

Interview with Mexican Committee of 68 member

“Students were the main targets of the dirty war”

31 October 2005

Alejandro Alvarez is a Mexican economist and a member of the Committee of 68. As a student he participated in the peaceful student protest of June 10, 1971 which was attacked by paramilitary thugs, leaving scores dead. He spoke to Rafael Azul of the World Socialist Web Site about the committee's work and the campaign to unmask the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

RA: Describe the work of the Committee of 68.

AA: The Committee of 68 fights in the courts to move these cases along, taking advantage of the openings provided by the appointment of a special prosecutor. The special prosecutor has been hampered by the absence of enough investigators. It is responsive, but does not take initiatives. We have conducted our own investigations and passed the results on to the special prosecutor's office. We find that the main obstacle to bringing the perpetrators to justice is the courts, which have taken a very partisan position. The courts accepted the very narrow definition of what constitutes genocide that was offered by Echeverría's lawyers.

This is to be expected since the Supreme Court is still largely dominated by judges appointed by former president Zedillo of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and tend to rule in the interest of that party. This raises the need for a reform of the judiciary.

RA: What was the dirty war in Mexico?

AA: The dirty war lasted approximately from 1968 to 1981. On October 2, 1968 between 350 and 400 students were shot and killed. On June 10, 1971, 36 were killed, many more were wounded. The committee's position is that both events were part of a policy of genocide against the students. Students were the main targets of the dirty war, together with the

Party of the Poor. In the decade that followed the massacres, scores, perhaps hundreds of students were abducted and disappeared. They are still missing and are presumed dead.

RA: What was the United States' involvement in Mexico's dirty war?

AA: In 1975 former CIA agent Philip Agee revealed that Echeverría had been a CIA asset during the period of the dirty war. There is no doubt that the US government, through the CIA, was intimately involved in the operations against the students and against rural guerrilla forces. Among the information that has been uncovered is that many of those involved in the repression had been trained in the United States.

RA: In 2000 President Vicente Fox promised a full investigation into the massacres and the dirty war. He also appointed a special prosecutor. In your opinion what has been accomplished?

AA: There were never sufficient resources mobilized to carry out an investigation. The Fox government dubbed itself the government of change and promised greater transparency and an end to human rights abuses. It raised greater expectations than what was actually accomplished. When it comes to human rights, though the dirty war is over, Amnesty International recently reported that torture is still practiced in Mexico. When the Supreme Court in July declared against the charge of genocide, Fox quietly accepted its decision. In our opinion, the decision not to charge those involved in the dirty war with genocide has nothing to do with the facts of the case; it is based on current political considerations in a changed international context.

RA: What is the international context of this whitewash?

AA: The Fox government is colluding with US

security agencies. At the same time that it turns its back on international treaties and agreements on genocide and human rights, it wants to enforce security arrangements with the US that violate the Mexican constitution. When Fox met with Bush in Waco, Texas in March of this year he agreed to a scheme called *México Seguro* [Secure Mexico], which is just another way of trampling on human rights using organized crime and drug trafficking as an excuse for police-military occupations and repression. Some of those in the army that now lead these operations also participated in the dirty war. The army is being shielded from responsibility for the massacres and repression of the 1960s and 1970s in part because of its current role. The argument currently in vogue is that the armed forces are blameless for the killings and disappearances because they were following orders from elected officials.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact