

Report from Paris by Katherine Kanter and Sophie Tanapura

A fight for nuclear energy

Trade unions and business associations are rallying to defend the West's most advanced nuclear program.

After a first short period of hesitation, Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy's Socialist government decided to use the opportunity of the holiday period to announce the dismantling of a big part of the French nuclear program, a program that was considered to be among the best in the world. In the first half of this year, the French nuclear industry has already achieved production of a third of the country's electricity and, since the program's start, has added one new reactor to the electrical grid every two months.

Lacking fossil fuel resources and having already maximally utilized its hydroelectric capacities, France is able to attain partial energy independence only through this nuclear program; opinion polls indicate that 70 percent of the population endorses it, and of the four large parties, only the Socialist Party is opposed to nuclear energy. Now, with the Socialist sweep in the National Assembly, they fully control French policy.

Immediately after Prime Minister Mauroy's cabinet decision to "freeze" the construction of 18 nuclear reactors distributed over six different sites and totaling a power of 23.5 gigawatts-electric, a strong movement of resistance to this sabotage arose, despite Europe's August vacation period.

Among the first to react strongly against the Mauroy decision was the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT),

trade union in the country; it is close to the Communist Party, which in turn is represented in the Socialist cabinet. The CGT is very pro-industrial, and, its cabinet ties notwithstanding, immediately reacted with demonstrations, sit-ins, and other actions—including the world's first pronuclear strike, at the huge Thionville steel center near Cattenom. The Communist Party itself, in the past a strong supporter of nuclear power, is now in a shaky situation, wavering between its obligation to "cabinet solidarity," and its traditional defense of industry and labor. This issue may, in fact, one day break up the alliance of Communists and Socialists. Meanwhile, the strongly anti-communist Force Ouvrière labor federation, which is linked to the Socialist Party, has joined the CGT's demonstrations.

Another wave of protests has come from the Giscardians and the Gaullists. It was somehow surprising to see Robert Galley, former Cooperation minister under Giscard, and René Monory, former finance minister, participating in demonstrations with trade unions such as the CGT.

We ought to give special attention to the case of the Cattenom nuclear complex. On this site, two of the planned 1,300-megawatt-electric reactors are near completion and unaffected by the cabinet decision. However, the other two reactors await the start of their civil

engineering phase in September.

Cattenom is located in the heavy-industry Lorraine region, which has been severely struck by the steel and iron crises and by successive "restructuring" plans, the latest being the steel rationalization program of Count Davignon. For Lorraine, the Cattenom nuclear complex represents the only hope for economic recovery.

In addition to a CGT-sponsored demonstration to defend the complex, there has been created a Committee for Cattenom, initiated by the European Labor Party, the Movement of Young Giscardians, and the French chapter of the Fusion Energy Foundation.

The Committee for Cattenom has gathered the support of important political figures in the area, including Cattenom's Gaullist mayor, Alphonse Bohler; Henri Ferretti, former deputy of the area where the nuclear complex is being built; and Dr. Denis Jacquat, the head of the Giscardian Party in the Moselle *département*.

The committee has also begun to draw international support. The New York-based Fusion Energy Foundation in the United States is circulating a telegram of support; and European Labor Parties in West Germany, Italy, and Sweden claim the committee's defense of nuclear energy as crucial to the protection of industrial growth.

The Committee for Cattenom plans regional tours, complete with a nine-foot scale model of the complex, to educate the population and build for large-scale pronuclear defense actions. The committee, we are told, will also prepare to coordinate campaigns with other pronuclear forces where nuclear energy is being threatened.