

## Report from Paris by Katherine Kanter and Sophie Tanapura

### Mitterrand's nuclear Waterloo

*France's citizens are not prepared to quietly watch the destruction of their greatest industrial achievement.*

**T**he anti-nuclear power Mitterrand government has discovered it has a wolf by the ears. The Committee for Cattenom, formed to defend nuclear plant construction in the Lorraine industrial region, held a conference on Oct. 8 to announce its decision to campaign nationally for nuclear construction.

More than 250 business, labor, and area citizens assembled in the city of Metz, the largest town in the vicinity of the Cattenom nuclear reactor, to hear presentations from a veritable "who's who" of regional political leaders.

Jacques Cheminade, President of the Committee and General Secretary of the European Labor Party (POE), warned against any tendency for the group to rest on its laurels or accept any compromises with the environmentalists. The pro-nuclear lobby-in-making, he said, must be an alliance of productive workers and industrialists that will treat the environmentalists as the recruitment ground for terrorism. One committee member, Jean-Marie Rausch, a Senator and the Mayor of Metz, told the crowd they must fight for the Lorraine region to once again become "France's Texas."

Other distinguished members of the Committee for Cattenom who shared the podium with Cheminade and Rausch were Alphonse Boehler, Mayor of Cattenom; Dr. Denis Jacquat, head of the Giscardian Republican Party for the region; and Dr. Schwartz, head of the re-

gional General Council and a leading member in the Gaullist party.

The Lorraine region, which shares a border with West Germany along the Rhine River, has been the industrial belt of France. The Committee for Cattenom, whose three founders were the POE, the French section of the Fusion Energy Foundation, and the regional branch of the Young Giscardians, was formed to fight not only for the preservation of the nuclear plant, but also against the de-industrialization that would accompany its demise.

The Cattenom nuclear energy plant, originally to be made up of four reactors, would be the centerpiece of such an economic development program for the region. Soon after Mitterrand's election, the government announced a freeze on the construction of all four reactors, but quick action on the part of the Committee and others brought about a first concession: Reactors 1 and 2, for which ground had already been broken, were allowed to continue, the government said, but the fate of Reactors 3 and 4 was to remain undecided.

Since July, when the decision was made, demonstrations and meetings of local residents and workers have taken place non-stop, including several strikes—probably the first ones recorded in favor of nuclear energy. The day the conference was held, hundreds of members of the Communist labor union, the CGT, blocked traffic on local

highways in their continued protest.

The Socialist government presented its energy program to the National Assembly the second week in October, calling for a large cut in the 1982-83 nuclear plan which originally scheduled 8 reactors of 1,300 megawatts and one of 900 Mw to be started. The government plan calls for a reduction by 3,900 MW, enough energy at present levels of consumption for 4 million people.

The government plan met with stiff resistance in the National Assembly, even from within Socialist party ranks, where some argued for the original program established by Giscard.

To put a lid on the fight, the Prime Minister turned the vote on energy program into a vote of confidence, thereby forcing the entire body of the Socialists—which holds single party majority in the National Assembly—into line. Giscard's political coalition voted against the plan, while the Gaullist Party (RPR), in a sign of the backroom deals of its leader Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, abstained.

Yet, fearing the worst from the opposition, the government also conceded that the five nuclear plants it had frozen in July, including Cattenom 3 and 4, should be allowed to proceed, provided they are fully approved by the local authorities in each prospective site. The fate of Cattenom is now relatively secure. The Committee's decision to expand nationally means there is now a rallying point for the resistance. First endorsements for the national committee include Senator Chauty of the Gaullist party, who heads the French Society for Nuclear Energy.