



DECEMBER 2012

## ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

### ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

◆ Last year, our annual business meeting was held on December 8, 2011, at La Parrilla at Albrecht Str. 11, 10117 Berlin: [www.la-parrilla.de](http://www.la-parrilla.de). The last year was reviewed, executive committee officers were elected for 2012, 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 CAROLYN PRESCOTT (associates).

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

◆ JON WOLFE continued as our web master. Check the web site, [www.avaberlin.org](http://www.avaberlin.org) to see our new, improved layout and the more direct access. He deserves all of our thanks.

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

◆ ANN WERTHEIMER continued 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) where you can find us on the "members map of the world"!

◆ The dues for full membership with voting rights

in AVA-Berlin are €30 per year, or a self-assessed smaller amount if necessary. Check our web site for details.

◆ KAREN AXELRAD takes care of our Facebook and Twitter pages. We'll be continuously updating our Facebook page with links to events, articles, petitions, etc. of interest to our membership.

◆ NPR Berlin (UKW104.1) continues to post our first Thursday of the month Stammtisch on its web site under its Upcoming Events: [www.nprberlin.de](http://www.nprberlin.de) and then scroll down a bit to find Events.

◆ Our Stammtisch continued on the first Thursday of every month at the Seerose, Mehringdamm 47 in Kreuzberg, [www.seerose-berlin.de](http://www.seerose-berlin.de) with two diversions in April and May to the restaurant next door.

### LETTERS WRITTEN AND PETITIONS SIGNED BY AVA-BERLIN

◆ Only occasionally does an organization ask another organization to sign a letter. But in late June Public Citizen did just that and we responded immediately. We joined many groups, among them Greenpeace, the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, People for the American Way, the Sunlight Foundation and, of course, Public Citizen, in calling on Congress to pass the DISCLOSE Act (S. 2219, H.R. 4010). "Between now and November, sham, shell and phony front groups will be blasting our airwaves with smears, half-truths and outright lies. But people-powered groups are fighting back." Below is the text of the letter that AVA-Berlin signed on behalf of us all; we also made a small donation to Public Citizen.

*The undersigned organizations support S. 2219, the DISCLOSE Act of 2012, sponsored by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse.*

*The legislation would provide the public with basic information about campaign expenditures made by outside groups that are influencing federal elections and the donors financing these expenditures. The legislation would also provide timely disclosure by Super PACs and require outside groups which make campaign expenditures to take responsibility for the campaign ads they put on TV.*

*It is a cardinal rule of campaign finance laws that citizens are entitled to know the identities of the donors financing campaign expenditures to influence their votes, and the amounts they gave. This basic right to know has long been recognized by disclosure laws enacted by Congress and by Supreme Court decisions upholding the constitutionality of these laws.*

*In the Citizens United decision, the Supreme Court by an 8 to 1 vote upheld the constitutionality of disclosure requirements for outside groups making campaign expenditures. The Court stated: "The First Amendment protects political speech; and disclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way. This transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages."*

*Polls show citizens strongly support disclosure by outside spenders.*

*The DISCLOSE Act of 2012 only contains disclosure and disclaimer requirements and does not contain special exceptions for any groups. The legislation is effective, fair and constitutional and deserves the support of Senators. Congress should enact the bill and provide citizens with the information they are entitled to know about who is giving and spending money to influence their votes.*

*We urge you to vote for S. 2219 and to take all steps necessary for its enactment.*

◆ On September 5, AVA-Berlin signed the petition below asking both major party presidential

candidates to "publicly acknowledge the climate emergency and commit to hosting a summit within their first 100 days in office to formulate remedies." The petition had already been signed by Bill McKibben [350.org](http://350.org) and James Hansen, [NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies](http://NASA.GoddardInstituteforSpaceStudies), among many, many others.

We then sent the petition to the entire list so that all AVAers could sign as individuals.

