

The Madrid Forum comes to Santiago: An international organization of counterrevolution

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The fifth regional meeting of the Madrid Forum, which opens in Santiago on September 3–4, is the international organization of social counterrevolution, coordinated across national borders, in the service of the most reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie. The choice of Chile as host is, in the Forum’s own words, a statement that “the reconquest is possible.” José Antonio Kast—one of the original signatories of the Madrid Charter and now president of the republic—will deliver one of the principal addresses, with the Argentine president, Javier Milei, expected to follow.

The date was chosen because it marks the fourth anniversary of the “Rechazo” victory in Chile where an overwhelming majority of voters rejected a new draft constitution that aimed to replace the nation’s authoritarian charter. It is also a salute to the September 1973 US-backed coup d’état that installed the 17-year dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, one of the heroes of the international fascist right.

The list of confirmed panelists reveals the gathering’s true purpose. Alongside some of the most reactionary Latin American politicians—Kast; Milei; the president of Honduras’s Congress, Tomás Zambrano; the Peruvian deputy Norma Yarrow; the Ecuadorian assemblywoman Diana Jácome; the Colombian senator Enrique Gómez Martínez; and the Venezuelan Alejandro Peña Esclusa—sits the “intellectual” apparatus of American imperialism in its most aggressive current form. They have been given keynote prominence throughout the proceedings.

The Heritage Foundation’s Kevin Roberts is giving a special address. The Heritage Foundation, founded in 1973, has been the central policy institute of the American right since the presidency of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. This will be followed by a Panel titled: “The New Role of the United States in Ibero-America” addressed by Eric Farnsworth, Continental Strategy; Brandon Judd, US Ambassador to Chile; Mike González, Heritage Foundation; and Alejandro Peña Esclusa, Dissent Foundation.

The event closes with the final panel titled: “The Defense of the West: A Civilizational Alliance,” featuring Kinga Gál, MEP and vice-president of Patriots (Hungary); Hermann Tertsch, MEP and vice-president of the Patriots for Europe group; and Andrés Martínez, senior analyst for Latin America at The Heritage Foundation.

The security panel, titled “Hemispheric Security: Confronting Transnational Crime and Terrorism,” features Joshua Treviño, speechwriter for the George W. Bush administration, subsequently head of intelligence and research at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Other panelists include John P. Walters, president of the Hudson Institute, who served as director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy throughout the entire Bush administration, as well as Sarah Rogers, the right-wing US Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

This is the same constellation that gathered at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), the flagship annual gathering of the

American right, when it was held in Buenos Aires in December 2024. There, Lara Trump, the daughter-in-law of the incoming president, hailed Milei as the model for the new administration stating, “we are going to do the same thing in the United States”; Steve Bannon, the former Trump strategist, declared Argentina “the tip of the spear” of the “Judeo-Christian West.” Milei stated the function of these gatherings was to “establish channels of cooperation across the world—we could call ourselves a Right-wing International.”

These think tanks speak for the most rapacious interests of American capital who wish to effect the re-colonization of the region. As the *World Socialist Web Site* documented when the Forum was launched in 2020, the Madrid Charter was drafted after Santiago Abascal, the president of Spain’s far-right Vox party, toured the United States to meet the Heritage Foundation, the International Republican Institute and the American Conservative Union, and was built in direct coordination with Trump at the helm of the Republican Party.

The yearly gatherings of the Madrid Forum have been themed around “democracy,” “freedom,” “the rule of law”—high sounding ideals that the cockpit of reaction centered in Washington under Trump is working towards eviscerating. The Latin American cohort have never been invested in these principles; they have a record of backing the military dictatorships that ruled over the region for more than three decades. They are all actively seeking to pardon the butchers who committed heinous crimes against humanity and have all brought into their cabinets active and retired military personnel.

The Latin American right are co-conspirators in US destabilization campaigns against Cuba and Venezuela—complicit in the sanctions regimes that have gutted both economies, fueled mass emigration and produced documented shortages of food and medicine that fall heaviest on the poorest sectors of the population, regardless of the body count this entails.

An indication of their “democratic” credentials is the current case of the Argentine Fernando Cerimedo, a behind-the-scenes “advisor” to the Latin American right. Cerimedo was serving the right-wing Bolivian President Rodrigo Paz when he was arrested just over two weeks ago for the attempted murder of Bolivian lawyer and activist Nadia Beller. Following raids on multiple properties linked to him in La Paz, Bolivian prosecutors have since accused Cerimedo of illicit enrichment and protection of narco-trafficking.

