

Party loyalty has definitely come under the most strain. The first major crack in the PRI came in 1987 when Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, both high ranking members, split from the party together with numerous followers in order to form a left-leaning electoral coalition against the PRI's presidential candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. While Salinas managed to reimpose order and improve morale in the party during most of his term of office, open and highly publicized dissent began anew after the nomination of his successor, Luis Donaldo Colosio, on November 28, 1993. Whereas past losers in the presidential nomination process bravely bore their defeat and disappointment in self-imposed silence, Manuel Camacho made little attempt to veil his discontent. Camacho's loyalists reputedly worked behind the scenes to discredit Colosio. After Colosio's death in March 1994, tension continued between Camacho and the new presidential candidate Ernesto Zedillo, leading shortly thereafter to Camacho's dismissal as chief peace negotiator in Chiapas. Camacho would eventually resign his membership in the PRI on October 13, 1995. It is widely believed that he will form his own political party and run for president in the year 2000.

The murders of Luis Donaldo Colosio and party secretary-general José Francisco Ruiz Massieu during 1994 were symptomatic of internal strife within the PRI. The country had not witnessed such high level assassinations since the 1930s. After Ruiz Massieu's death, his brother Mario openly accused party president Ignacio Pichardo and secretary-general María de los Angeles Moreno of complicity in the murder.

Finally, recently there was an unprecedented display of public criticism by Mexican parliamentarians of their government. On January 12, 1996, a group of 255 legislators of the PRI allegedly sent a letter to their party president, Santiago Oñate, attacking the government's free market policies and lack of "sensitivity" to the plight of the poor. The incident made front-page headlines in the Mexican press.²³

There are increasing popular demands for an end to **high level impunity**. In a poll conducted by the pro-democracy organization *Alianza Cívica* on February 26, 1995, over 96 percent of those surveyed were in favour of making Salinas stand trial for his role in the peso crisis and for alleged corruption. The prosecution of an ex-president would be a clear sign of a definitive break with past traditions. However, it could also be a possible double-edged sword. While a fair trial or judicial inquiry might reinforce the rule of law in Mexico, it could also lead to even further political destabilization.

²³See Linda Diebel, "Trouble Brewing for Mexican Leader: Insider Rebellion May Spell End of Ruling Party's 67-year Reign," *The Toronto Star*, 23 January 1996.