

Brazil's Cabinet Reshuffle Is Just Politics, Explains Minister

Contributed by Juliana Andrade
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Minister Nilmário Miranda, of Brazil's Special Secretariat of Human Rights, affirmed today that the Ministerial reform that President Luiz Inácio Lula is concocting and will announce soon is necessary for the President to guarantee political backing in the Chamber and the Senate.

"From the beginning, President Lula has had this perspective, that he was elected with 53 million votes but that his party - the PT (Workers' Party) - failed to obtain majorities in the Chamber and the Senate and, therefore, has to form a broad coalition."

Miranda said that he doesn't know which members of the Ministerial team will be replaced, but he stressed that, in light of the Administration's success, the changes will not be sweeping.

"The President is satisfied with the government's performance, including that of the Ministers he is substituting," he said.

According to Miranda, President Lula is making some changes, solely for political reasons.

In January 2004, during another cabinet reshuffling, the vice-leader of the government in the Chamber of Deputies, Sigmaringa Seixas, regretted the departure of the Minister of Education, Cristovam Buarque.

"I would have liked him to have had more time to demonstrate his proposal for Brazilian education," he said.

On the other hand, the vice-leader regarded the attempt by the PT (Workers' Party) of the Federal District to obtain compensations for the loss it suffered as political "provincialism."

Nevertheless, Seixas approved the party's attitude of demanding greater direct participation by the party in the government to help President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The departure of Buarque and three of the Ministers from Rio de Janeiro - Miro Teixeira (Communications), Benedita da Silva (Assistance and Social Promotion), and Roberto Amaral (Science and Technology) in January 2004 produced a series of criticisms by legislators from the two states.

The president of the party in Brasília, Wilmar Lacerda, criticized the way in which Buarque was dismissed. In the PT-DF's interpretation, the departure of the ex-Minister and the accession of Eunício Oliveira strengthen Federal District's Governor Joaquim Roriz, who is affiliated with the PMDB.

In Rio de Janeiro, Senator Roberto Saturnino demanded economic and political compensations for the state in return for its losses.

"The time has come for the population of the state of Rio to remind the President that the state needs economic compensations, since it has effectively been the victim of discrimination in the last decades, and it was also in Rio that the President received the highest percentage of votes in the country," the senator said.

House Representative Miro Teixeira, considered feeble the assessment that his state emerged weaker as a result of the Cabinet reform. "I think that nobody can feel weakened. Government policies are what is important," he said. The Administration is endeavoring to get the ex-Minister to join the ranks of the PT in the state of Rio.

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