

Call for support in the struggle against Stuttgart 21 – please circulate widely

Dear Friends,

we, activists against “Stuttgart 21 (S21)” in Germany are asking for your solidarity and support in our struggle to stop Europe's “largest infrastructure-project”, to protect our city and to achieve true democracy.

Two days ago, Thursday September 30th, the escalation began: a massive police force - using water-cannons, pepper spray and batons - pushed aside over 10.000 peaceful protesters, who were trying to protect their park and its trees with acts of civil disobedience, simply refusing to get out of the way. The demonstration of state-power was shocking. Over 300 protesters were injured, some seriously, many of them school-children, who had been participating in a students protest-march officially scheduled for that day a long time in advance. In the night the shredders moved in and began turning the beautiful old trees into sawdust in front of thousands of shocked but, strong and peaceful demonstrators. Yesterday, 100.000 demonstrated peacefully against this act of state violence – the largest protest against S21 ever.

Below we give some background-information on the project. But it is important to consider that this struggle is not just about a railway station in a German provincial-capital. It is about overcoming the arrogance of those in power, it is about peoples voices being heard, it is about real democracy. And it will not only affect people in Stuttgart or in Germany: if we stop Europe's “largest project” in the centre of one of its most conservative and economically powerful corners, we can change Europe from the bottom up!

Please sign on the letter below (and attached) – asking for an end of police-violence, a moratorium and to let the citizens of Stuttgart decide – and send your signatures to johanneslauterbach@gmx.net and carol.bergin@gmx.net by Saturday 9th October.

We will deliver the letter with the list of signatories to the local, regional and federal government.

Please, also send messages of solidarity and support to the activists – we will try to publish these and read them at the rallies

In solidarity
Johannes Lauterbach and Carol Bergin
Colibri e.V.

Background:

The Stuttgart 21 project is advertised as part of the “Magistrale for Europe”, a high-speed railway line from Paris/France to Bratislava/Slovakia. As such, it is part of the neoliberal EU agenda, which places infrastructure in the service of corporate interests above the interests of local communities. It involves the building of an entirely new railway station in the centre of Stuttgart, which will be built deep underground as a drive-through station to replace the 19th century terminus. To achieve this

- a large section of the city's central park with hundreds of beautiful old trees will be destroyed
- one of the best working railway stations in Germany, with easy one-level access to all trains, will be turned into a narrow tunnel, threatening to become a bottle neck due to limitations in size of the tunnel and forcing passengers to climb up and down long stairways
- parts of the railway building – a national heritage – are being dismantled: this destruction has already started and roused the anger of tens of thousands of citizens
- the tunnel is posing a potential threat to precious mineral-water sources, which are located a few miles downhill

- a series of tunnels will be built into sensitive geological formations, threatening the stability of Stuttgart's hillside, and likely going to produce massive additional costs

Estimates calculate the resulting gain in travel time at 1-2 minutes. But then, this project offers huge real-estate deals and billion-Euro-contracts for tunnel-building companies – which we now know to have close ties to decision-makers.

While billions of Euros (estimated costs officially are 4.1 billion, critical sources estimate rather 10 billion) are lavished on this prestige-project, urgent improvements in the local and regional railway system – needed to help remove traffic from the roads to reduce fuel-consumption and carbon-emissions – are being neglected in the name of speeding up long distance-travel by a few minutes.

From the early planning stages in the nineties, this project was opposed by a growing citizens movement. A faked citizens-participation was offered, in which the one issue not to be discussed was, if the project should be built at all, or if there were any alternatives. Demands for a referendum – backed by over 60.000 signatures (more than 10% of Stuttgart's population) – were denied by those in power. Opinion polls show, that 54% of citizens are against the project (with only 35% in favour). There were massive demonstrations, growing in numbers every week. A new movement emerged: the “park-protectors” – who prepared themselves for non-violent action with over 2.000 people having pledged to chain themselves to the trees when the chainsaws move in. But building permissions were pushed through and this summer the machines started to attack the old railway building.

The authorities however, underestimated the peoples willingness to resist. Immediately mass rallies with ten thousands of protesters took place in addition to acts of peaceful civil disobedience, blocking the streets for hours. Since July, people are guarding the park and the building site around the clock, providing early warning. And an amazing new culture has emerged in the centre of the city, with people holding meetings in the park, sharing food and talk, joining in art-performances and strangers having conversations in the public buses. With the state now using massive police force against its own citizens this struggle has reached a new dimension.

article in English about S21:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/rail-plan-could-be-terminal-for-merkels-coalition-2047321.html>

further info (in German only):

www.kopfbahnhof-21.de

videos from protest:

blockades and police-action 30.09.10:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=c17clyO3S4Q&feature=youtube_gdata_player

killing trees 01.10.10 early morning: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goXwtSKJNqU>

Demonstration 01.10.2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZgogP5jCCY>