Photo of the Day |



Students line up for the UConn Dairy Bar truck by the student union on Oct. 13. The truck visited campus as part of its daily routine, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. PHOTO BY COLLIN LO, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Has Germany forgotten? The AfD wants them to.

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The Reichstag building's west and main entrance. The building was designed in the Neo-Renaissance style reflecting the German Empire in 1871

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A German flag waving in the wind in the sky. The flag was catching wind on a cloudy day.

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Since the end of the Second World War, Germany has devoted much effort to make amends for the horrors unleashed by the Nazi regime. From Denazification to Willy Brandt's kneel in Warsaw, German political parties have pushed to learn from the mistakes of the past — that is, until the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) appeared. The AfD wants to make the Nazis a footnote in German history.

The AfD is a far-right party. They were founded in 2013 to be a party of Euroskeptic ideas. Over the years, they have grown to have a platform of nationalism and xenophobia. Some of their stances include increasing deportations or abandoning the Euro. One of their biggest red flags is the overhaul of Erinnerungskultur (memory culture) of the Second World War. They seek to move past the "collective guilt," as they see it, of the war in favor of highlighting other historical people and events from Germany's past like the 1871 unification of Germany.

This should raise eyebrows, not just in Germany but also across the world — Hitler did the same thing. Hitler wanted schools to focus on events that would instill German patriotism in the youth. Now the AfD wants less focus on this aspect of history because it brings up the valid criticism that they want to enact the same policy. Under AfD leadership, Hitler and the Nazi era would be given a passing glance. With statements like "More Bismark, less Hitler" being tossed around, it is only a matter of time before less becomes none.

This is not a new concept to the AfD. In years past, party officials have said the Nazi era is a "speck of bird poop" and described Berlin's Holocaust memorial as "a monument of shame." They attempt to downplay World War II and the Holocaust, so people don't see they are using the same strategy to lead. They have drawn up the same nonsensical fears of foreigners and immigrants ruining the country and touted the idea that they will "save" German culture. They see history as a way to control what people remember.

History is not something to pick and choose at; it requires a critical lense and scrutiny. A "so what" attitude to historical events that highlight terrible actions carried out by one's nation is the mindset that will lead to the inability to spot the warning signs of repetition. Germany should never forget how the Nazis gained power.

The AfD is becoming stronger. It is currently the second largest party by seats in the Bundestag and the largest opposition of the current formed government. The other parties have formed a Brandmauer, firewall, against any cooperation with the AfD, but how long will that last? If the AfD passes the Christian Democratic Union in seats held, how long will that wall stand before having to court AfD MP's? How long will it hold if more German states begin to vote AfD into their state parliaments? These are the questions facing the current formed government, and they are not easy to answer. The government will need to find ways to prevent the aforementioned scenarios.

The AfD seems to be here to stay, but that doesn't mean people must listen. People can choose to open a history book and they can choose to understand the history of their nation, both good and bad. People will be the deciding factor for the AfD and let us hope the people of Germany remember to never forget. As George Santayana said, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."