

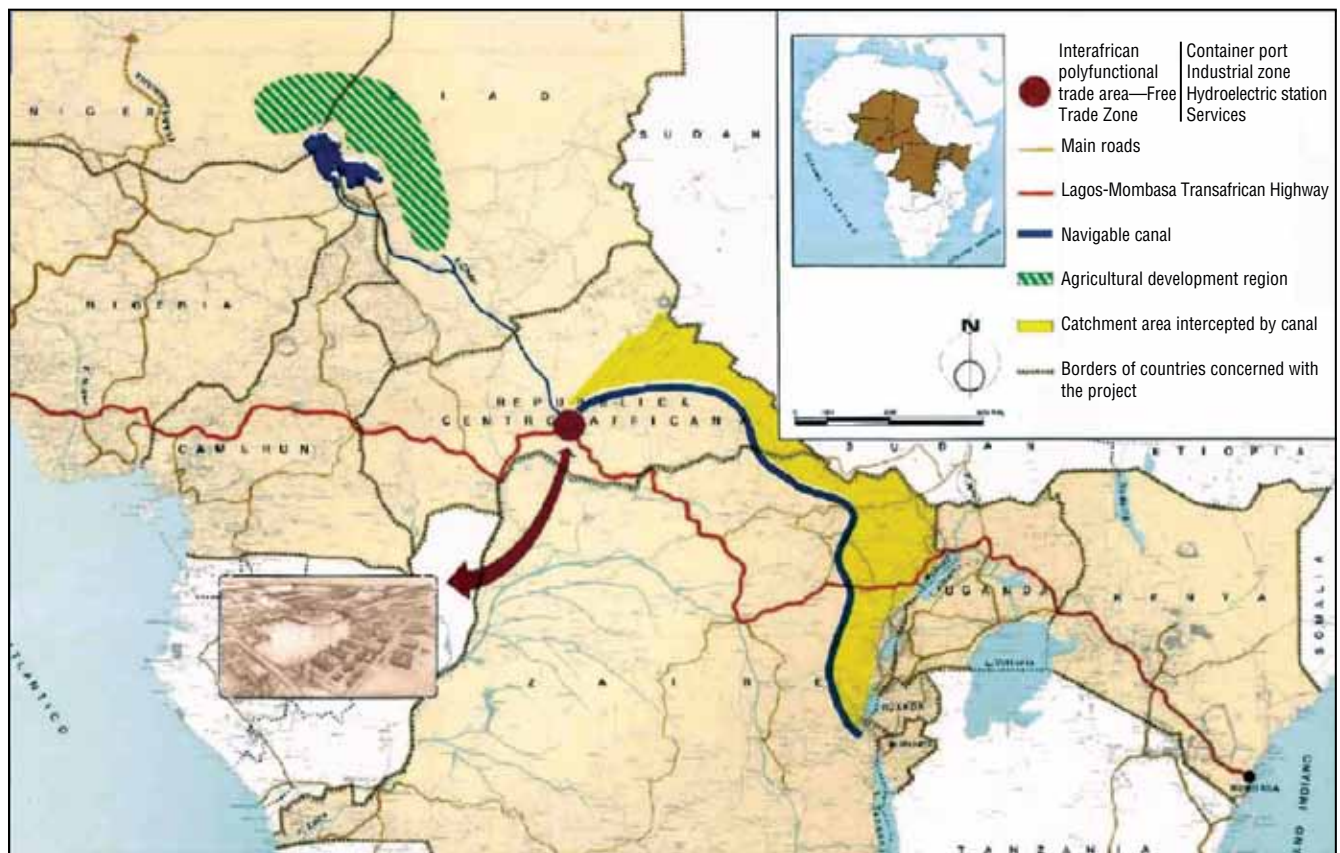
Africa: Transaqua Project Gains Momentum

by Claudio Celani

Sept. 9—After the historic memorandum of understanding between the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the Chinese giant PowerChina (see *EIR*, Jan. 6, 2017), further encouraging developments have fed the hope that finally, the 35-year-old Transaqua project for water-transfer, transport, energy and agro-industrial development in the Lake Chad region and Central Africa, will finally come to realization. On June 8, the Italian engineering firm Bonifica, which devel-

oped the Transaqua idea originally, signed a letter of intent with PowerChina in Hangzhou, for the joint exploration of the feasibility of the project.

