

Zepp-LaRouche, Geraci, Bocchetto Marking Progress for All of Mankind

by *EIR* Staff

March 17—A landmark conference took place in Milan on March 13, organized by MoviSol, the LaRouche movement in Italy, and the Lombardy regional administration. The main speakers were Helga Zepp-LaRouche, chairwoman of the Schiller Institute, known in China as the “Silk Road Lady,” and Prof. Michele Geraci, Undersecretary in the Development Ministry and author of the new China policy of the Italian government.

The event drew political and media attention as it occurred in the midst of a heated debate on the highly anticipated visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping on March 22-23, and an international political and media campaign against Italy’s intention to sign an MOU for collaboration between the two countries in the Belt and Road Initiative, whose prime mover has been the very same Prof. Geraci.

Michele Geraci

Thus, at the onset of the conference, moderator Claudio Celani asked Prof. Geraci to explain the Belt and Road Initiative; what advantages it presents for Italy, including for the less-developed areas of the *Mezzogiorno*; and also to address the issue harped on by the anti-China faction, i.e., the demand for a “screening mechanism” for Chinese investment in Europe.

Geraci responded to the criticism of many, including the attacks of international media such as the *Financial Times*, Reuters, *Handelsblatt*, and others, over the fact that a G7 country is, for the first time, officially joining the Belt and Road initiative. “One of the criticisms against us is that Italy is the first G7 coun-



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Michele Geraci (left), Undersecretary in the Italian Development Ministry, addresses the conference.

try. These critics also raise the so-called debt trap. These two things are of course contradictory. Because we are a G7 country and not a low-income country, the debt trap risk is very limited.” With a 1.7 trillion-euro GDP, talking about possible investments of 5 to 10 billion euro creating a debt trap is ridiculous, Geraci said.

With the signing of the MOU with China, “nothing will change in our international alliances,” Geraci said. The MOU is an agreement to promote exports and investments by Italian companies in the framework of the Belt and Road.

We are trying to develop Southern Italy by better exploiting ... a geographical situation that so far has produced disadvantages for us and turn it into an advantage. Africa has created more problems than opportunities for us and we want to turn the glove inside out with the collaboration of China—and also of Japan with whom we



MoviSol/Flavio Tabanelli

Left to right: Massimo Kolbe Massaron, Claudio Celani, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, and Liliana Gorini.

have spoken—two large Asian powers that have major investments in Africa.

Geraci reminded the audience that China is the power that has invested most in Africa:

It is the first time, maybe in the history of Africa, that the interest of the investor—in this case China, which of course has its commercial interests—coincide with the interest of targeted countries, which for the first time can start to have a sustainable social and economic development.

Southern Italy, in the center of the Mediterranean region, “is the ideal place for a Chinese or Japanese investor who wants to approach Africa and needs backup from a system within the European Union” that is a mere forty-minute flight from Africa. Italy’s Mezzogiorno, Sicily, and all the rest, can be used as a hub “and therefore provide transport, infrastructure, but also research, centers of technological development and energy,” he added.

As to other critics who say Italy is going to “sell out its ports” to China, Geraci said Italy is not selling anything. What will happen is that the Chinese will build some docks in ports in which they are interested, and therefore will add something that was not there.

And by the way, let us not forget that the Chinese already own 15% of European port capacity, he said. They own 35% of Rotterdam. In the Mediterranean region, China has ownership interest in ports in Egypt

(Said), Israel (Haifa), Marseille, Valencia, Bilbao, and Piraeus.

On the China 2025 Manufacturing plan, an issue raised by some journalists in the audience, it is true that it will be a “tsunami,” because there are many areas that compete with Italy, but, Geraci said, there is a saying: “When the wind blows, some build walls, and some build windmills.” “I prefer to build windmills,” he said, so that when the wind blows, “it will turn my blades, generate energy, and cooperate instead of blocking.”

Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Helga Zepp-LaRouche spoke right after Geraci. She was introduced by moderator Celani as the “New Silk Road Lady,” known as such by many Chinese because of her pioneering activity in the last three decades to promote her husband Lyndon LaRouche’s grand design for Eurasian infrastructure, which later became the Belt and Road Initiative of Xi Jinping.

None other than former Italian finance minister Giulio Tremonti publicly reminded us, in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* the day before, that the New



MoviSol/Flavio Tabanelli

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and President of the Schiller Institute, addresses the conference.



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Pietro Saccò, journalist with *Avvenire* raises a question.

Silk Road was originally promoted by “the American visionary Lyndon LaRouche.” However, Tremonti has seemed to distance himself these days from those ideas, whereas in 2007, at a public event in Rome with LaRouche, he had much more positive words for LaRouche’s Eurasian Land-Bridge project.

Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche emphasized that Italy is under attack for the Belt and Road MOU “because this Italian move will make the New Paradigm possible.” This is the New Paradigm that is so feared by the British and the neocons in the United States. It is, however, the only alternative to a new financial blowout and the only alternative to a policy of confrontation towards Russia and China, “which could lead to war.”

So, she continued, while in the West there is a lot of fake news on the BRI, “if you ask the leaders of the countries which joined the BRI in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, those leaders will tell you that for the first time they have the opportunity to overcome poverty and unemployment, and that China is their friend.”

