In China, Sheinbaum promises “certainty” to investors as protests bring much of Mexico to a standstill

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On Tuesday, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum told more than 1,000 business executives gathered in Shenzhen, China, for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum that Mexico offers investors “certainty” and “a long-term vision.” Presenting a $432 billion portfolio of projects under her “Plan México,” she called the recent freight railway across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec “an alternative to the Panama Canal.”

Extending Benito Juárez’s dictum that “respect for the rights of others is peace” to economics, she declared that “the development of one nation should not mean the fall or stagnation of another.”

Her promises, however, were falling apart as she was speaking.

Mexico woke up to the speech with much of the country at a standstill due to protests. Farmers blocked 25 highways in five states. In Mexico City, active and retired workers of the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) massed in front of the Senate, truckers blocked the Santa Fe business district, electrical workers marched on the headquarters of the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), Metro workers marched on the Interior Ministry (Segob) over the lack of spare parts and maintenance, UNAM students marched to the Zócalo and a new migrant caravan moved across Chiapas.

At the government’s morning press conference, Interior Secretary Rosa Icela Rodríguez called the blockades “unnecessary.”

Linked by video to that same conference, Sheinbaum confirmed she would meet Donald Trump on Wednesday. The encounter rounds out roughly 48 hours on the ground that include meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, among others.

The “certainty” she is selling rests on Mexico’s place in the world capitalist division of labor as a cheap-labor platform for US capital. That is what drew the nearshoring investment of recent years, as Washington pulled supply chains out of China to prepare for war. Her “humanist” model promised investors that the class struggle would be contained through minor concessions and left-populist talk of sovereignty and refusing to be Trump’s vassal. But this plan is falling apart in public, with the whole house of cards beginning to fold.

The summit served to announce which bloc Mexico belongs to. According to a commentary in Tuesday’s *El Financiero,* Sheinbaum decided in August to go to China because her advisers proposed “replacing the United States with that nation,” then wavered and finally went with a message for the White House: Mexico’s priority is North America. On her first day in Shenzhen she announced that Jesús Seade, ambassador to Beijing for five years, would leave for a seat on the IMF’s executive board. Washington had already vetoed Seade for the embassy in Washington as one of the government’s “China men.”

Washington wanted more. Ambassador Ron Johnson posted that the United States takes 83 percent of Mexico’s exports and China 2 percent, while China “floods the Mexican market with low-cost imports.” With Xi, Sheinbaum carefully asked for “a more balanced and diversified economic relationship” after her government imposed tariffs of up to 50 percent on goods from China, as well as other countries without a trade agreement with Mexico. Carney, by contrast, spoke ahead of Trump’s arrival of a “redefinition of the relationship” with Beijing, which his office called “strategic, pragmatic and decisive.” On November 12, Sheinbaum said of a Trump meeting, “No, not in China.” Five days later she announced a brief encounter at the APEC leaders’ dinner, as Trump threatened new tariffs unless Mexico stops a migrant caravan formed in Chiapas.

The Interoceanic Corridor’s showcase shipment in July shows whom it serves: Hyundai vehicles carried from Asia across the isthmus by rail to the US market. Mexico has bet

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$4 billion on the line, Sheinbaum announced no Chinese investment in it.

Moreover, Mexico's armed forces are being folded into Washington's war preparations. On October 28 the Senate authorized 28 members of the US Navy's SEAL Team 4 to land at La Paz, Baja California Sur, aboard a C-130 Hercules "with tactical equipment, munitions and organic weaponry." Until April 15, 2027, they will train Mexican special operations and naval intelligence marines in close-quarters combat inside buildings, urban patrolling, breaching and sniper techniques. Such training binds the Mexican military to the Pentagon, readies it for war against China and prepares it for repression in Mexico's cities.

When SpaceX boosters scattered debris along the Tamaulipas coast, Elon Musk received the same deference: the government "opted first for communication rather than a lawsuit."

Nowhere is the subordination plainer than on the southern border. Rodríguez reported Tuesday that 24 caravans have entered Mexico and "none has reached the border with the United States," because the National Migration Institute (INM) tells migrants they have no chance of crossing. "They are given the information, some so they return to their countries and the others so they can be taken in by various states where many hands are needed for work," she said. The caravans are mass protests by workers against the destruction of the right to asylum. Acting as Trump's border police, the Mexican National Guard and migration police breaks them up, and channels a section of the most desperate migrants into the Mexican economy as cheap labor.

The "social peace" Sheinbaum offers investors is being enforced through its industrial police in the form of the trade union bureaucracy. At Volkswagen Puebla, the Independent Union of Volkswagen Workers (SITIAVW) called off a strike set for October 2 and pushed through a 3.8 percent raise, below the 4.3 percent that workers had rejected by 4,327 votes to 1,598. VW has dismissed 786 workers after eliminating a shift, offering to rehire 611 in 2027 if they signed their terminations without legal claims. Another 400 were thrown out at suppliers, and the Puebla government estimates 3,000 indirect jobs could be lost. Sheinbaum boasted in Shenzhen of a 154 percent real increase in the minimum wage; in Puebla, the share of the population in labor poverty rose from 36.2 to 37.1 percent between the first and second quarters of 2026. VW, which is cutting 50,000 jobs worldwide, is making Mexican auto workers pay for an 11.5 percent fall in its US sales through July.

The IMSS workers at the Senate are fighting an 8 percent agreement that the IMSS and the National Social Security Workers Union (SNTSS) imposed without a vote and that the federal labor registry recorded on October 28. Since 2008, with the SNTSS's signature, new hires have been condemned to privatized individual AFORE (Pension Fund Administrators) accounts. The electrical workers marching on the CFE demanded respect for acquired labor rights, defense of their pensions, legal certainty and no retroactive application of the law.

The truckers, who staged a national stoppage last month over the cut to a toll tax credit and over robbery and extortion on the highways, were told on Monday that the cut affects "only 170 large companies." Last week, farmers' associations and the National Association of Transporters (ANTAC) held a joint blockade in Calera, Zacatecas. The Agricultural Confederation of Mexico (Coagromex), which led Tuesday's blockades, denounces the government's failure to honor the October 22 agreements with the Agriculture Ministry: payment of debts for previous corn and wheat harvests, guaranteed prices, crop insurance and energy subsidies.

Behind the hostility to this growing movement on the part of the self-proclaimed "left" and "pro-worker" Morena administration stand the creditors. The public deficit reached 959.6 billion pesos in the first nine months of the year, and the IMF, projecting public debt at 62.9 percent of GDP in 2027, is demanding a harsher fiscal adjustment. The growing debt, tariffs and cuts to investment are to be paid through cuts to healthcare, public education, pensions, jobs and inflation. The "certainty" promised in Shenzhen must be extracted from the workers and farmers now taking the streets and voting down sellout contracts.

Sheinbaum is due back in Mexico City before sunrise on Friday to lead the parade marking the anniversary of the 1910 uprising against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, which handed Mexico's railways, mines and oil fields to US and British capital. The Porfiriato sold foreign investors the same thing Sheinbaum offered in Shenzhen: "order and progress," meaning cheap labor held down by force.

Behind the platitudes about "sovereignty" and "welfare for all" stands a regime that serves as US imperialism's junior partner in its preparations for war with China and enforces the cheap-labor conditions and a growing assault against democratic rights on which that partnership rests.

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