

B. CONTEXT AND CIRCUMSTANCE

B.1 Renewed concern

"The good scenario is that we will soon face a challenge much more severe than the peso crisis...[the] bad scenario is that 'no true crisis will emerge.'" Antonio Alonso Concheiro to Robert D. Kaplan. (Kaplan, "History...", p. 22)

The mid-term mark in the Zedillo *sexenio* - punctuated by congressional and, most notably, the path-breaking election of a governor for the Federal District - has been noted in a spate of articles and reviews of the state of Mexico's union and implications for the United States, if not Canada. Robert D. Kaplan in "History moving north" (The Atlantic Monthly, February, 1997) describes state failure, the emergence of three Mexicos and the cathartic need for crisis to free Mexico and move it ahead. Denise Dresser "Mexico: Uneasy, Uncertain, Unpredictable" (Current History, February, 1997) looks at Mexico in the wake of "economic meltdown", the "schizophrenic and often contradictory" record of President Zedillo, the renewed appearance of militarized opposition groups and the need to confront the brutal disparities which divide Mexicans with more inclusive economic reforms and inclusive political modernization. Elizabeth Palmer, "Trouble in Paradise" in Canadian Living (Toronto, March, 1997) uses Acapulco and the state of Guerrero as a window on corruption, poverty, violence and civil conflict. A number of authors contribute to a wide-ranging review "Contesting Mexico" (NACLA: Report on the Americas, Jan/Feb, 1997), examines the effect of Mexico's ceding economic and political power to forces outside Mexico, the crisis in legitimacy of the PRI, and the development of social and political forces for change beyond the immediate reach of the current party/state system. Two recently published specific studies should also be mentioned. Heather L. Williams, Planting Trouble: The Barzon Debtors Movement in Mexico, (San Diego, 1996) surveys the mercurial growth and force of the movement of producers against the banking system, usury and debt. Andrew Reding, World Policy Journal, New York, Fall, 1996 examines the populism of Vicente Fox' PAN administration in Guanajuato indicating the potential it may have for more open government in Mexico. The significant changes in Mexico's authoritarian regime have been reviewed by a wide variety of authors among them Wayne A. Cornelius, Mexican Politics in Transition: The Breakdown of a One-Party-Dominant Regime. Monograph Series No. 41, (San Diego, 1996), and Judith Teichman, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Mexican Authoritarianism", CERLAC Working Paper Series Number 6 (York University, 1996). Finally there are those who are attempting to keep up with the emerging scope of the detritus of the Salinas years. Although it is preliminary and not equal to the flood of arcane detail and titillating accusation currently occupying front pages in Mexico, a starting place is Alma Guillermoprieto's "Murder, Mexico and the Salinas Brothers" in The New York Review of Books (October 3, 1996). The arguments were taken forward dramatically in Neill Docherty's excellent Fifth Estate (CBC/PBS, April, 1997) of the story of Raoul Salinas and his Presidential brother.

What is common about most, if not all, of these works is that the nature of the authoritarian state/party system in Mexico is in transformation and crisis; that neoliberal economic reforms while contributing to that crisis have also radically exasperated social and economic polarities in Mexico; that the state/party apparatus has been undermined by its own corruption, not least in