

4-21-1999

## President Ernesto Zedillo Announces Minor Cabinet Shuffle

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex>

---

### Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "President Ernesto Zedillo Announces Minor Cabinet Shuffle." (1999). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/4067>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## **President Ernesto Zedillo Announces Minor Cabinet Shuffle**

*by LADB Staff*

*Category/Department: Mexico*

*Published: 1999-04-21*

In a minor Cabinet shakeup, President Ernesto Zedillo appointed former president of the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) Mariano Palacios Alcocer as the new labor secretary. Palacios in effect exchanged places with Jose Antonio Gonzalez Fernandez, who left his post as head of the Secretaria del Trabajo y Prevision Social (STPS) to run for president of the PRI.

Gonzalez was elected unanimously as PRI president, after his only challenger, Rodolfo Echeverria, withdrew his candidacy. Echeverria, a former member of the Chamber of Deputies, was drafted by the reform faction of the PRI to ensure that the election would not be uncontested (see SourceMex, 1999-03-24). However, Echeverria later abandoned the effort, charging that the PRI had rigged the election to ensure a victory for Gonzalez Fernandez.

Some members of opposition parties questioned Palacios' appointment to the Cabinet post, pointing to his lack of experience in labor relations. In a second Cabinet appointment, Zedillo named former Chiapas governor Eduardo Robledo Rincon as agrarian reform secretary. Robledo replaced Arturo Warman who took a post as assistant to Social Development Secretary Esteban Moctezuma.

Surprisingly, the appointment of Robledo met very little opposition from the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD). Robledo won a disputed election in November 1994, closely beating PRD challenger Amado Avendano. The PRI candidate was accused of committing massive fraud and electoral irregularities to win the seat (see SourceMex, 1994-11-16). Only five of the 17 Cabinet secretaries appointed by Zedillo at the start of his term remain in office. The group includes Trade Secretary Herminio Blanco and Environment Secretary Julia Carabias.

### ***Interior secretary to seek presidential nomination***

In other events related to the governing party, Interior Secretary Francisco Labastida Ochoa came a step closer to declaring his intention to seek the PRI's presidential nomination for the 2000 election. Labastida, who in recent months remained noncommittal about his presidential ambitions, told reporters he will seek the presidency. "That question doesn't even have to be asked," he said. "I admit it without doubt."

The PRI leadership, under the direction of new president Gonzalez, has drafted a proposal to select its candidate during a party convention. Under the plan, the party would hold elections for convention delegates at 6,600 precincts around the country. The delegates would then select the party's candidate. Under these guidelines, all Cabinet secretaries, governors, and other elected officials who wish to seek the nomination would have to resign by the first week of July. This directive would apply to Labastida, Tabasco Gov. Roberto Madrazo, and two other potential candidates, Interior Secretary Esteban Moctezuma and Veracruz Gov. Miguel Aleman Velasco. But many rank-and-file PRI members are not happy with the proposal. The members, which include

some governors and state legislators, are pushing for the party to allow all registered PRI members to elect the nominee in a secret ballot.

Labastida, considered by some the candidate favored by President Zedillo, is the front-runner in a contest with three other declared candidates: former Puebla governor Manuel Bartlett Diaz, Tabasco Gov. Madrazo Pintado, and former PRI president Humberto Roque Villanueva. However, Labastida may face a tough race against Aleman Velasco, son of former president Miguel Aleman Valdes (1946- 1952).

Although Aleman has not officially declared his candidacy, the weekly news magazine Proceso reported that he has taken two key steps that could be construed as preparations to seek the PRI nomination. During April, Aleman formed a special advisory committee of 60 prominent politicians. The committee was not given any specific purpose. The second sign, said Proceso, was the Aleman family decision to sell its shares in television network Televisa.

In late April, the governor's supporters announced their intention to promote Aleman's candidacy. The effort is led by Fidel Herrera Beltran, deputy coordinator for the PRI delegation in the Chamber of Deputies. "The party requires a candidate who will guarantee victory," Herrera said. Aleman's backers suggest their candidate has wide support within the PRI and could be the one candidate who could unite the various factions of an increasingly fractured party.

### *PRD's Cardenas also confirms presidential candidacy*

The speculation also ended in the PRD in April, when Mexico City Mayor Cuauhtemoc Cardenas officially announced his intention to seek the party's presidential nomination. In late April, Cardenas said he was preparing to resign the post he won in 1997 as soon as the PRD begins its formal process to select a presidential candidate. This would be the third presidential race for Cardenas, son of former president Lazaro Cardenas (1934-1940).

Cardenas will compete for the nomination with influential Deputy Porfirio Munoz Ledo, who was once led the PRD delegation in the Chamber of Deputies. Public opinion polls taken earlier this year suggested that Cardenas was the overwhelming favorite to win the nomination. But his image has been tainted by revelations that he held a secret meeting with then president Carlos Salinas de Gortari to end his challenge of the 1988 election results. Salinas is widely believed to have used massive fraud to win the election.

Some prominent PRD members, including Sens. Layda Sansores, Rosa Albina Garavito, and Cristobal Arias Solis, said they were angry with Cardenas for not revealing his meeting with Salinas. Cardenas has also been embroiled in a very public dispute with Munoz Ledo regarding party policy, which has caused major divisions within the party and may have contributed to the breakdown of the internal elections to select the new party leader in March.

But Proceso said the rift in the PRD runs far beyond the Cardenas and Munoz Ledo factions, with the internal elections providing an opportunity for a variety of party members to attempt to gain the upper hand. The PRD nullified the results of the internal elections following revelations of

widespread fraud conducted by supporters of the two front-runners, Sen. Amalia Garcia and former party secretary Jesus Ortega, who had run a tight race (see SourceMex, 1999-03-24).

The complaint of irregularities included allegations of ballot-stuffing, bribing voters, and eliminating legitimate PRD members from voter rolls. "The gravity of these actions has filled us with indignation and embarrassment," Garcia told reporters. In an interview with Proceso, outgoing party president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador acknowledged the botched election shows many PRD politicians have clearly failed to divest themselves of practices they learned while they were members of the PRI. "The PRD cannot automatically divorce itself from a culture that permeated our national political life for 70 years," Lopez Obrador said.

Meanwhile, party leaders convinced PRD legislative leader Pablo Gomez to take the post on an interim basis, after outgoing president Lopez Obrador declined to extend his tenure for a few months. The PRD is expected to hold new leadership elections at the end of May, although the exact date has not been announced. (Sources: The Dallas Morning News, 04/03/99; Reuters, 03/30/99, 04/09/99; Spanish news service EFE, 04/10/99; Proceso, 04/04/99, 04/11/99; Excelsior, 03/26/99, 04/02/99, 04/07-09/99, 04/16/99; Associated Press, 04/17/99, 04/18/99; La Jornada, 03/26/99, 04/07/99, 04/20/99; Novedades, 04/02/99, 04/07/99, 04/09/99, 04/20/99; El Universal, 04/02/99, 04/09/99, 04/16/99, 04/19/99, 04/20/99; El Economista, 04/07/99, 04/20/99)

-- End --