

Opposition to the underground Stuttgart 21 (S21) station and high-speed projects

By "Stuttgart ist überall" Committee

We are against the underground station in Stuttgart:

- because it is an unnecessary large project and damaging to the City of Stuttgart,
- because they say it is necessary for the high-speed Stuttgart – Budapest link,
- because it is being built notwithstanding the fact that the local population doesn't want it,
- because it is being imposed using every means, even brutal violence.

Stuttgart is in the valley of a branch of the Neckar and is the second most important European city for mineral water. The park near the castle is several square kilometres and the green lung of the city. The "terminus" station was built at the beginning of the 20th century. It is the most punctual in all of Germany, it offers travellers long and short connections, is suitable for the population and has no architectural barriers. We want to modernize this station not demolish it.

The large area occupied by the station in the city centre began attracting the attention of urban planners, real estate agencies, construction impresarios, banks and what normally follows, in 1994. The project for the new underground station presented by the State, Region and Municipality would use the existing atrium transforming it into a shopping centre, however, it designed the station under the original one as well as beneath the park and castle. A large number of the century-old trees in the park will be cut down. The station will no longer have 17 lines with 9 platforms but 8 lines and 4 narrow and dangerously inclined platforms. The disadvantages are clear: many commuters and disabled people will opt for their car.

During the construction, for 15-20 years, the city centre will become a construction site full of exhaust fumes, ground water will have to be pumped elsewhere, the pressure of the water tables will be modified with a high risk that the mineral water will be lost. To do this, many laws will be suspended or broken.

The financial contract between the State, Region and federal railway determined an upper limit of 4.5 billion euros, but experts on the "NO" side calculate a cost of 8.2 billion euros. One might ask: why should such a quantity of public money be wasted and how can we establish another political approach?

The resistance was born in 1995. Since November 2009, every week there is a Monday protest in front of the station, evening information sessions, cultural protest activities of all kinds and the "*Schwabenstreich*" (a comedy of the Swabians, like the *cacerolazo*, translator's note.) organized by the protesters of the S21 who from that moment have livened up Stuttgart and the entire region. This summer, a permanent protest site has been set up in the park with its ancient trees, organized by the "protectors of the park".

The local police force has been reinforced by units from outside the city. An insidious campaign of intimidation of individuals has begun, a criminalization with accusations and trials that are incredible for how they violate the right to gather as well as the limits to the freedom to form an opinion.

On September 30, 2010, police used water, pepper spray and billy clubs for hours against 1,000 students and citizens. Approximately 400 people were injured, one person lost their vision. More than 100,000 people participated in the protest.

In November 2010, a mediation session (*requested by both the protestors with high hopes and the government and railway company, translator's note*) got a great deal of coverage in the media. It involved Mr. Geissler (the CDU, Christian Democratic Union of the regional government at the time, translator's note) who was able to reduce the ample indignation of the populace. The new red-green alliance regional government party is divided on the project and is promising a referendum. Given the expectations with the new Regional Government and the feasibility study (*which should demonstrate that the project is feasible in terms of cost-benefits, translator's note*) resistance has been further reduced. In the meantime, the media has launched an offensive campaign against the opponents of the S21.

In June 2011, hundreds of Monday protestors destroyed part of the fence around the construction site and of the water pumping equipment. An infiltrator-police officer armed and dressed in civilian clothes was discovered and beaten. These facts were used by some of the media and politicians that supported the project to start a major vilification campaign against the struggle, which raised a broad debate about "violence" and "legal" or "legitimate" resistance.

Our resistance is decisive and incessant and we are starting to realize that we will need a lot of endurance.

We are hoping to get some help by comparing different experiences of struggle, solidarity and through the discussions on fundamental themes, from this Forum in Susa Valley.