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High-Profile Solidarity Seeks to Save Val di Susa

New protests and meetings are being organized to stop construction of a new railway in Turin, Italy

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Hundreds of protesters, including civic leaders, in Turin, Italy are trying to halt the construction of a high-speed train that will connect the city with Lyon, France.

Opponents say the railway will ruin the Alpine landscape and pollute the surrounding environment with asbestos.



▲Symbol of the "NO TAV" Movement
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What started as a local issue for Val di Susa residents has become a national issue. The train would pass through the mountain where amianthus (a kind of asbestos) and other dangerous substances will be released in the construction process.

Val di Susa already has a railway and a highway, but with their own set of problems. Instead of improving the existing structures, the government wants to build another tunnel.

From northern Italy, where the government wants build the railway, to southern Messina, where politicians prefer bridges, the song is always the same: new structures and old problems in a country that will never grow up.

After months of protests, in which citizens from all over Italy participated, another meeting against the railway, also known as TAV, is in the works. Several Italian artists will take part, including Marco Paolini, a playwright, Dario Fo and Franca Rame, two of the nation's most respected authors and theater actors of the Italian cultural landscape, and also Beppe Grillo, the great satirist.

After some protests over the last few weeks turned violent, local residents and city officials fear more bloody incidences between police and dissenters.

The protest will be controlled by police and Carabinieri forces who should avoid any kind of problem. The rally walk leaves from Porta Susa station toward suburbs, in order to avoid passing through the center of the village.

Civic leaders are against the protest because they prefer negotiating the matter with the authorities.

"All the mayors kept an initial position against the protest but in favor of the meeting," said Sergio Chiamparino, mayor of Val di Susa. "I hope the atmosphere will be quiet."

The temperature should be between -3°C and 6°C, challenging local and foreign citizens planning to attend.

Why Oppose the Railway?

The citizens of Val di Susa region are fighting against the construction of the new railways connecting Turin to the French city of Lyon for three reasons in particular.

The structure is 52-km long, and it would be one of the longest in Europe. For this reason, the builders must dig through the mountains where there is amianthus and other harmful substances. This could cause severe health problems for local residents.

The landscape of Val di Susa will be completely transformed. This area already has a highway, the Mont Blanc tunnel, two national roads and a railway line. Another tunnel will be useless and intrusive.

The last point concerns the economic aspect. The government will spend 21 billion euros

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to build the high-speed rail line, but with an inferior sum of money and less impact on the environment, the existing railway could be improved and still embrace the demand for transportation to France.

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