

AVA-BERLIN, ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

DECEMBER 2, 2021 – HIGHLIGHTS

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. Our last annual business meeting was held on December 13, 2020, via Zoom. We reviewed the past year and made plans for 2021.
2. The following Executive Committee officers were elected for 2021: ANN WERTHEIMER (chair); PAM SELWYN (vice chair); ALAN BENSON (treasurer); JANE HARTMANN (assistant treasurer); ISABEL COLE, JON WOLFE, and CAROLYN PRESCOTT (associates).
3. ANN WERTHEIMER continued as mailing list administrator and PAM SELWYN as mailing list administrator backup.
4. JON WOLFE continued as our web master.
5. CAROLYN PRESCOTT and KAREN AXELRAD posted all relevant information on our web site www.avaberlin.org.
6. 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 <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/member-groups/> and scroll down to UfPJ International Member Groups.
7. The dues for full membership with voting rights in AVA-Berlin are still €30 per year, or a self-assessed smaller amount. See www.avaberlin.org and then click on MEMBERSHIP for details. ALAN BENSON, with JANE HARTMANN as backup, kept dues records, answered questions, and wrote reminders.
8. We held our monthly Stammtische via Zoom. Thank you to JON WOLFE and DOUGLAS HILLMER for hosting.
9. The pandemic, in its 4th wave here in Berlin as I write this, prevented us from getting together in person. Many of our usual activities—joining demonstrations, most obviously—were greatly limited. But our Stammtische got a boost. Our part-timers, who spent weeks, if not months, in Berlin, and who, while they were here, come to AVA meetings and events, have now become full-timers. So we get first-hand information from friends in Massachusetts, Michigan, DC, and Maryland.

OUR AVA-BERLIN PROJECTS

On November 24, AVA sponsored the screening of *Reversing Roe* (USA 2018) as part of the One World Documentary Film Festival at the Lichtblick Kino in Prenzlauer Berg. The film, directed by Annie Sundberg & Ricki Stern and shown in the English original, examines the state of abortion and women's reproductive rights in the US. The Emmy-nominated film presents interviews with key figures from both sides of the divide. Thank you to NATALIE GRAVENOR for all her work organizing the screening. We are grateful to NATALIE and ELISA ROSI of the Lichtblick Kino for their help in arranging for AVAers who did not want to attend in person to see the film and take part in the discussion remotely. AVA paid for 15 tickets (€120) to the Lichtblick to compensate to our lack of attendance in person.

Reversing Roe shows the state of the reproductive rights debate in 2018, and is a comprehensive review of the years leading up to that point. Drawing from a wealth of historical footage, it charts the period leading up to the Roe decision—and documents the opposition that has followed ever since.

PAM SELWYN organized the discussion after the film. First Pam brought us up to date on the depressing developments since 2018, State legal decisions (for example, in Texas and Mississippi) and the conservative majority in the Supreme Court put the future of the Roe decision in question.

We then heard from Polish abortion rights activist ANA KRENZ of Dziewuchy Berlin about the situation in Poland. We subsequently donated €100 to Dziewuchy Berlin.

Finally we heard about the German abortion laws from gynaecologist BILLEE MANIGAULT (Fachärztin für Gynäkologie, Fachärztin für Allgemeinmedizin bei Internationales Frauen- und Familienzentrum Heidelberg). Billee reviewed the current situation, pointed to some progress in reforming the laws (with regard to information on gynaecologists websites). We were left with some hope that the new governing coalition may, in fact, implement a few further reforms.

LETTERS WRITTEN, PETITIONS SIGNED, AND SPEECHES GIVEN

On June 8, on behalf of AVA, Ann Wertheimer signed this open letter to Presidents Putin and Biden in advance of their June 16, 2021 summit:

Open Letter to Presidents Putin and Biden in advance of their June 16, 2021 Summit

We write to you, world leaders whom we know fully understand the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and the cataclysmic effects on humanity of a nuclear war: the possible end of civilization as we know it.

We are participants of a growing international campaign for a commitment by nuclear-armed states to a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons. We have just completed a number of successful global events, including a two-day conference preparatory to

launching this campaign, which have included over 700 participants from Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, South America, North America, and the Pacific. Arising from these events is an appeal to you to use your summit to make a mutual bilateral commitment on No First Use (NFU) as a first step to adoption of such a commitment by other nuclear weapon states and to the elimination of all nuclear weapons .

We are mindful that decades ago your predecessors declared “*A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought*”. A few years ago, Mr. Biden, you declared in an eloquent speech about the threat of nuclear war, “*If we want a world free of nuclear weapons, the United States must take the initiative to lead us there.*” Similarly, Mr. Putin, you have said “*The understanding that a third world war could be the end of civilization should restrain us from taking extreme steps on the international arena that are highly dangerous for modern civilization.*” The United Nations set the goal to eliminate nuclear weapons in its very first resolution which was adopted unanimously, and reaffirmed this in 2013 by establishing September 26th as the annual International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Now is the perfect time for you to declare a joint commitment that your nations **will not use nuclear weapons first under any circumstances**, and to make this a key step toward fulfilling the UN goal to totally eliminate nuclear weapons from the planet. We pledge to you - as legislators, former political/military leaders and representatives of multiple civil movements endorsing this goal - to mobilize civil and political support for your effort.

You should know that such a measure will be supported by most of the other 189 States Parties of the Non-Proliferation Treaty who unanimously agreed in 2010 to support ‘*policies that could prevent the use of nuclear weapons*’ and ‘*to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons*’, and will be strongly supported by the 122 nations that in 2017 approved the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We believe it is in your hearts to achieve this noble goal. We call on you to initiate this vital step at your summit and to lead us all to a planet free of nuclear weapons.

OUR OTHER MODEST CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

1. Although AVA-Berlin has no affiliation with any political party in the U.S. or in Germany, we are always happy to explore our common interests with the Berlin chapter of the Democrats Abroad, as well as with German groups like Compact, which lost its Gemeinnützigkeit in 2019.

2. AVA is always happy to announce political events around town, especially if they are in English and/or not widely publicized. Let us know if you hear of something that might interest others. And let us know about your own exhibitions, publications, and performances. Just send the information to wertheim@zedat.fu-berlin.de.