Whereas the memorandum of understanding between the LCBC and PowerChina established “the basis on which the parties will carry out successful further research on the Lake Chad Basin Water Transfer Project and other future projects,” the letter of intent between PowerChina and Bonifica includes the agree-



The blue ribbon is the canal that captures some of the water from the upper reaches of the Congo River tributaries in the yellow catchment area. The Congo River system itself is a background feature in pale blue, identified at its mouth as F. Zaire. The canal then feeds the water across the divide between the Congo and Chari basins and into the Chari River at the red spot; the Chari empties into Lake Chad.



LCBC

Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, Engineer Imran Sanusi Abdullahi (left) and Deputy Chief Engineer Zhy Ziping Huang of PowerChina in Djamena, Chad in March 2017.

ment “to cooperate in order to submit specific project proposals” based “on the thorough technical review and exchange of information concerning the Transaqua project.”

The news of this agreement was first released by *EIR Strategic Alert Service* on Aug. 8, followed two days later by coverage in the Italian business daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*, which independently confirmed Italian Foreign Ministry interest in the project. Eventually, the Operations Portal of the UNHCR, the UN Agency for Refugees, posted the *EIR* story as picked up from the French *Solidarité et Progrès* website. Last but not least, the agreement was aptly covered by *People’s Daily*, the official daily of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, which ran a lengthy article on Aug. 21, underscoring the key [role played](#) by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche in bringing the plan forward.

People’s Daily quoted extensively from *EIR*, adding in its own words that “hopes have been revived for the 40 million people who depend on Lake Chad for their livelihoods,” and: “Thanks to the fight taken up by LaRouche organization over the years and the initiators of Transaqua, the project is today be-

The Idea of Transaqua

The Transaqua idea is as simple as it is ingenious. Prompted by then-Bonifica CEO Francesco Curato, in 1972, a Bonifica team led by Dr. Marcello Vichi began to explore the idea of collecting enough water from the right-side tributaries of the Congo River, to refill Lake Chad and eventually develop hydroelectric power and irrigation potential. It was calculated that, to refill Lake Chad to its original dimensions, about 50 billion cubic meters of water would be needed. The Bonifica engineers envisioned the construction of a 2,400 km system of reservoirs and canals that would be able to collect 100 billion. This would amount to about 5-8% of the Congo River’s water.