### **Petition to Both Presidential Candidates to Acknowledge the Climate Emergency and Commit to Hosting a National Summit to Formulate Remedies.**

*We the undersigned, current and former elected officials and representatives from the scientific, business, finance, labor, youth, national security, conservation, racial justice, civil rights, arts, faith and other communities of the United States, declare that our nation faces an unprecedented climate emergency. All Americans must rapidly prepare for and build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate just as we reduce our contribution to its causes. We therefore petition both presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney to publicly acknowledge the climate emergency and commit to hosting a summit within their first 100 days in office to formulate remedies.*

*For many years the National Academy of Sciences has warned that the continued human-caused emission of greenhouse gases would produce more frequent and intense droughts, heat waves, precipitation, floods and other extreme weather events, rising sea levels and ocean acidification. These events would, in turn, generate far-reaching and long-term adverse impacts on our health, economy, communities, and quality-of-life. Although no single event can be attributed to climate change, this year's weather extremes and the rise in extreme weather our nation has experienced over the last decade are fully consistent with NAS projections and with the science of human-induced climate change. Rising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases are among the factors affecting our weather patterns.*

*This summer's heat waves, for example, broke thousands of temperature records. July was the hottest*

month and May–July the second warmest on record for the lower 48. Colorado experienced one of its largest wildfires in history, and other states, such as Texas and Oklahoma, have witnessed similar massive burns. Essential infrastructure has been damaged, businesses have been impacted, and people have suffered due to the loss of homes and jobs. The Gulf coast and other Southeast and East coast states now also face the threat of increasing severe hurricanes.

In addition, the momentous drought has caused extensive damage to our economy and the wellbeing of American farmers, companies, workers, their families and communities. Forecasts are that food availability and prices will be negatively impacted for at least 18 months. As a result, by the first day of August the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued drought disaster declarations for 1,600 counties in 32 states, representing more than half of all U.S. counties.

Although essential, these and the many other disaster declarations issued this year by Governors and the President address the symptoms of the problem. The real emergency remains largely unacknowledged and unabated. Average global surface temperatures have so far increased a little more than 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit since the 1880s. Climate scientists estimate that without rapid and significant emissions reductions, global temperatures are very likely to rise by as much as 3.6 degrees above pre-industrial levels or even much higher well before 2100. As the heat climbs close to or beyond that level, so do the risks of catastrophic consequences. The American people need the leadership of our nation's President to prepare for these impacts and to address their root causes.

Our great nation has the spirit, know-how, and tools required to prepare for and build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. We also have the capacity to significantly reduce our contribution to the problem. Ample research and experience shows that smart preparedness and emissions reductions will in many cases save money, create jobs, improve public health, and produce numerous other benefits. But the current level of deployment of the practices, technologies, and policies needed to accomplish these goals is woeful compared to the scale

of the challenge.

As candidates for the highest office in the land, President Obama and Republican candidate Mitt Romney have a responsibility to candidly tell the American public that human-induced climate change is happening and that it is a very serious problem that must be rapidly and meaningfully addressed. They also have a responsibility to lead our nation's efforts to respond to the crisis.

We call on both Presidential candidates to act in the best interests of this and all future generations of Americans now by publicly acknowledging the climate emergency and committing, if elected, to hosting a summit within their first 100 days in office to craft a national action plan to rapidly scale up and deploy needed solutions.

◆ On September 7, AVA-Berlin signed a long letter that was composed by SAVE for All, Strengthening America's Value and Economy for All, and addressed to Dear Representative or Senator. It came to us via Massachusetts Peace Action, who write: "Save for All is initiated by Coalition on Human Needs, a broad coalition representing human service providers and advocating for essential programs. They are an important ally of the peace movement as we build the broadest possible coalition on federal budget issues.... While the language on both military budgets and taxes could go farther, please remember that Save for All is a very broad coalition striving for maximum participation."

The letter includes an argument against sequestration, against going over the 'fiscal cliff': "Putting the most vulnerable people at risk is the wrong response to our nation's fiscal situation. Automatic cuts to domestic programs that are scheduled to take effect in January 2013 under the sequestration provisions of the Budget Control Act will inflict devastating harm."

"A balanced approach that raises revenues, promotes tax fairness, and seeks responsible Pentagon and other savings will allow us to achieve national goals of economic growth, economic security for our people, and fiscal stability. We cannot rebuild by further reducing local, state and federal govern-

ment workforces, cutting education, Head Start, employment services, housing and community development, and other vital public services. Nor can we achieve these goals by slashing SNAP/food stamps, Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act. Please stand with us to SAVE our vital services and to preserve and expand opportunities so all can share the benefits of restored prosperity.” <http://bit.ly/SignSAVE4All>

## OUR OWN AVA-BERLIN PROJECTS

◆ Although a Stammtisch is just a Stammtisch, we do, on occasion, have themes. At the January Stammtisch, we discussed the Tom Hayden Skype call of last December (2011) and the Occupy movement more generally. GRETCHEN KLOTZ prepared a handout to help us organize the discussion.

