

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Gorbachov opens a new flank

Controversy over France's Cattenom nuclear power plant aggravates French-German relations.

West Germany's most important ally, after the United States, is France. Whatever Bonn's position in Western Europe has become, is owed to the support the French have given to the Germans since World War II. It is, therefore, evident that once the Kremlin starts serious efforts to decouple West Germany from the United States, it has to target French-German relations as well.

And so, there have been increasing tensions between France and Germany, the main issue of controversy being the nuclear project at Cattenom. At least since the bloody Pentecost (May 17-20) riots at Wackersdorf, the Green Party's eye has also been on the French project Cattenom, lying in the Lorraine region close to the French-German border. During the mobilization for a June 15 rally against Cattenom, radical ecologists from Germany, Luxembourg, and from the Lorraine region in France collaborated "across the border."

As was reported shortly before June 15, French security authorities were concerned about a repetition of the Wackersdorf riots, and were extremely angry at the refusal of Oskar Lafontaine's Saarland state government in West Germany to cooperate with the French police. Lafontaine didn't want to impose controls at the Saar-Lorraine borders, and even authorized his environmental affairs minister, Jo Leinen, to attend the anti-Cattenom rally near the nuclear facility as the official representative of the Saar government.

Lafontaine himself addressed a rally in Saarbrücken on June 15, where he said, "Fear is a good adviser. Only fear can make survival possible."

It was then that he announced his intention to sue the French government at the European Court in Strasbourg. Lafontaine also declared a ban on all electricity imports from France through the Saarland, as long as the French wouldn't guarantee that the electricity came from non-nuclear power stations in France. Governor Johannes Rau, chancellor candidate of the Social Democrats for the January 1987 elections, assisted Lafontaine in the neighboring West German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, by making a deal with his own REW (Rheinische Elektrizitäts-Werke) not to take electricity from France, either, for the time being.

An important signal was the joint press conference of Lafontaine and Rau in Saarbrücken, on Aug. 18, where they announced the SPD's intention to turn Germany non-nuclear. It was also announced that an SPD government in Bonn would not permit energy imports from nuclear industries in France. Lafontaine and Jo Leinen stated: No electricity from Cattenom.

Lafontaine introduced a Franco-phobic tinge into the campaign, when he used the formulation, "Cattenom is not in the interest of the Saar population."

In the meantime, the anti-nuclear movement in Germany has begun to use the name "Kattenhofen," instead

of Cattenom. Kattenhofen was the name of the city when it was German (under the Kaiser and under Hitler).

As in West Germany, the main propaganda line nurtured by the Soviets, that "Germany equals Nazism" is to be put into the minds of the pro-nuclear French, while the Germans will be made to believe that the "French are insensitive to nuclear fears" and are "dangerous."

It is this latter profile which the Sept. 1 cover story of *Der Spiegel*, one of the prime mouthpieces of the radical ecologist movement in West Germany, has started to create. *Spiegel* wrote: "The essence of the French and the German character is that they are two completely different worlds."

Spiegel went on to draw the following profile of the French: 1) they are neurotically pro-nuclear; 2) they are arrogant; and 3) they build nuclear power stations to compete with German coal power stations in the border region in the supply of cheap electricity to German industries.

But the French are not as neurotic as the Greens, at least when it comes to environmentalism. There is also a relatively clear perception in France that ecologism is a transmission belt for Soviet subversion of industry in the West. The French, seeing the West German example, know that with radical ecologism, extremism and terrorism come along as well. French media have clearly identified Lafontaine as central to the creation of tensions between France and West Germany.

It seems, though, that neither France's President Mitterrand, nor West Germany's Chancellor Kohl take notice of the growing "anti-nuclear" problem at their common border. During their latest summit in Heidelberg on Aug. 26, the two resolved: "The public opinion in our countries has to be better informed."