
II. Africa: Development Before Debt

TO REPLENISH LAKE CHAD

Italy's Prodi Puts Transaqua Back on the International Agenda

by Claudio Celani

Nov. 23—At this time when the world's nations have not yet adequately responded to the call for help launched by the World Food Program (WFP) to avoid mass starvation in the developing sector, the issue of Transaqua has again come into focus as the *durable* solution to famine, terrorism, and emigration in Central Africa. On November 13, Romano Prodi, the former EU Commission President and former UN Special Envoy for the Sahel, launched a strong call for the EU, the UN, the African Union (AU), and China to join hands in financing and building this giant infrastructure platform, that can be the locomotive of agro-industrial development for the entire African continent.

Transaqua—also called the Transaqua Inter Basin Water Transfer Scheme—is a project that dates back to the mid-1970s, when engineers from the Italian company Bonifica witnessed the drying up of Lake Chad and came out with the idea of refilling the lake by transferring water from the Congo Basin, where immense quantities of water were simply wasted into the Atlantic Ocean, unused.

By building dams along some of the right-bank tributaries of the River Congo and connecting these reservoirs with canals, the Bonifica engineers, under the direction of Dr. Marcello Vichi, calculated that with only 5% of the water that goes into the River Congo, it was possible to transfer up to 100 billion cubic meters of water per year into Lake Chad. These tributaries are at high altitude, so



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Romano Prodi, former Prime Minister of Italy, former President of the European Commission, and former UN Special Envoy for the Sahel.

that water in this dam and canal system can travel across the Central African Republic-Chad watershed by means of gravity alone. See **Figure 1**.

Besides refilling the gradually disappearing lake, the infrastructure would provide a 2400 km waterway that would boost trade from the southern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), close to the Great Lakes region, up to Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic, and down to Lake Chad. The numerous dams would provide plenty of electricity and irrigation capa-

bility for 7 million hectares of farmland, providing the platform for developing agro-industrial activities.

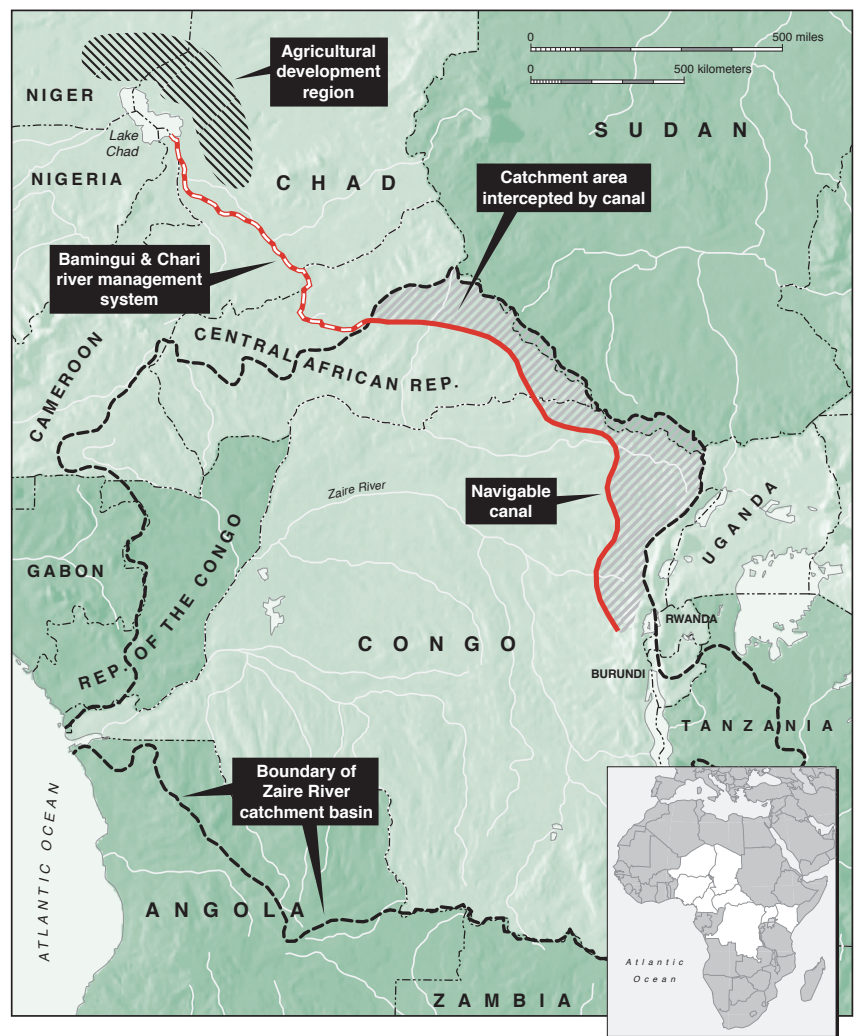
After many decades of oblivion and thanks to efforts by *EIR* and the Schiller Institute, Transaqua received a new impulse in February 2018, when the plan was adopted at the International Conference on Lake Chad in Abuja, and the Italian government pledged to fund part of the feasibility study.

