



# US Press Missed Rubio's Nod to Far-Right German Movement to End Holocaust Guilt

The secretary of state didn't merely minimize Nazi crimes, he erased them

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Marco Rubio at CPAC... years before he compared Trump to a “third-world dictator” or sent a letter to Trump expressing concern over the “downward democratic trajectory” of Orbán’s Hungary. *Gage Skidmore/Flickr* ([Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en>))

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**B**efore [embracing](https://www.ms.now/rachel-maddow-show/maddowblog/rubio-praises-hungary-viktor-orban-trump-el-paso-airport) (<https://www.ms.now/rachel-maddow-show/maddowblog/rubio-praises-hungary-viktor-orban-trump-el-paso-airport>). Hungary’s authoritarian leader, Viktor Orbán, and wishing him success, Marco Rubio gave a speech at this year’s Munich security conference that was littered with White Nationalist talking points. From references to the superiority

of “Western Civilization” and the glory days of colonialism, the secretary of state’s speech to the European foreign policy crowd was hardly a surprise given the Trump administration’s 2025 National Security Strategy (<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2025/12/19/trumps-2025-national-security-strategy-is-a-clear-articulation-of-the-administrations-nativism-and-illiberalism/>). But one portion of Rubio’s ethnonationalist screed that turned heads in Germany (and elsewhere across the Atlantic) has been largely overlooked by the US media:

*“[...] We want allies who can defend themselves so that no adversary will ever be tempted to test our collective strength. This is why we do not want our allies to be shackled by guilt and shame. We want allies who are proud of their culture and of their heritage, who understand that we are heirs to the same great and noble civilization, and who, together with us, are willing and able to defend it.”*

An end to guilt—these words have a very specific and clear meaning to ears attuned to the German far-right discourse. Politicians (<https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/afd-wie-die-rechtsextreme-partei-mit-fake-geschichte-politik-macht-a-a061dd83-462f-41f9-b56e-1ea6abd69394>) of the far-right AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) have repeatedly (<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/gemutzzustand-eines-total-besiegten-volkes-5488489.html>) called for an end of what they call the “guilt cult”—by which they mean Germany’s remembrance of the Holocaust and Nazi atrocities. The phrase (<https://www.stiftung-gedenkstaetten.de/en/reflexionen/reflexionen-2021/schuld-kult--und-schuld-kolonie>) (“Schuld-kult (<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schuld-kult>)” in German), originated in the neo-Nazi (<https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afd-sprache-schuld-kult-das-steckt-hinter-dem-begriff-afd-woerterbuch-a-00000000-0003-0001-0000-000002560468>) scene of the 1980s, although the attempt (<https://www.zeit.de/2017/45/ns-zeit-ostdeutschland-volkhard-knigge-gedenkstaette-buchenwald/komplettansicht>) to downplay Nazi crimes and put a stop to their remembrance was certainly not limited to neo-Nazis. Those who use it today seek to trivialize Nazi crimes and believe that memorials only exist to oppress today’s Germans under collective guilt, which prevents them from achieving national greatness.

Rubio’s revisionist history was also noted by the memorial site of the Wannsee Conference (named for the Berlin villa where, on January 20th 1942, the Nazis (<https://www.bpb.de/themen/holocaust/erinnerungsorte/502984/haus-der-wannsee-konferenz-gedenk-und-bildungsstaette/>) coordinated “the final solution to the Jewish question”—i.e. the mass murder of Jews). On Bluesky (<https://bsky.app/profile/wannseekonferenz.bsky.social/post/3mevb6pm2d22e>), the “Haus der Wannsee Konferenz” posted that Rubio’s speech surpasses a 2018 speech by the AfD’s Alexander Gauland (<https://www.dw.com/en/afds-gauland-plays-down-nazi-era-as-a-bird-shit-in-german->

[history/a-44055213](#)) in which he declared Nazi Germany a “speck of bird poop... in over 1000 years of German history.”

Rather than merely minimizing Nazi crimes, the Wannsee account notes that: “Rubio goes further: In [Rubio’s] view, Europe is suddenly ‘in ruins’ [after WWII] and Nazism no longer plays even a minor role in his historical politics; it is completely left out.”

Indeed, in Rubio’s retelling of history, Europe lies in rubble after 1945, only to then partly fall under the tyranny of communism. No mention of how the destruction came to pass; no mention of the Nazis and their monstrous crimes. The memorial site’s account warns (<https://bsky.app/profile/wannseekonferenz.bsky.social/post/3mevb6s7qzs2e>):

*“When Rubio no longer mentions the Nazi crimes against humanity, 80 years after the Nuremberg trials, when historical injustice is now only represented by the red hammer and sickle and no longer by the swastika, then it becomes easier for him (and others) to call for the “shackles of shame and guilt” to be cast off.”*

The backdrop of Rubio’s speech is the State Department effort to connect with right-wing European think tanks about potential future funding in light of the new National Security Strategy, which the *Financial Times* (<https://www.ft.com/content/f8696da1-5fe6-4218-be9c-5309bd9a6ae5>) reported earlier this month.

That a right-wing revisionist narrative is now being echoed by the US State Department as they attempt to build a global ethno-nationalist alliance is a harbinger of what to expect in the future—not to mention an indictment of every promise that Rubio would provide a moderating influence, or be the “the adult in the room,” for this administration. He may well be an adult—but if so he’s an adult who’s more than willing to spew White Nationalist talking points and make overtures to German fascists and right-wingers who think that Holocaust remembrance has “gone too far.”

It should come as no surprise that the AfD (<https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2026-02/afd-nsdap-parteitag-erfurt-weimar>)—whose leader, Alice Weidel (<https://www.zeit.de/politik/2025-02/vance-weidel-afd-usa-sicherheitskonferenz>), JD Vance met during his visit to Munich last year—has scheduled their annual party conference for *exactly 100 years to the day* after the historical Nazi party “Reichsparteitag” in 1926.

Americans should heed the warning of Christian Stöcker (<https://bsky.app/profile/christianstoecker.de/post/3mew3vlkqlw2o>), journalist and media professor:

*“Voters who helped the @GOP to power, take note: Your government takes a leaf out of the German far right’s propaganda handbook and says: All of this “remembering the holocaust” has gone too far. Stop it. Get on with being “proud of your heritage”. That is what this means.”*

Maybe even more shocking than Rubio’s speech (because, haven’t we come to expect White Nationalist talking points from the administration at this point?) was the fact that the highest-ranking German government officials present—foreign minister Johann Wadepful (CDU), defense minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) and minister of the interior Alexander Dobrindt—were all among the first to rise at the conclusion of this poisoned warning to Europe and give the US secretary of state a standing ovation. Shame. Shame.

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