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons, clubs or associations whose names appear on the following list. The names appear in alphabetical order; the order in which they appear has no other significance.*