

# German AfD parliamentarian joins weapons drill of far-right group in South Africa

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Petr Bystron, a member of the German Bundestag (parliament) from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), took part in shooting exercises of the paramilitary “Suidlanders” group during an official parliamentary trip to South Africa, according to a report published last week by the ARD policy magazine *Report Mainz*.

The Suidlanders is a right-wing extremist organization founded in 2006 by Gustav Zietsmann Müller. Müller was a member of the infamous South African National Intelligence Service (NIS) during the racist apartheid regime.

According to their own statements, the Suidlanders are preparing for a “racial war” against the predominantly black population of South Africa. Simon Roche, the organisation’s spokesman, told *Report Mainz*: “The blacks want to exterminate all the whites in the country. We believe there will be a racial war. That’s unavoidable. You can’t mix oil and water. Under the present circumstances, no civilization can be built in South Africa.”

Roche proudly showed the organisation’s weapons to *Report Mainz* journalists, claiming that his group “wanted only to defend itself, never to attack.” That is an obvious lie.

The South African police accused the Suidlanders of actively planning attacks in the run-up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. According to an entry in the German Wikipedia: “[F]arms and private property were searched... They found arsenals of explosives, ammunition and firearms and issued an arrest warrant.”

In August 2017, Roche and other Suidlanders took part in the right-wing violence in Charlottesville, Virginia that ended with the killing of 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring of at least 19 others. Following the protests, Roche and one of his colleagues

met with one of the most infamous neo-Nazis in the US, David Duke, former leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

The article by *Report Mainz* gives a sense of the openness with which influential German politicians—Bystron chairs the AfD fraction in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag—maintain contact with racist and right-wing terrorist organizations and participate in their operations. Its report cites Bystron as saying that “As a member of parliament who is responsible for foreign policy, he must meet everyone, ‘if I want to get a comprehensive picture of a country.’” For him, the Suidlanders are “an organisation of civil society in South Africa.”

The article includes the following dialogue:

*Report Mainz*: “The Suidlanders are holding warlike shooting exercises.”

Bystron: “Possibly even with German weapons. That’s nice, isn’t it? Then they are the customers of our products, just like the BMW motorcycles they ride.”

*Report Mainz*: “Were you present at the shooting training?”

Bystron: “Yes.”

*Report Mainz*: “Did you actively participate?”

Bystron: “Yes, of course. I am a hunter.”

*Report Mainz*: “Well, I hear you have no problem being in contact with the Suidlanders.”

Bystron: “No.”

As usual, the representatives of the government and the opposition have reacted to the latest revelation of right-wing extremist activities by the AfD with hypocritical horror and calls for the state to intervene.

Burkhard Lischka, the domestic policy spokesman of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), told *Report Mainz*: “To be honest, it takes my breath away. The [Suidlanders] are paramilitary apartheid warriors. This

again shows the double game of the AfD. On the one hand, they declare that AfD membership is incompatible with this type of extremist organization, and on the other hand they court these organizations worldwide.”

The Green vice president of the Bundestag, Claudia Roth, expressed herself similarly on *Spiegel Online*: “Petr Bystron makes it clear that the AfD’s inhibition threshold to open proximity and international cooperation with openly racist and violent groups is not only diminishing, it has been eliminated. It is perfectly clear: The Suidlanders are preparing to kill black people in South Africa. Whoever seeks links to such a scene—let alone joining its shooting exercises!—leaves the sphere of our Basic Law.”

The Social Democratic vice president of the Bundestag, Thomas Oppermann, wrote on Twitter: “If AfD member of parliament Bystron actually participated in the shooting training of a right-wing extremist/racist group in South Africa during a BT [Bundestag] business trip, this would be a case for the Office for the Protection of the Constitution [Verfassungsschutz]. And it should be his last such business trip.”

Obviously, the established parties are trying to cover their tracks. In fact, Bystron, who maintains contacts with the right-wing extremist identitarian movement and openly counts National Socialist politicians such as the Swiss Eric Weber among his staff, could carry out his “business trip” to South Africa only because it had been approved and paid for by the Bundestag.

The German parliament confirmed this to *Report Mainz*. The website *Spiegel Online* quotes a spokesman for the Bundestag as saying, “The president of the Bundestag [Wolfgang Schäuble] approved the individual business trip on the basis of the application.” It adds that the Foreign Affairs Committee “voted in favour of the motion.”

Bystron’s shooting exercises with the Suidlanders would not have been possible without the active support of the other Bundestag parties, all of which are represented on the Foreign Affairs Committee. Behind the scenes, the SPD in particular is working closely with the AfD.

For example, the AfD politician Stephan Brandner owes his post as chairman of the powerful Legal Affairs Committee of the Bundestag to Thomas

Oppermann, who proposed the AfD delegate for election. At Humboldt University in Berlin, the Social Democratic president, Sabine Kunst, is suing the student administration (RefRat) at the behest of the AfD and defending the radical right-wing professor Jörg Baberowski, who has been inciting his fascistic supporters to attack left-wing student meetings.

The Bystron case makes clear that it is not only in the police and the German armed forces that Neo-Nazi networks exist, but that right-wing extremist structures reach into the Bundestag and are systematically covered up and supported by the highest authorities and politicians within the state and government apparatus.

How closely the ruling class works with right-wing extremist forces to enforce its hated policies of austerity at home and militarism abroad against growing popular opposition was also on display during the recent trip to Iraq by Social Democratic Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. One member of Maas’ delegation was none other than Bystron, who can be seen in photographs standing next to the German foreign minister!

The themes of the trip could have been taken directly out of the AfD party programme. At its core is the enforcement of the economic and geo-strategic interests of German imperialism in the Middle East and measures to fend off refugees and organize their deportation back to the war zones. In Baghdad, Maas spoke out in favour of a continuation of the engagement of the Bundeswehr [German armed forces] in the region, and declared: “I believe that the security situation is such that one can say there is a basis for people to have a perspective of staying here currently and returning in the future.”



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