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THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Crowds Fault Police Actions in Stuttgart

By [MICHAEL SLACKMAN](#)

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Photo: Michael Dalder/Reuters

The police fired water cannons last week at thousands of protesters who tried to block the felling of trees in a Stuttgart park.

BERLIN — Tens of thousands of protesters flooded the streets of Stuttgart in southwestern Germany on Friday chanting “Shame on you,” one day after the

police used pepper spray, water cannons and tear gas to disperse crowds that had gathered to save centuries-old trees from being cut down, German news agencies reported.

A confrontation between the police and protesters on Thursday that left about 130 demonstrators injured was the most heated flare-up in a months-old dispute between the government and local residents who oppose plans to build a modern transportation hub, called Stuttgart 21, that will eventually be linked to Europe's [high-speed rail](#) system.

Newspapers across the country on Friday were filled with pictures of German police officers in riot gear and bloodied and wounded demonstrators, young and old. The incident, already a major [political embarrassment to Chancellor Angela Merkel](#), has persuaded the opposition Green Party to call for national protests.

A party leader, Cem Ozdemir, said in a television interview Friday that "these methods aren't the way we do things in Germany, and we don't want them."

Mrs. Merkel has called for calm, while her party, the Christian Democratic Union, has shown it is determined to move ahead with the project regardless of how many people take to the streets of a city best known as the home of Mercedes-Benz and Porsche.

"I would hope that demonstrations like these would pass off peacefully," Mrs. Merkel told the public broadcaster SWR on Friday. "This must always be tried, and anything that leads to violence must be avoided."

The city, state and federal governments, along with Deutsche Bahn, the German rail agency, are determined to move ahead with a [plan that has been in the works for about 15 years](#), will cost billions of dollars and take about a decade to complete.

It requires knocking down two wings of the city's 100-year-old train station, one of the few buildings to survive heavy bombing during World War II, and cutting down about 300 trees, some centuries old.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

### **Correction: October 12, 2010**

Because of an editing error, an article on Oct. 2 about a violent confrontation in Stuttgart, Germany, between police officers and demonstrators protesting the demolition of centuries-old trees where a rail transportation project is to be built

misstated the name of Chancellor Angela Merkel's political party, which has vowed to move ahead with the project. It is the Christian Democratic Union, not the Christian Democrat Party.

**A version of this article appeared in print on October 2, 2010, on page A6 of the New York edition.**

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## **Germany Halts Demolition of Train Station**

By [MICHAEL SLACKMAN](#)

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**BERLIN — Hoping to cool down what has become a growing political problem and national embarrassment for Germany's top leadership, officials said on Tuesday they would not cut down any more trees or demolish the remaining wing of a century-old train station, at least for now.**

Though the remarks by officials did not represent a moratorium on construction of a new high-speed transit hub in the city of Stuttgart, it did mark the first time officials inched away from an aggressive insistence that construction move ahead on the [Stuttgart 21](#) project, said leaders of the opposition movement in the German state of Baden-Württemberg.

Last week the police fired water cannons and pepper spray at thousands of protesters who tried to block the felling of about 25 trees, some centuries old. The next day tens of [thousands of demonstrators took to the streets](#) chanting, "Shame on you."

“This is the first offer by the project makers in order to cool down the situation,” said Gangolf Stocker, a speaker and organizer of a grass-roots movement that has sought to block construction of the multibillion-dollar project.

However, he said he did not believe the leadership’s statement that it would stop cutting down trees, and he called for protests to continue as long as the government does not agree to freeze the project and carry out talks.

“I don’t see a chance for direct talks with the project makers as long as there is no real moratorium,” he said.

[In the planning for nearly 15 years](#), the Stuttgart 21 project calls for knocking down two wings of a century-old train station and replacing above-ground tracks with miles of tunnel that will allow Stuttgart to link into a [high-speed rail](#) system. The project, which will take about a decade to complete, requires cutting down nearly 300 trees in a popular park just behind the station.

Opposition to the project has been steadily growing since demolition work started in the summer, with tens of thousands of residents of the conservative, wealthy area turning out for regular weekly demonstrations. But the local conflict became a [national crisis last week for Chancellor Angela Merkel](#), who supports the project, when images of injured protesters were printed and broadcast around the nation. Polls suggest that the issue could cause Mrs. Merkel’s party, the Christian Democratic Union, to lose control of the state in elections in March.

On Tuesday, [police officials insisted they had acted with restraint](#), showing video of demonstrators throwing chestnuts and plastic bottles at officers dressed in riot gear.

“We carried away demonstrators as long as possible, but later it became necessary to use water cannons and also occasionally some pepper spray,” Stuttgart’s police superintendent, Siegfried Stumpf, said in remarks broadcast on national television.

Tanja Gönner, Baden-Württemberg’s state environment minister, told German television that no more trees would be cut down and that the remaining wing of the historic station would not be removed, for now.

“We have to come back from the emotional to a sober level,” she said. “This is my objective as a representative of the state government.”

On Monday, more than 25,000 demonstrators filled the streets.

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