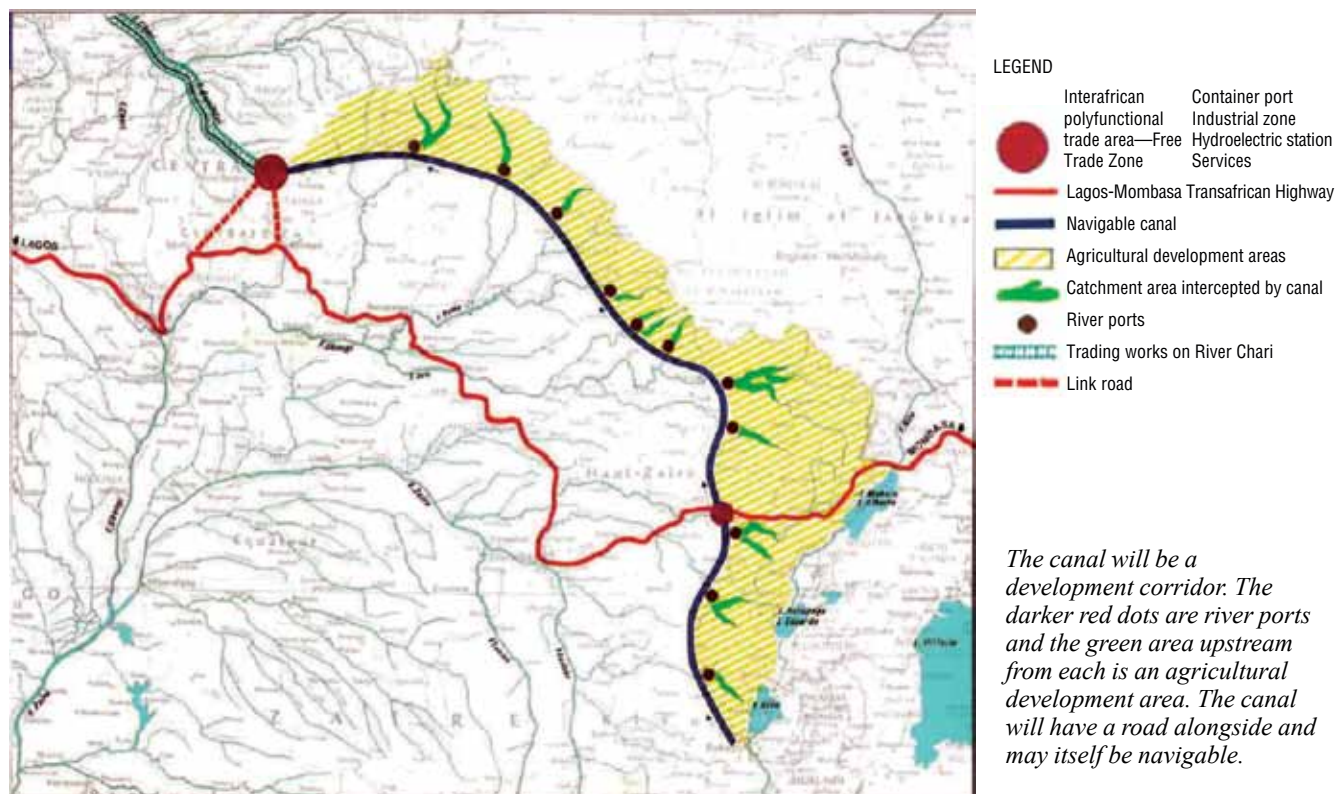
The Transaqua canal would start from the southeastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), intersect all the tributaries upstream, cross the DRC and the Central African Republic (CAR), and reach the watershed between the CAR and Chad at about 500 meters altitude. Here, it would pour into

the Chari River, which feeds Lake Chad, having carried 100 billion cubic meters of water per year, purely by gravity, in a 10-meter deep, 100-meter wide canal. It would really be a new, manmade river, with dimensions comparable to the Nile at the Aswan dam.

Along its path, Transaqua would create systems of reservoirs, water regulation and hydropower production that would benefit every basin of the Congo’s tributaries, without negatively affecting their carrying capacity, fisheries, or navigability. Furthermore, a road would be built as necessary to serve the construction of the canal-dams system, which would remain as a modern transport connection in central Africa. The canal itself would be a magnificent waterway, with the idea of building at least one major inland port and economic development area in the CAR.

The new irrigation potential would allow the creation of an agricultural development area around Lake Chad as large as the Italian region of Lombardy.

The construction of Transaqua would absorb hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers in all the central African nations, providing them with an income and creating a demand for goods and materials from throughout the continent.



coming reality within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. *Executive Intelligence Review* magazine and Schiller Institute in 2015 arranged the first meeting between LCBC and the brains behind Transaqua. This was followed in December 2016 by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between LCBC and PowerChina, and subsequent contacts between Bonifica Spa and the Chinese company.” The *People’s Daily* article was republished by former U.S. diplomat David H. Shinn on his widely read blog: <http://davidshinn.blogspot.de/2017/08/chinese-and-italian-companies-agree-on.html>

The idea of Transaqua has been around for over 35 years, but things have started to move only recently, thanks to two factors: China’s fight for the development of Africa (as an extension of its Belt and Road policy) and the refugee crisis. The latter has made it very clear that only by creating jobs and development in Africa, can the refugee wave to Europe be stopped.

Italy, at the forefront of the refugee flow and abandoned by its European “allies” to face the crisis alone, has now developed an interest in Transaqua. According to *EIR* sources, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni raised the issue at the summit with his colleagues from France, Germany, and Spain on Aug. 28, telling them

that the Italian Foreign Ministry is examining a plan for Lake Chad.

According to *EIR*’s information, the Italian Foreign Ministry is even considering financing the 3 million euro feasibility study with COP24 (“climate change”) funds. However, the required bureaucratic procedures may take too long, so that it might be faster to find other funding sources outside of Italy.

Transaqua Enemies Attack LaRouches

The momentum in favor of Transaqua has raised hopes for Africa, but fear for imperial interests. A putatively Congolese network which had already attacked Transaqua in 2014, has now attacked it again with a long article full of falsities and slanders. The authors of Transaqua and its sponsors are accused of aiming to “steal Congo’s water,” and create an ecological catastrophe by transferring 5% of the Congo River’s water to Lake Chad. They claim Transaqua is a new form of European looting of African resources. They attacked Lyndon and Helga LaRouche and Jacques Cheminade, the leader of LaRouche’s co-thinker organization in France.

But it is the authors of the attack who should explain their own ties to the interests that have histori-

cally looted and still loot Africa.

Author Sinaseli Tshibwabwa, in fact, is a biologist who is based in Kinshasa, but his neomalthusian ideology is made in Europe. In fact, at the beginning of his article he quotes Géraud Magrin, a professor at the Sorbonne, who even claims that the shrinking of Lake Chad is an invention by those who want to build environmentally hostile water-transfer projects.

The article is published in an outlet run by a certain Jean-Jacques Wondo, another Congolese national, who graduated from the Royal Military Academy in Belgium, got his master's at Liege University, and did graduate work at the Free University of Brussels. <https://desc-wondo.org/en/after-plundering-minerals-soon-the-plundering-of-the-congo-freshwater-the-blue-gold-of-this-century-sinaseli-tshi-bwabwa/>

It is worth refuting one argument here: that Transaqua, by taking 5% of the water from the Congo River's tributaries, would reduce the amount of electric power generated by the proposed Grand Inga project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This argument is also circulating among African diplomats, but the problem does not exist: In fact, that 5% of the water would also produce electricity, but on the eastern side of the DRC, thus saving the costs of transmission from Inga, which is situated in the westernmost part, close to the Congo estuary.

The other arguments and the falsehoods about Transaqua were already answered by Transaqua author Marcello Vichi in 2014, with a long [letter to the editor](#) of the 7sur7 website. This time, Bonifica CEO Mrs. Romina Boldrini issued a statement to *EIR* Aug. 29, in which, among other things, she makes it very clear that “currently, Transaqua is not a developed and approved project, which, regardless of the will of countries and peoples, has been imposed on African countries: *it is an opportunity*. The opportunity of assessing and developing a solution that could allow all concerned parties to consciously criticize, modify, accept, and share the proposed solution—or to propose another one.”

Jacques Cheminade answered with a long [letter](#) to *MoviSol.org* in which, among other things, he exposed those who oppose water-transfer projects that would save millions of African lives, and reminded them that he “supported in France the elimination of the CFA franc [a French-controlled African currency], to allow African countries to regain their monetary sovereignty and allow them to issue credit for their infrastructure, their industry and their agricultural development.”

Transaqua: Bonifica Answers the Critics

In a statement released to *EIR* Aug. 29, Bonifica CEO Romina Boldrini answered recent criticisms and slanders against the Transaqua project for water-transfer from the Congo Basin to the Lake Chad Basin, and associated infrastructural development.

“Concerning recent media reports on the Transaqua project,” her statement says, “I felt it opportune, as a legal representative of Bonifica Spa, to at least present our views on the matter. To express one's own opinion and point of view is a human right, even when it is contrary to someone else's ideas and positions.

“However, I believe it is necessary to avoid producing sterile polemics, for their own sake, without a solution: I think that an objective analysis of facts is more difficult but more constructive and conclusive, and the best offer to the reader and to those who are directly involved in the process.”