It turns out that Cerimedo has the closest links to the Trump administration through his former campaign manager Brad Parscale. The criminal investigations have opened a Pandora’s box of electoral interference orchestrated by the fascist right spanning six countries including Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Honduras and Mexico. The Madrid Forum, whose Argentine operative stands accused of orchestrating

a disinformation campaign against a sitting government, habitually brands its political opponents as “criminals,” “narco-terrorists” and threats to democratic order.

How to understand the emerging fascist movement: the bourgeoisie as a learning historical subject

A fascist international is a contradiction in terms: fascism’s ideological substance is irreducibly nationalist. The nation is the supreme object of loyalty and sacrifice. Yet they feel the need to project an international unifying theory and to build international organization. They require the financial and political support of imperialism. And they need a unifying mythology that transcends the particular nation. Hence the “Iberosphere,” invoked by Abascal, or the “the West,” and the “Judeo-Christian civilization” invoked by Bannon and Milei.

This is because their true enemy is the working class, a genuinely international social force.

The most politically conscious sections of the international bourgeoisie have studied the years 1919–1933 and drawn the lesson that waiting until the crisis is acute is strategically catastrophic. The German bourgeoisie improvised under pressure and nearly lost everything. The lesson drawn from that experience is to act before the working class reaches the threshold of independent political action. The operative word is pre-emptive.

That Trump is known to have kept a book of Hitler’s speeches at his bedside is no mere biographical curiosity; it is a symptom of the ideological tools with which the most aggressive fraction of the American ruling class thinks. Nor is the pre-emptive logic confined to the domestic front. At the Nuremberg trials after WWII, at which the surviving Nazi leadership was judged by the victorious Allied powers, the supreme charge was the “crime against peace”—the planning, preparation, initiation and waging of a war of aggression.

The American chief prosecutor, Robert Jackson, called it “the supreme international crime.” In the end, American imperialism adopted that same crime as doctrine. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, launched on fabricated pretexts under the “Bush Doctrine” of preventive war proclaimed by President George W. Bush, was the formal incorporation of pre-emptive aggression into the foreign policy of the most powerful imperialist state. Three decades later world imperialism finances and arms Genocide. The same class that made pre-emptive war its strategic doctrine is now applying the same logic to its domestic class enemies: strike before the enemy is organized.

This is what the Madrid Forum and the international CPAC circuit are all about. There does not yet exist a mass fascist movement based on the ruined and enraged middle classes. In Latin America, the partial resolution of this absence lies in the paramilitary networks established through decades of counter-insurgency cooperation, the half a century of training of Latin American officers at the US Army’s School of the Americas (now Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation), the intelligence-sharing arrangements and the networks among intelligence, military and police officers across the continent. The officer corps and high command trained in the viscerally anti-communist National Security doctrines, from the 1960s to this very day, is numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

But nor are there yet workers’ councils, a mass revolutionary party, an organized working-class offensive. The working class lacks a party of its own and confronts a protracted crisis of revolutionary leadership. And yet the most aggressive section of the bourgeoisie is moving now because it can read the indicators it has created: extreme social inequality, the

collapse of living standards of the vast proportions of the population and a general socio-economic malaise that only deteriorates. Amid the universal illegitimacy of bourgeois institutions, the bourgeoisie is itself again breaking with democratic forms of rule and acting on those projections rather than waiting for socialist revolution to materialize.

What has changed since 1933: the collapse of the old organizations

The coming to power of fascism in Germany in 1933, signaling the defeat of the most powerful section of the European working class, was not, in the final analysis, a victory of not only the Nazis, but of the betrayers of the German working class over the working class itself. Germany then possessed the largest, best-organized labor movement on earth. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD) together commanded the allegiance of millions of organized workers, with their own parties, unions, newspapers and cultural institutions. That organizational weight was converted into a mechanism for the working class’s own suppression.

The SPD, as the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky showed in his writings of 1931–32, was a mass party that nonetheless held that the question of which class would rule Germany depended “not on the fighting strength of the German proletariat, not on the shock troops of fascism, not even on the personnel of the Reichswehr, but on whether the pure spirit of the Weimar Constitution... shall be installed in the presidential palace.” The SPD supported Brüning’s emergency-decrees government as the “lesser evil,” campaigned for Hindenburg’s re-election as president in 1932 on the same “lesser evil” logic, and remained passive even when Hindenburg and von Papen ousted the SPD-led government of Prussia—Germany’s largest state—by military force in July 1932. The SPD’s response to that coup was to file a constitutional complaint with the Supreme Court rather than to mobilize its millions of members. As Trotsky observed, the reformists “who have outlived their own day, work for the fascists along bureaucratic lines.”

