

# St. Augustine: From Carthage to Rome

by Ahmed Kedidi

It is a simple truth, but one which has symbolic value: In coming from Carthage to Rome to participate in your colloquium, I travel the same path as the great thinker St. Augustine, who, in the year 384, left Carthage for Rome, then Milan—that was 16 centuries ago. But the universal message of Saint Augustine lives on, and with burning actuality. For from Carthage to Rome, the voyage was not only geographical, but for St. Augustine in 384 or for us meeting here in homage to his memory in 1985, the voyage is essentially political, spiritual, intellectual, and the issue, above all, is civilization itself. This is the full ardor and force of St. Augustine's message.

Dear friends, northern African—and notably Tunisia—which has given humanity a man like St. Augustine, is proud of having always been a bridge between the two immense cultures, Christian and Muslim; between the two prestigious civilizations, European and African; between the two inexhaustible sources of the fertile humanism of the northern and southern Mediterranean basin.

That is where the force of St. Augustine's presence resides today—the son of Carthage and of Rome, bearer of immortal aid for our world which, alas, lies dark in the abyss of a new barbarism and in the pits of a new slavery.

Yes, this world at the end of the 20th century needs new messengers, new horizons, a new emancipation, so that the next century, which we will inaugurate in 15 years, might be one of humanity reconciled with itself, of the free man who renews the world with his grandeur, of the world which recovers its dignity through the advent of a healthy spirit, freed from war, from famine, AIDS, terrorism, state terror, and the servitude imposed by the international financial institutions that are what St. Augustine called 16 centuries ago in his *Confessions*, “the impure chains which prevent the spirit from imagining, in his prison, that behind the infamous walls there is a horizon, the sun, and beauty. . . .”

This is our true battle, all the others are secondary. Humanity should be given the priority to reconstruct the world

on the basis of new values. Look around you at the world we are bequeathing to our children:

A West which is decomposing, because it is losing strength and moral weight day by day; pornography is establishing itself to alienate man and make of him an animal, a carnal machine of desire, without beauty or faith.

Pandemics rage and AIDS strikes like a curse from God and nature's vengeance. Tensions and terrorism are blindly achieving the destruction of the last bastions of civilization which survived the apocalypse of the Second World War. The multinationals based on profit, the giant banks, and the tentacles of the drug trade contribute to enslave man, and submit him to the law of the jungle, a jungle of cement, of glass and formica where the souls of individuals accumulate, where two neighbors can live on the same floor, side-by-side, for 10 years, without ever meeting or speaking to each other, they cross paths without ever meeting. Human communication is excluded; the heart's warmth is stifled, in order to allow this modern inferno to thrive: this purgatory of incomprehensibility, of scorn, of xenophobia, and of racism. Between man and his offspring, invisible screens and barriers arise. Mankind is engulfed in chaos, transformed into a worn ensemble of individuals, separate, broken, submissive, cloistered in fixed uniformity, erected in cities without heart.

## The destruction of the Muslim world

As for the Muslim world, torn to pieces by needless wars launched by armed bands, and comprising close to a billion people. . . . It is regrettable to describe the immense gap which separates the true Islamic faith transmitted by the Koran from the first, by the Prophet Mohammed, and the actual usage that a part of the Arab world makes of the Islamic message.

For Islam from pure sources is a religion of concord and of tolerance. Under the banner of Islam, the first universities of medicine, pharmacy, botany, and philosophy were created from Baghdad to Cordova. At the Cairo university known as Beit el-Hikma, “house of sciences,” during the 9th century of our era, working together side-by-side, were the Arab Muslim Ibn Jazzar, celebrated founder of Arab medicine, and the Jew Ibn Omrane, celebrated author of the famous treatise on mental illness. Together they generously communicated the fruits of their researches to the University of Sicily, where Christianity was professed. This is an example—taken from the land where St. Augustine was born—which illustrates this spirit—alas, now in perdition—of co-existence between the religions, the spirit of the Book preached by Mohammed, which gave rise to the expansion and radiation outward of our religion, whose very name (Islam) in Arab means “peace,” and adherence to peace.