Since then, however, the momentum has slowed down. After Abdullah Sanusi, P.E., left at the end of his mandate as Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in 2018, no significant impulse has come from that institution, which brings together the five riparian member states around the lake—Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and the Central African Republic.

On the Italian side, with the exception of an amendment drafted by Sen. Tony Iwobi—who managed to include initial funding for the feasibility study in the Ital-

FIGURE 1

The Transaqua Project, as Proposed by Bonifica



ian government budget for 2021—a political shift in the government has led to a change in ministerial personnel, and the tender for the study has been left up in the air. The Covid-19 pandemic has overwhelmed an unprepared and incompetent government.

Prodi Not for Colonial Songs about Africa

Now, a seminar organized by the Turin Center for African Studies on November 9-13, “Water Diplomacy and the Culture of Sustainability: The Lake Chad Basin,” has put Transaqua back on the list of strategic priorities. Speaking at the final roundtable, Prodi said the project cannot wait any longer: “Please, don’t come with environmental objections, the former EU chief said. “Don’t sing the song that human intervention can damage the environment: In this case, we help nature to recover a situation of internal balance, to the advantage of African

peoples—an internal balance that has been lost.”

Prodi’s reference to pseudo-environmental objections to Transaqua is important, because one of the main sources for those objections has been that very EU Commission that Prodi has chaired in the past, whose structure and ideology Prodi knows very well.

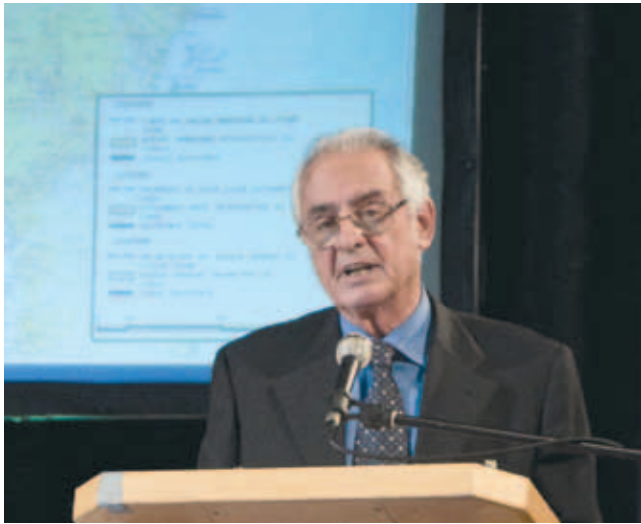
Back in 2013, the EU Commission rejected Transaqua, ostensibly with environmental motivations. Answering a query by European Parliament member Cristiana Muscardini, EU Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs stated that “Preliminary feasibility studies... indicate that the project would involve major environmental risks.” (See “EU Rejects Transaqua Water-Transfer Project for Africa,” [posted](#) October 2, 2013 on the La-Rouche Irish Brigade website.)

And in the Turin roundtable, Francesca Di Mauro, head of the Central and Southern Africa desk of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, almost had a fit over Transaqua, saying “It is a bit of a chimera; it is too expensive, too many countries must reach agreement,” etc.

(A quick glance at her Twitter account shows that she is a fanatic for the “Great Reset” of Prince Charles and

the World Economic Forum, who rejoices at economic damage done by the COVID-19 lockdowns. She writes: “Temporary lower CO₂ emissions during C-19 lockdowns says *Nature* paper; -17% by April compared to 2019, half from lower surface transport. But impact on 2020 could only be -4% to -7% ... only a Global Green Recovery can influence future emissions paths.”)

Opposition to Transaqua has also been fed by former European colonial powers which still have political control over some governments in the region. Notably, the government of Canada, on behalf of the British Commonwealth and of French government institutions, has recently funded a [paper](#), “Soft Power, Discourse Coalitions, and the Proposed Interbasin Water Transfer Between Lake Chad and the Congo River,” which claims that Transaqua is an imperialist scheme pushed by the government of Italy, China, and the Schiller Institute.



EIRNS/Julien Lemaître

Dr. Marcello Vichi speaks at a Schiller Institute Conference, “Rescuing Civilization from the Brink,” in Rüsselsheim, Germany, July 2, 2011.