The KPD, meanwhile, was subordinated to the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow. Pursuing the so-called “Third Period” line, imposed by the Communist International, the KPD declared the Social Democrats, not the Nazis, to be the main enemy, branding them “social fascists” and refusing the united front of the two workers’ parties that alone could have stopped Hitler. By 1933, the Comintern had become the foreign policy tool of the Kremlin, and the German disaster confirmed its transformation into a counterrevolutionary agency. Hitler was handed power on January 30, 1933, without a shot fired in organized resistance, because the organizations that could have resisted had already been converted into instruments of the working class’s demobilization.

The destruction of the revolutionary alternative was not left to chance. The physical extermination of the Bolshevik-Leninists, first and foremost in Russia during the Moscow Trials, was the condition for the political disarmament of the international working class.

These tragic experiences were echoed in Chile between 1970 and 1973, where the Communist and Socialist parties subordinated the mobilized working class to the Popular Unity government’s program of class conciliation, disarming it politically at the precise moment the bourgeoisie and the military were preparing the coup. Capitalism survived the 20th Century due to the criminal betrayals of the Second and Communist Internationals.

These political tendencies are ghosts of what they once were. The Latin American bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist, reformist and pseudo-left governments, known collectively as the Pink Tide, are purely electoral machines without mass membership or a social base in the working class.

Their anti-imperialist rhetoric, including claims by some that they were implementing “21st century socialism,” led the Latin American and international pseudo-left, Pabloite revisionism and its variant in Latin America, the Moreonites, to promote these governments as a new path to socialism.

The first wave—Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil, Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, Bolivia’s Evo Morales and Ecuador’s Rafael Correa—brought in some social reforms financed by the commodity boom driven by Chinese demand that began in the 1990s and collapsed around 2014.

The second wave—Venezuela’s Maduro, Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico (2018), Gabriel Boric in Chile (2021), Colombia’s Gustavo Petro (2021) Lula again (2022)—mired in stagnant economic conditions, dropped even the pretense of reforms and one by one deepened capitalist property relations, enriched the oligarchy, entrenched poverty, adopted the right’s law-and-order and xenophobic anti-immigrant tropes and aligned with the Biden Administration’s aggressive hemispheric posture that paved the road for Trump.

It is the betrayal of immense expectations in the working class and oppressed masses that facilitated the victory of the fascistic right, notwithstanding the electoral interference orchestrated by Cerimedo & Co. The spontaneous mass eruptions across the region—in what was part of an international resurgence of the class struggle beginning in the 2010s—produced a situation that was explosive and less predictable because of the absence of the bureaucratic buffers that previously dominated the working class. But the social movement, resting predominantly on students and youth, lacked the political perspective and leadership to convert that force into political power, which would have required an explicit orientation toward the working class and a break with the anarchist middle-class radicalism that defined the outer limits of the movements’ politics.

It was precisely into this breach that the Pink Tide inserted itself to contain the mass movement from below, channeling the accumulated rage of the streets into electoral processes and constituent assemblies. Having dissipated the revolutionary energy into parliamentary forms, the Pink Tide governments suppressed every manifestation of struggle.

The crisis of revolutionary leadership

The historical crisis of humanity reduces to the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The defeats of the twentieth century were not inflicted by the superior strength of the bourgeoisie but by the betrayals of social democracy, Stalinism and every species of reformism that channeled working-class struggle back into the service of capital. But these same forces cannot repeat their betrayals. They no longer hold the organizational and political grip on the working class they once exercised. The conditions that sustained that grip have been destroyed by the very globalization of capital they accommodated.

It is in this context that the International Committee of the Fourth International represents something historically decisive: the continuity of genuine revolutionary Marxism through the decades of defeat, betrayal and assassination. That continuity is not merely organizational, it is theoretical and programmatic, embodying the lessons of a century of class struggle that the working class does not have to relearn from scratch.

The situation is dangerous and the timeline is sharp. The fascist right is organized, internationally networked, and integrated into the state in ways it has not been since the 1930s. But the objective conditions for socialist revolution, the globalization of production, the socialization of labor, the manifest bankruptcy of every capitalist alternative, have never been more

mature. Against the fascist menace, austerity and the opening salvos of World War III, there is a socialist alternative. The task is to build it.



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