But what remains of these eternal values which used to rule Muslim societies and which had made the Muslims perpetuate them? Listen to the deafening noise of bombs and missiles of the Gulf war, between two Muslim peoples who,

five times a day during their prayers, turn toward the same Mecca, and who, through the fanaticism of Iran's rulers, have been obliged to kill each other. This same fanaticism excludes all the essential Islamic virtues in order to make of them a *leitmotif* to destabilize the moderate regimes of the Muslim world; calling for a kind of integrism which excludes one of the bases of Islam, known under the Arab name of *Ijihad*, that is, man's permanent reflection on the necessary adaptation of religion to the exigencies of man's natural development and the dialectical evolution of societies. Fanaticism denies Reason, thus calls upon the reign of anarchy, denies order and authority of institutions, thus preaches the absence of the State, destroys man's dignity and liberty, thus reclaims the establishment of "arbitrary" justice, which from Teheran to Tripoli consecrates the worst, bloody dictatorships and nourishes terrorism throughout the world.

My country, the unique civil republic and democracy in the Arab world, a state of law, stability, and tolerance for 2,000 years, still suffers the aggressions of the master of Tripoli, whose doctrine is to destroy democracies, burn libraries, and combat the ideas of the renaissance and revival of the world. I am not making up anything here, I am simply reading to you from Chapter 3 of what we call the *Green Book*, written by Qadaffi himself, and which is ensconced in Libya's system of power.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the state of mankind today, plagued by a West which is destroying itself, and an Islamic world becoming fanatical here and there, we witness the same phenomenon: the massacre of the human, creative spirit, which, in Christianity as in Islam, is symbol of fertility, synonym of beauty, generator of wisdom, and promoter of eternal communion with God. This spirit is today buried under mountains of absurdity, the mess of atheism, racial hatred, and blind terror. I pose to you, dear friends, such as is still possible: Is it acceptable for you to exchange your humanity for the mythology of a criminal cultural and economic order whose mission is to dehumanize man?

Is it acceptable for you, and tomorrow, for your children, to coexist side-by-side with the fear, hate, AIDS, drugs, the underworld, and the soul's misery?

It is of the utmost importance today, and it is a matter of destiny, to revive the ideals which had been those of St. Augustine, and, closer to us, Friedrich Schiller. Schiller gives his name to our honorable Institute, the repository of these ideals, thanks to the flame that sparks the conscience of its founders, Helga and Lyndon LaRouche, whom I warmly salute in offering them this example, taken from the life of St. Augustine, who in the year 410, living through the siege of Rome and its pillage by the Goths, with Alaric at their head, wrote his book *City of God* where he said: "I saw the vandals and barbarians destroy the cities, because these cities were built on our sins and our weaknesses. . . . Together we will construct our cities on faith and love . . . and they will be impregnable."

## St. Augustine vs. the IMF's genocide

by Hon. Publio Fiori

. . . The Augustinian concept of *Filioque* means considering every man as a "son of God," and hence a participant in the creative capacity of the Father. Since these creative capacities exist in every man, according to St. Augustine, the task of every nation or national or supranational institution must be to develop to the maximum the capacities of every individual, such that he can contribute more, with material and intellectual actions, to the progress of human society.

Unfortunately, we all know that this teaching is not always respected today. The policies of austerity, of cuts in living and consumption standards, which the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have imposed for years on the developing countries, are not only provoking famine and genocide in Africa and political destabilizations in Latin America, blocking world trade, but they must be considered one of the prime causes of the economic crisis of the advanced sector.

On repeated occasions, these financial institutions have imposed on the African countries, as a condition for extending credit, a harsh policy of demographic restriction, impeding thereby not only the development of individuals, but their very birth.

With such methods, neither the problem of the Latin American debt nor that of underdevelopment in Africa can be solved. Italy has a great tradition in this field, the tradition of ENI and Enrico Mattei, who in the 1950s launched a project for the development of North Africa and the Mediterranean basin. Mattei's method was that of reaching accords with sovereign oil-producing states, through which, in exchange for oil purchases, these countries received effective high-technology exports capable of allowing their industrial development. In Egypt, in Algeria, in Tunisia, and in other African countries, Mattei's name is still the symbol of an Italy which was a technology bridge between Africa and Europe.

As we know, above all because of Mattei's death, the project was not fully realized. Still, after over 20 years, it represents today the model which Europe and the United States must understand and implement if they wish to resolve the great problem of underdevelopment.

There is a strong temptation to utilize the hunger and underdevelopment of many countries, to inaugurate a kind