“In this regard, Bonifica has some merit: having exposed, for over thirty years now, the dimension of the emergency, explored a myriad of possible solutions, and identified one possible organic solution after having warned at an early stage about demographic growth in Nigeria, and about the social-economic crisis of a very large area. Bonifica did this alone.”

“Let us now forget for a moment that we have been the ‘fathers of the Transaqua project’ and try to offer the most objective possible point of view.

“The facts:

- It is indisputable that Lake Chad is undergoing an irreversible process of desertification. It suffices to see the satellite data related to the Lake Chad basin. Such a process is generated by a series of interconnected causes, and can be interrupted only through an extraordinary and permanent intervention;

- It is indisputable that this situation is leading to climatic changes that affect both vegetation and wildlife in the area;

- It is indisputable that the population—and not only the population—is threatened by starvation because of the progressive shrinking of Lake Chad: The lack of opportunities for support and jobs, and the increasing poverty, have tragic consequences, both in terms of public health and socially, with the development of terrorist phenomena;

- It is indisputable that the population in that area has a continuous demographic growth; this not only ag-

gravates the situation, but increases ever more the flow of migration towards other areas.

“But confronting these facts, there are opportunities:

- The opportunity of relying, today more than before, on international aid. Immigration and terrorism are violently striking the so-called ‘Western World,’ which finally, and perhaps for its own egoistic reasons, is looking at Africa’s problems today, as its own problems;

- The opportunity to examine and develop some project-ideas, among them Transaqua, for the purpose of considering the best solution or solutions to adopt in order to help to solve one among the many problems in Africa. Here we must open a necessary chapter:

Transaqua is not a project that was developed independently of the will of the countries involved.

Transaqua is not a project which was imposed on the African countries involved.

Transaqua is a project idea, studied and developed in its pre-feasibility stage already in the 1980s, and, at that time, approved and shared by the then President of Congo (former Zaire).

Transaqua is an ambitious project because the emergency in Africa has a planetary dimension, such that it cannot be faced with modest projects or,

worse, with short-term solutions.

Transaqua is a possible solution ‘on the table,’ which should be developed through a feasibility study in order to understand and assess a series of aspects:

Technical feasibility

Economic-financial feasibility

Environmental impact

Agreement of the states concerned

Its economic and social benefits

Critical aspects.

“Currently, Transaqua is not a developed and approved project which, regardless of the will of countries and peoples, has been imposed on African countries: *it is an opportunity*. The opportunity of assessing and developing a solution that could allow all concerned parties to consciously criticize, modify, accept and share the proposed solution—or to propose another one.

“The opportunity, this is the keystone. Without opportunities there are no chances, there are no solutions.

“This is what we want to offer to African countries: the opportunity to have in their hands the feasibility study of a project, financed by western countries and/or international agencies, which could allow us to offer a potential solution.”

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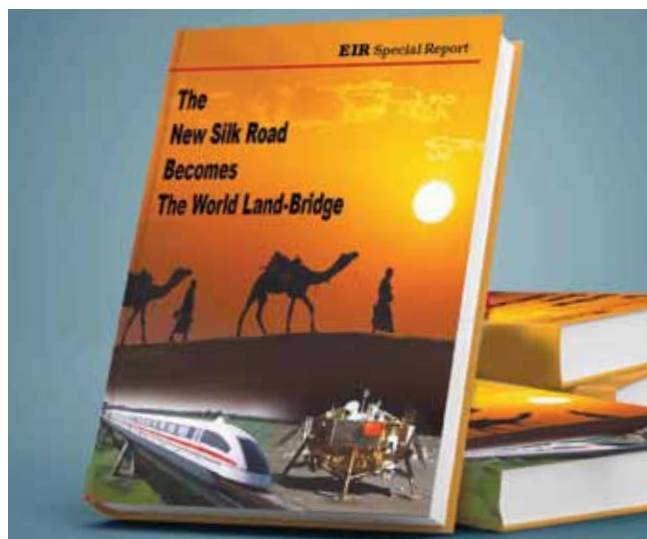
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