

France's Cheminade assaulted by goon

by Our Paris Bureau

Jacques Cheminade, president of the Solidarity and Progress association in France, and a longtime associate of Lyndon LaRouche, was attacked on Nov. 13 and suffered a double fracture of the nose. The incident took place just as Cheminade was about to deliver a speech on solutions to the present economic crisis, before about 50 students at the Institute for Political Studies in Grenoble.

Cheminade was the official guest of the school, where he had been invited by a student supporter. Before the speaker had said a word, the attacker came up to him, and after asking politely if he were Jacques Cheminade, punched him in the nose. He was later arrested, and told the prosecutor that Cheminade was a "fascist," and would not be allowed to speak on the campus.

The attacker is a member of the student bureau of the university. He has the reputation of being unbalanced, and is not known to belong to any political group. However, Cheminade's scheduled appearance had provoked a debate within the student bureau as to whether he should be allowed to speak; they ultimately decided that he should. Cheminade will have to undergo surgery and rest for 10 days.

Political persecution

This attack on Cheminade comes as no surprise; he is still under heavy attack for having dared to run in the 1995 Presidential race. The French Treasury has seized all his bank accounts, and is attempting to seize all his personal belongings, to cover for the 1 million francs advanced to him by the state, as to all candidates during the Presidential race (somewhat comparable to the U.S. system of matching funds, provided to qualified Presidential candidates). Normally the state would have reimbursed all of Cheminade's campaign expenses, including that million, but, in an unprecedented decision, the Constitutional Council, which oversees the financing of Presidential campaigns, refused to do so. As a result, Cheminade, who has no personal fortune, is personally in debt not only to the state, but also to numerous campaign contributors who lent up to 4 million francs to his campaign effort, and who expected to be reimbursed by the government.

Negotiations are currently taking place before a judge,



Jacques Cheminade (right), during his Presidential campaign last year.

between Cheminade's lawyers and those of the Treasury. The tone of those negotiations is one of total arrogance of power on the part of the Treasury lawyers, who are threatening to seize Cheminade's few belongings, including 500 books. They are also threatening to confiscate the belongings of his girlfriend, including her violin. "We will force him to spit out the million," they threatened, using the language of the mafia. When his lawyer argued that Cheminade, as an author, needs his books, the judge scornfully said, "You say he has produced works? Does he knit?" This is a play on the French word *ouvrage*, which can mean "books," as well as "embroidery and knitting." Concerning Miss Mojon's violin, Cheminade's lawyer had to produce her musical degree from the Aubervilliers Conservatory, to prove that her violin did indeed belong to her. They also laughed at the idea that the Aubervilliers Conservatory—in a working class suburb—could produce "real" musicians.

The massive harassment of the former candidate is taking place in the context of a nearly total media blackout. Only *L'Express* has so far reported that the Treasury has started the procedure to seize all of Cheminade's paltry belongings.