◆ At the Stammtisch on March 1, we heard Fabio Reinhardt, MdA, from the Berlin Piraten Partei, tell us about the Piraten generally and also about ACTA, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. We had a good crowd and many questions were asked. It will be interesting to see if the Piraten Partei goes beyond its positions in its areas of expertise and develops into a political party with positions on all important issues.

◆ Film night: You may have been reading in the papers about the recent indictment of former Guatemalan general and dictator Efraín Ríos Montt on genocide charges. On April 22 AVAers had the opportunity to see the documentary film that is among the evidence being used against Montt in his trial: *When the Mountains Tremble*, Pamela Yates’ 1984 documentary depicting the involvement of the US military in Guatemala in the 1980s. PAM SELWYN and GRETCHEN KLOTZ organized a screening at Gretchen’s place.

*The Guatemalan conflict, which began in 1960, six years after an American-organized coup toppled an elected president, lasted 36 years, with an estimated 200,000 people killed, more than 90 percent of them by government forces. Yates uses spot footage, interviews, video transmission, and re-enactment*

*to show the war, and she focuses especially on the narrative of Rigoberta Menchú, the somewhat controversial Mayan-rights and peace advocate who went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.*

*Thirty years after its making, “When the Mountains Tremble” remains a compelling testimony to the struggle of the largely Indian population in a conflict rooted in the Cold War. This earlier documentary was reflectively and movingly complemented by Yates’ 2011 film, “Granito, How to Nail a Dictator,” which tracks the combined efforts of human-rights advocates to bring Ríos Montt to trial. AVA-Berlin co-sponsored “Granito” in last November’s One World Film Festival.*

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

◆ On January 11, to mark the 10th anniversary of the opening of the detention camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, American Voices Abroad Berlin joined Amnesty International Berlin-Brandenburg at the Brandenburg Gate to call for an end to indefinite detention and unfair trials. See a text of ANN WERTHEIMER’s speech below and KAREN AXELRAD’s film of the speech and photos of the entire event on our website: [www.avaberlin.org](http://www.avaberlin.org).

*Heute vor zehn Jahren internierte die Bush-Regierung die ersten 20 Gefangenen in Guantánamo Bay auf Kuba. Anlässlich dieses Jahrestages sammeln sich heute tausende Amerikaner überall in den Vereinigten Staaten um erneut die Schließung des Lagers zu fordern. Sie verlangen für alle dort Gefangenen ein faires, offenes, ziviles Gerichtsverfahren.*

*Wir von American Voices Abroad – Amerikaner in Berlin – stehen zusammen mit Amnesty International an diesem 10. Jahrestag. Wir stehen vor unserer Botschaft am Pariser Platz und verlangen folgendes von unserer Regierung:*

*We call on our government:*

*– to charge and prosecute all detainees in fair and open trials, or release them to countries that*



will respect their human rights;

- to abandon military commissions and any pursuit of the death penalty;

- to bring justice to all violators of human rights
- torturers and enforcers of disappearance;

- and to respect international human rights law in all counterterrorism operations.

*Just after his inauguration 3 years ago, President Obama promised to close Guantánamo. But as of today, most of the detainees have been neither charged nor fairly tried. There have been no releases at all in the past 12 months even though the U.S. government has cleared half of the present 171 inmates for release.*

*In mid-December, President Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act, despite his own reservations about several critical provisions, including military detention without charge or trial. This act also restricts the transfers of cleared detainees from Guantánamo to foreign countries for resettlement or repatriation, making it even more difficult to close the prison camp. We expect the constitutionality of these provisions to be tested in the courts. We call on President Obama to continue to make the case for closing.*

*And, in the last few days, there have been related developments. Lengthy secret negotiations, many of them here in Germany, between the U.S. government and the Taliban have led to the opening of a Taliban political office in Qatar. In return, the United States may soon be releasing five prisoners from Guantánamo. If the Taliban and the United States agree to conduct peace negotiations, it would be the most significant political breakthrough since the start of the war. This is a critical time. President Obama: Take advantage of this moment! Start releasing the remaining prisoners in Guantánamo!*

*And, as we are beginning to read even in the mainstream press – for example, in *The New York Times on the Web*: President Obama should acknowledge the long history of the Guantánamo naval base and initiate the process of returning it to Cuba. He would be keeping his campaign promise and would begin to put the mistakes, not only of the last ten years, behind us. This recognition of our “military interventionism” would “lay the groundwork for*

*new relations with Cuba and other countries in the Western Hemisphere and around the globe.... Surely there would be no fitter way to observe today’s grim anniversary than to stand up for the principles Guantánamo has undermined for over a century.”* <http://tinyurl.com/8a9349p>

◆ At last year’s One World Berlin Film Festival, AVA-Berlin partnered *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* by Pamela Yates (USA 2010). *Granito* deals with the Guatemalan massacres of the 1980s. “Part political thriller, part memoir, Yates transports us back in time through a riveting, haunting tale of genocide and returns to the present with a cast of characters joined by destiny and the quest to bring a malevolent dictator to justice.”