The paper was competently rebutted by an October 18 [posting](#) on African Agenda, “Green Power, Political Pessimism and Opposition to the Development of the African Interior with Transaqua,” by P.D. Lawton, who noticed that most of the time, African opposition to Transaqua comes from African Diaspora figures, used by the British and European oligarchy in operations of regime change on the African Continent.

‘Something To Do Together with China’

Rejecting such phony objections, Prodi stated:

What we must do, in my view, is a strong action of healthy lobbying, a call on Europe, the African Union, the United Nations, China, to carry forward this project. Be aware that the Lake Chad Basin covers one eightieth of the entire African continent. This is enough to understand its importance. And it affects the poorest, most disgraced and left-behind area.

Since such a large project as Transaqua involves political, financial, technological, and security aspects, it needs strong political leadership and economic power. Thus, the EU, UNO, and OAU—

should try to involve China, be-

cause [some] reports connect Lake Chad with the Silk Road. What is the political problem of the Silk Road? It has been a Chinese thing. We must find something to do together with China.

The video of Prodi’s presentation, in Italian with English subtitles, can be viewed [here](#).

The day before, on November 12, the seminar had featured engineer Andrea Mangano, a veteran of the Bonifica team that had developed the original Transaqua idea in the 1970s. In an interview format entitled “Lake Chad and Infrastructure: Challenges and Ideas,” he presented the updated version of the project—similar to what Mangano himself and other Bonifica officials have presented at Schiller Institute and *EIR* events in recent years.

Starvation Warnings from WFP’s Beasley

Recently the UN World Food Program’s Executive Director, David Beasley, warned that the Central Sahel region faces one of the world’s fastest-growing humanitarian crises. This is the region most affected by the deterioration of living conditions due to the drying out of Lake Chad, conditions that have offered grounds for recruiting young people to the terrorist Boko Haram. Terrorism has added to economic devastation and caused huge migration waves in the region.

More than 13 million people now require urgent humanitarian assistance, five million more than estimated at the beginning of 2020, Beasley said, characterizing their plight as “marching toward starvation.”

In October, Beasley travelled in several nations in the region, together with the development ministers of



UNDP/Lamine Bal

Representatives gather for a UN-sponsored international conference on the Lake Chad Region in Berlin, September 3-4, 2018.



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Left to right: Mohammed Bila (Lake Chad Basin Commission), Andrea Mangano, Marcello Vichi, and Claudio Celani (EIR), discussing plans for Transaqua in the Rome Bonifica office, summer 2015.

Germany and Denmark, to solicit not only emergency aid, but also long-term investments in infrastructure. On October 9, Beasley was in Niger when he got the news that the World Food Program had been awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize. He said to reporters that day:

The fact that I was in the Sahel when we received

the announcement is really a message from above, that “Hey, world. With all the things going on around the world today, please don’t forget about the people in the Sahel! Please don’t forget about the people that are struggling and dying from starvation.”

Transaqua is exactly the infrastructure that could stabilize the entire region. You don’t need to wait until the first dam is built and water starts to come through the Chari River to Lake Chad from the Congo basin: The many jobs created by the project will immediately start to stabilize the region in terms of providing incomes for thousands of families.

Unfortunately, the October 20 donors’ conference organized by Denmark, Germany, the EU, and the UN in Copenhagen, took the restricted view of humanitarian intervention. Some \$1.7 billion dollars were pledged for emergency aid—and this is of course welcome—but it failed to address the root of the problem and adopt long-term solutions.

Mr. Prodi’s words must be followed by deeds, so that the “healthy lobbying effort” in favor of Transaqua is successful in bringing together the international coalition to build Transaqua.

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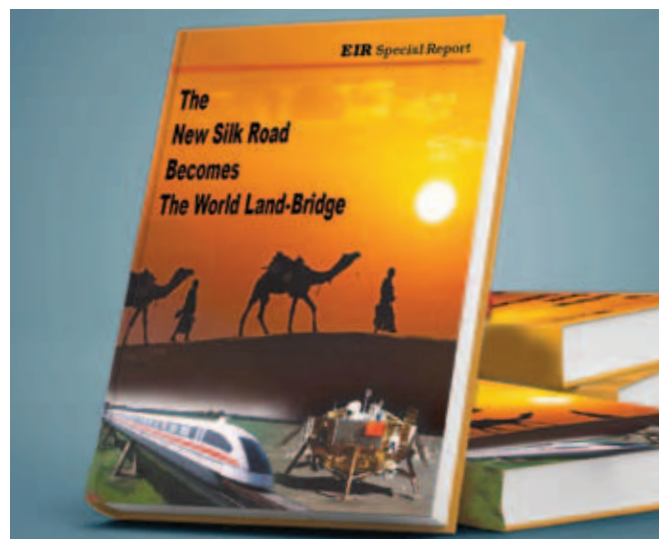
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