

The Three Gorges Dam Project is proceeding according to its schedule. Some, including Dai Qing, believe that the recent changes in the current Communist party leadership possibly could bring the dam project to a halt, or at least slow its progress. She understands that there is widespread opposition to the project in China which the current leadership suppresses.

The Clinton Administration, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the World Bank and the U.S. Import-Export Bank are withholding support for the project. The lending institutions are denying loans to the Chinese government and guarantees to U.S. suppliers and contractors due to unresolved environmental and resettlement problems. However, two major U.S. equipment makers — Rotec Industries, Inc., of Elmhurst, Illinois, and C.S. Johnson Co. of Champaign, Illinois — have secured major contracts. In November 1996, Rotec Industries signed a new \$30.5 million contract to provide concrete delivery equipment, following an earlier \$15 million contract. A year earlier, C.S. Johnson Co. provided a \$2.5 million concrete batch plant. Allen Seeland, President of C.S. Johnson Co., says his company is looking for backing from Japanese banks to bid on four more batch plants at Three Gorges. The C.S. Johnson batch plant now at Three Gorges can produce 360 cubic meters per hour with 6-inch aggregate. "It's probably the biggest plant ever built," says Seeland. Other U.S. construction equipment manufacturers backed off after the U.S. Export-Import Bank rejected the project in 1996. Meanwhile, according to the *Engineering News Record*, firms from Canada, France, Germany, Russia and Japan are showing considerable interest in supplying generating equipment for the record 17,680-megawatt power plant.

China expects to spend about \$3 billion on the international market for generation, transmission, transformer and construction equipment. The lure of these large sums will bring international firms to China's Three Gorges, even while the construction proceeds and the debate continues.

As part of the worldwide debate on big dams, the World Bank called for a meeting of all parties interested in big dams on April 10-11, 1997, in Gland, Switzerland. According to *The Economist*, dambuilders, financiers, conservationists and anti-dam activists attended to try to reach a consensus on whether large dams should still be built and if construction should be continued, how dams should be built. One topic was how to estimate accurately the environmental and social costs of a dam project. Participants agreed that an international commission should be established to set dam-planning and dam-building standards, that everyone affected by a dam project should be involved in the planning process and the dam should benefit everyone, that a dam option should be compared against other alternatives and that all costs should be accounted for before a dam project is undertaken.