Zepp-LaRouche emphasized the positive economic and cultural aspects of the New Silk Road, including investments in European ports—the Maritime Silk Road—but also “a dialogue of cultures,” which has been emphasized by President Xi Jinping on all his trips—for example, he spoke of the Renaissance in Italy, or when he was in Germany the classics, quoting Heine and emphasizing the aesthetical education of the population and “the beauty of the mind.”

As to the accusation that “China will divide Europe,” Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche reminded the audience—which included journalists and representatives of a number of important Italian and Chinese institutions—“that Europe is already divided, without China; there is the north-south conflict because of the austerity imposed on Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal, and the east-west conflict on the issue of migrants.”

“What Italy is doing in signing this MOU is of the greatest strategic importance. Italy can become a role model for other European countries, for example in the cooperation between Italian and Chinese firms in Africa,” she said.

Zepp-LaRouche called on Europe to stop being the Europe of European Union diktats, or of the military pacts of Macron, and to become again the “Europe of the fatherlands,” as Gen. de Gaulle meant it.

She also addressed a hotly discussed issue in Italy, the Turin-Lyon high-speed train [TAV or *treno ad alta velocità*], which one part of the government wants to block. Moderator Celani asked for her views, given that this important infrastructure, with a 57-km tunnel under the Alps, is an essential part of the Lisbon-Kiev Corridor 5, and would be integrated with the Belt and Road Initiative.

Zepp-LaRouche noted that German media are expressing great *Schadenfreude* at the Italian government’s postponement of any decision on the TAV in order to avoid a crisis. She invited everyone to look at it in the larger picture. At the beginning of the BRI, central Asian countries debated whether it should be built along the east-west or the north-south connections. She insisted that with the progress of the BRI, both corridors will be built and the entire continent will be integrated. And that is what is happening:

“This is exactly how to look at the Lyon-Turin tunnel question, because the lack of infrastructure in Europe is gigantic,” with a backlog of 1.7 trillion euro merely in Germany. If Europe wants to be anywhere at a level close to China, where all major cities are connected by really fast trains and with slower speed maglev systems being built in urban areas, “we have to integrate our infrastructure in Europe and modernize it and completely revamp our current way of thinking.”

In this context, she exposed the lack of a scientific

basis behind the green ideology, which is affecting not only parts of Italy but all of Europe:

On Friday in 60 nations we will have school children going on strike [to protest climate change]. This is not based on science. It is a suicide movement. Many of these young children have no basis to be able to understand the source of climate change. They are saying it is not worth living anymore; why should I learn if the world will end in twelve years? ...

We need a Renaissance of scientific thinking and the question of infrastructure is absolutely the precondition for any industrial development.

Tony Iwobi

Massimo Kolbe Massaron, a Movisol activist who helped to organize the conference, then read the speech sent by Sen. Tony Iwobi, a member of Italy's Lega party (and originally from Nigeria), who emphasized the importance of the agreement between Italy and China on the Transaqua project in Chad, saying that "it is an important accomplishment to replenish Lake Chad and represents a new historical phase, from the geopolitical and social standpoint, with the aim of reducing the migratory phenomena from Sub-Saharan Africa."

Franco Bocchetto

Dr. Franco Bocchetto, director of Bonifica, then explained to the audience, with slides, that the Transaqua project is not just a water-transfer project but an integrated transport, energy and agro-industrial project for central Africa, based on a win-win idea for all countries involved. Bocchetto recounted the history of the project, paying homage to its "father," Eng. Marcello Vichi, and its recent update by the Bonifica company. For instance, the original estimate that 50 billion cubic meters of water per year would be needed to refill Lake Chad, has proven to be overly pessimistic. Recent studies show that together with modern techniques of water use and conservation, "only" 30 billion cubic meters would



Movisol/Flavio Tabanelli

Dr. Franco Bocchetto, Director of Bonifica, SPA, discusses the Transaqua project.

be needed. This makes Bonifica engineers even more optimistic that the project, whose feasibility study should start in one month, can be realized.

One more note of optimism, Bocchetto explained, is that the PowerChina company, which has signed a strategic partnership with Bonifica, has already built 1,500 kilometers of water-transfer infrastructure from Southern China to Beijing, overcoming and solving several natural and technical obstacles. Bocchetto concluded by endorsing the Belt and Road and wishing "that Italy follow the Chinese example in building infrastructures in a very short time."

Liliana Gorini

After a long and lively debate, Liliana Gorini, chairwoman of Movisol, concluded the conference, dedicating it to Lyndon LaRouche, who passed away one month ago, and who was well-known and greatly appreciated in Italy for his economic forecasts, which "were always to the point," as many parliamentarians who heard him speak at the Italian Parliament in 2007 had to admit after the crash of 2008. Mr. LaRouche was also known and well respected for his Glass-Steagall proposal, which is now in the program of the Italian government.

Videos covering the entire conference are here:

<https://youtu.be/IPwkDb0D-dU>

<https://youtu.be/1bg9qW4MaLc>

https://youtu.be/d6_zU9-5GOg