

**Carlos Salinas de Gortari, *A Win/Win/Win Situation*, 1993**

**Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari delivered this speech about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) at a commencement ceremony at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The agreement had been signed by leaders of the United States, Mexico, and Canada in December 1992. Following ratification by the legislatures of the three countries, it went into force at the beginning of 1994.**

...It is a great pleasure for me to deliver this commencement speech today... Four years ago, when you entered MIT, the world was very different from the one we live in today. Few historical periods have been subject to such a profound and rapid transformation. While you were studying, the map of the world was being redrawn. And I must say that nothing compares to the implications of putting aside all boundaries, all ideologies, and to abandoning the terms with which individuals, societies, and nations define themselves... The Berlin Wall, a bastion of the Cold War era, has folded, bringing down with it the old equilibrium, and the old certainties of the world order. The Soviet Union ceased to exist as such, leaving a legacy of several republics, each struggling to discover its individual identity. And nations that got together before, due to the threat of the Cold War, today face regional conflicts.

These changes have meant the end of illusions for some, the end of anxieties, and the revival of old fears for others – uncertainty for all of us.

In the former world system, there were precise positions with respect to ideas, personalities, and even heroes. Capitalism and communism presented the basic framework for debate, for analysis, as well as for action. There were clear and opposing points of reference, planning versus the market, individual rights versus community needs, formal democracy versus social participation. Duality left no room for confusion.

But in the world of today, where the threat of global nuclear war is over, we must recognize that there are still wars to be avoided, and wars to be waged, to be strengthened. The wars to be strengthened are the wars on drugs. The wars to be avoided are the ones regionally, or the looming of trade wars.

I have to emphasize the war on drugs, because this is a threat that is materializing in all our societies. Mexico is not a drug-consuming society, but drug traffickers pass through our country, looking for other markets. That is why we are so committed to fighting drug traffickers, arresting more than 85 individuals [and] seizing more than 200 tons of pure cocaine, which is equivalent to double the value of our total external debt.

But we are fighting them because drug gangs turn violence into pain, indignation, and tragedy, as happened a few days ago, when they slayed, while fighting each other, one of our bishops, Cardinal Posadas. This is outrageous, and we are committed to punishing them, and to reversing this process affecting our country and many other countries in the world.

The problem is that for us the cost of fighting drug trafficking is as high as the profits they make in other countries. We must reduce those profits in order to abate the cost and the pain that they inflict upon our societies while we fight them. We will strengthen international cooperation. We are determined not to lose this war, because then we would be losing our new generations. This is the war that we must strengthen.

But... the war that we must avoid is the one looming on the trade front. At the end of this century, global trade, and freer trade, is the way to improve the standard of living of our populations. That is why we in

Mexico have proposed to the U.S. and to Canada a free trade agreement. That is, the free movement of goods and services among sovereign nations.

For Mexico, taking this step is a very important one. For many years, my country tried to live as far as it could from the U.S., for good historical reasons [linked] to traumatic experiences.

There was a Mexican president at the end of the last century, who used to say something that was sort of mentioned in the invocation. The Mexican president used to say, "Poor Mexico, so far from God, and so close to the United States." This reflected a historical reality. We have to change our mentalities, in order to decide to get closer to our mighty neighbor to the north. It's a new reality, and we are willing to live with it.

By the way, if you allow me to share with you what a friend of mine from Israel told me. When I told him this phrase from the Mexican president, he said, "Well, in Israel, we say the reverse. 'Poor Israel. So close to God, and so far from the United States.'"

But realities have changed – have changed in the rest of the world, have changed in my own country. That is why we are proposing the free trade agreement. The North American Free Trade Agreement is called NAFTA. I think that it was called like this by an engineer. It sounds like a gasoline.

But NAFTA, I want to emphasize, is a job creating agreement. Because by increasing competition in our three nations, and its competitive capacity, it will allow us to compete with regions which are getting together in Europe, and in the Asian Pacific countries.

NAFTA is an environment improvement agreement, because with additional resources, we will take better care of our environment. NAFTA is a wage-increasing agreement, because we are committed to increasing real wages in Mexico, more than they have increased today, when NAFTA is ratified. And NAFTA is a migration reduction agreement, because Mexicans will not have to migrate north looking for jobs in this country, but they will be able to find them in my own, which is my own main commitment.

If Mexico prospers, the U.S. and Canada will prosper. That is why this is not a win/lose solution, but a win/win/win situation for the three countries in the northern part of the American continent.

The Latin-American community is watching eagerly for NAFTA's success, because it means hope for the whole region, and for the rest of the world, increased competitiveness [which] this is good for all of us.

What does it mean to the North American region? What does it mean to an MIT student, who is graduating today? In carrying out your studies, this tremendous change in the world, in Mexico, and in Mexican-American relations, may sound far away. But the world that you will now encounter will not let you forget its relevance in your daily life. You will compete for a job dependent upon what happens in Europe, in the Asian Pacific countries, and also in Mexico.

Today, again, unique in a generation, the questions you are asking yourself after graduating are similar to the ones that the president or the head of a state is facing. What is the place for the individual, for society, and for a nation, in the new world order? What's the role of technology, and also of morals and ethics? How to balance modernization with an environmental and social responsibility?

You may allow a foreign experience, perhaps that of Mexico, to fuel your thoughts. We have not solved every problem. On the contrary, we are facing new ones. But our experience of change may shed some light on your own enormous capacity of transformation...

Carlos Salinas de Gortari, "MIT Commencement Address, 1993," *The Tech* (June 23, 1993).