At the end of June this year, we received this message from the film’s producer, Paco de Onis: “*Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* has a new ending – the dictator, General Efraín Ríos Montt, was brought up on charges of genocide in Guatemala and placed under house arrest, so his appearance in court is now in our film. Ríos Montt is the first former head of state in the Americas to be charged with genocide – an amazing moment for all victims and ‘granitos’ out in the world fighting to defend human rights and bring justice to perpetrators of mass atrocities. And we’re proud that footage from *Granito* reinforced the prosecution’s argument that Ríos Montt exerted command responsibility over the genocide.”

◆ AVA-Berlin is pleased to watch the progress of The Clearing Barrel, a GI café in Kaiserslautern, Germany, and we plan to continue our support. The grand opening of the café on March 24, 2012, was a big success, with over 60 people in attendance. “Well-wishers enjoyed good food and drink, and marveled at the large beautifully remodeled space, with couches, tables, chairs, a bar and barstools, his and hers bathrooms, and a full kitchen.”

Today, in the entire world, there are only 3 GI coffee houses: Under the Hood at Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas; Coffee Strong near Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Lakewood, Washington; and The Clearing Barrel in Kaiserslautern, the largest US military community outside the US. Kaiserslaut-

ern is home to Ramstein Air Base and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, among a constellation of U.S. bases, with 50,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel living in the area.

During the Vietnam War, GI coffee houses “played a vital role as organizing centers for US active duty military personnel and veterans” and today these 3 coffee houses “see themselves in this tradition.”

Each of the 3 coffee houses provides a safe space for US military personnel, family members, and veterans outside the bases. They provide free GI rights counseling and help with veterans’ affairs. They are part of a network that helps provide their active duty clients with legal and medical resources, and assists them in publicizing their stories when necessary.

Meike Capps-Schubert, the general manager of the Clearing Barrel GI bar and coffee house in Kaiserslautern, and a longtime volunteer with the Military Counseling Network, and Chris Capps, an Iraq veteran and war resister, and a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) for several years, traveled around Germany to gain support for The Clearing Barrel project. On July 24th, Meike was in Berlin at the Coop Anti-Kriegs Café on Rochstr. in Mitte to present her work and that of Operation Recovery, which focuses on helping GIs to obtain the proper treatment for PTSD that is often denied them by the military. She was accompanied by Adele Carpenter (San Francisco) of the Civilian Soldier Alliance, who talked about ongoing efforts in the US to support soldiers and veterans in their struggles. AVA-Berlin helped publicize the event, and several members attended. Chris and Meike and other counselors will be available to help soldiers who are seeking to be discharged from the military, facing other diffi-

culties with the military, or seeking help dealing with military trauma.

Their efforts have been supported by the Military Counseling Network, Connection, the Center on Conscience and War, the German Mennonite Peace Committee, members of IVAW and Veterans For Peace, and many other German and American friends and activists. There is a link to The Clearing Barrel [www.gicafegermany.com](http://www.gicafegermany.com) on the AVA-Berlin site.

## OUR OTHER MODEST CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

◆ In March we started our usual voter registration campaign with ALAN BENSON doing the organizing. Thank you, Alan and the other voter registrars.

◆ On Saturday, September 1, AVA-Berlin celebrated Labor Day with Democrats Abroad Berlin at the Defender Sports Field in Lichterfelde. It was the last day of the Diplomatic Softball League Season and we joined the festivities: watching the game, helping Americans to register to vote, and generally celebrating the day.

◆ We have kept up our contact with BridgeBuildersBerlin [www.bridgebuildersberlin.de](http://www.bridgebuildersberlin.de) via DAVID KNUTSON. BridgeBuilders was instrumental in bringing National Public Radio (NPR, UKW 104.1) to Berlin, for which we are all eternally grateful.

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