

Transaqua Author Greets Lake Chad Basin Committee

Nov. 18—*This message from Dr. Vichi was read to the first meeting of the International Scientific Advisory Committee of the Lake Chad Basin Committee, N'Djamena, Nov. 17-18.*¹

Please accept a warm greeting by someone who, for more than 30 years, has worked to promote Transaqua among African countries concerned with a development proposal: “An Idea for the Sahel.” I was commissioned by the CEO of Bonifica [the engineering firm of the IRI-Italstat Group] to check out the feasibility for the construction of a new “artificial Nile” able to transfer some cubic kilometers of water from the Congo River Basin (at that time it was called Zaire) to the Chad Basin, rescuing the Lake from almost certainly drying out.

The first cartographic analysis and hydraulic studies

1. See Marcello Vichi “Transferring Water from the Congo to Lake Chad: The Transaqua Project,” *EIR*, July 22, 2011.

confirmed the hypothesis that it would be possible to intercept about 100 million km³ of water from the high basins of the north-eastern feeders of the Congo River, to pour into Lake Chad, through the construction of an approximately 2,400-km-long canal, without using any power, except the force of gravity.

The group of experts was convinced that the “take-off” of the African continent could never take place by limiting interventions to many small projects, politically important, but almost exclusively for subsistence-producers.

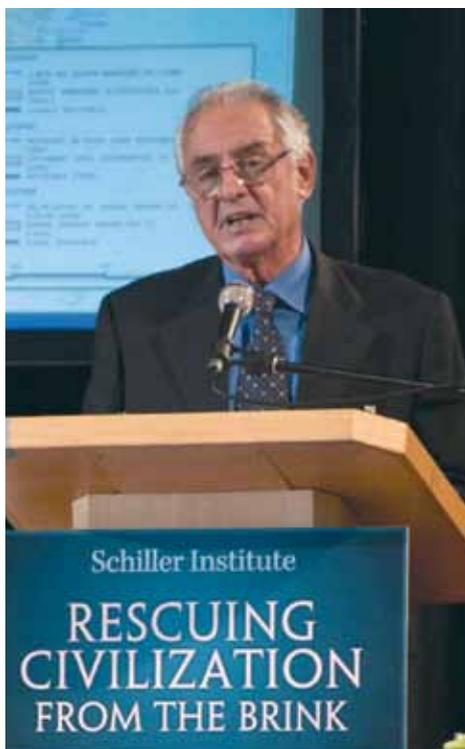
By withdrawing 100 million km³ of water from the circa 1,500 million km³, which, on average, the Congo River pours annually into the Atlantic Ocean, we believe we would also be compensating for a “natural injustice” which, in the face of one of the greatest wastes of freshwater in the world, condemned one part of Sahel to a progressive and increasing drought.

Finally, we thought that the creation of more than 2,000 km of south-north waterway in the heart of the continent, the creation of an industrial “pivot” in the Central African Republic, and a possible east-west, “coast-to-coast” motorway connection between the ocean ports of Lagos and Mombasa, together with a major production of hydroelectric power for local use, were all elements worth at least being considered.

This did not occur.

Why? Because African countries themselves did not fully believe in the “idea,” and did not attempt to obtain from international agencies the necessary financial support to verify the technical-economic, social-political, and environmental feasibility of the initiative. It was not a matter of endorsing the project *a priori*, but just to determine its feasibility.

Even though the feasibility study was never done—and its cost, using modern means, would be reasonable—the project has been viewed as a megalomaniac, pharaonic, utopian initiative.



EIRNS/Julien Lemaître
Dr. Marcello Vichi, shown here addressing a Schiller Institute conference in 2011.

Dear participants, do not allow your initiative to become yet another lost opportunity. Play the “utopia card,” because “utopian” projects—the Suez Canal was in its time no less “utopian” than Transaqua—are today indispensable for the continent, if equatorial Africa wants to really free itself from the burden of endemic indigence, and does not want to lose the race for global development which other continents have long since initiated. Some come to buy your resources, those resources that you have not been able to exploit to your advantage. Allow yourself one moment of megalomania! Do it in the interest of your children and your grandchildren.

What To Do?

I believe that unfortunately—but also luckily—finances move the world. Large multinationals

are always ready to “cooperate” when they smell fat profits. One of the ways to go would be, if I may make a suggestion, the creation of an Ad Hoc Consortium among sovereign states, concerned with examining the idea of Transaqua (Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, C.A.R., and whoever else wants to join), and address as a partner a Consortium of Multinational Companies (European, Chinese, Indian, American, Japanese, etc.), among the best known in the world for the construction of large projects in Africa.

The two consortia, joined in a sort of mixed African-foreign multinational company, could bring together the economic resources to promote a feasibility study, and eventually, in case of positive results, a series of preliminary projects, then executive projects, and ultimately a schedule for the execution of works. It would be fundamental that the “founding partners” of the mixed company clearly share among themselves tasks and responsibilities, mutually ensuring the future activities of execution and management for at least the next twenty years.

I am aware that the approach is neither simple, nor easy, but neither are the problems of the continent. In my view, it is worth trying.