

in denouncing the aggressive actions of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon against the Palestinians, and the actions of the Bush Administration, which, “despite the accords already made, has stood by Israel.”

The security arrangement, as mentioned above, has been in negotiation for two years, as an important feature of Khatami’s foreign policy. However, certain disturbing developments, occurring as the pact was finalized, raise questions as to whether other forces, inside Iran and Saudi Arabia, may be seeking to manipulate the alliance in a different direction. These include Iran’s Scud missile attacks on April 18 against positions in Iraq of the Mujaheddin e Khalq (MKO), an Iraqi-based anti-Iranian terrorist organization; and the report that Prince Nayev met with the leader of the Iranian-based anti-Iraqi terrorist organization Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. SCIRI had just announced its intention to work with the Bush Administration and use U.S. funds to fight the Iraqi government.

## ‘St. Augustine Links Islam and the West’

by Mark Burdman

The Algerian government is promoting the great Christian writer and theologian, St. Augustine, as the basis for a “dialogue of civilizations” between the Islamic and Christian worlds, and as the key to fighting “theocracy” and “fundamentalism,” inside Algeria, and elsewhere.

On April 1-6, there was a conference on the subject of Augustine’s “Africanness and Universality,” reported in an article by Henri Tincq in *Le Monde* of April 18. The conference was held in the two Algerian cities of Algiers and Annaba. There were some 100 historians, archaeologists, and European and Arab theologians, in attendance.

The featured speaker was Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who said that he wanted to make Augustine the symbol of a “new Algeria.” This “new Algeria” would seek to bring an end, simultaneously, to the “demonization” of the West, and to the “devaluing of the cultural heritage of the peoples who were colonized.” He stressed, that returning Augustine to Algeria, would be the basis for a “new ethic of relations between Islam and the West.” The specialists gathered at the conference agreed with him, that to do this would be, more than anything else, “an act of justice.”

While *EIR* does not yet have full details of the April 1-6 colloquium, it seems, from preliminary accounts, to have been very much in the direction of the famous 1985 Schiller

Institute Rome conference to celebrate the 1600th anniversary of St. Augustine’s conversion, which put forward Augustine the African, as the figure around whom various forces in the world could be rallied, for a cultural and political renaissance.

The April 1-6 event is all the more poignant, and a positive cultural shock, because, over the past years, Algeria has been the scene of civil war conditions, because of the assault of violently irrational Islamic fundamentalist forces, particularly the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which has significant support bases outside Algeria, particularly Great Britain. In that extremely bloody conflict, tens of thousands of people have been killed, often in horrible massacres.

### A Weapon Against Fundamentalism

*Le Monde* begins its report on the event, by quoting André Mandouze, who declares the conference initiative to be a “cultural revolution.” *Le Monde*’s religious-affairs writer Henri Tincq then adds the comment: “That this country recognizes, as one of its sons, the great St. Augustine, is a strong signal addressed to international opinion, which is constantly worried about the fate of Algeria.”

He notes, quoting one speaker, that there was a rich Christian tradition in what is now Algeria, before the coming of Islam, and that Christianity was critical in fighting “paganism,” so the revival of Augustine is particularly important.

Tincq later writes, that Christian writer St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as various Muslim writers, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina) saw in Augustine’s writings, “the alliance between faith, intelligence, and liberty.” “This is a potent weapon against ‘fundamentalism,’ because, as one speaker at the colloquium stressed, Augustine’s belief that ‘the light of God’ brings about ‘the aspiration of faith to intelligence,’ is a real ecumenical idea, for both Christians and Muslims.”

Furthermore, according to the *Le Monde* account, the Archbishop of Algiers, Msgr. Henri Teissier, argued at the colloquium against the “Augustinian legend,” that Augustine had insisted on the superiority of the spiritual order over the temporal, the which legend has been used to reinforce “caesaro-papism” and “holy wars,” throughout history. Nothing is more false, insisted Archbishop Teissier, than to make of Augustine, the advocate of an “ecclesiastical theocracy.” Rather, citing the work of the jurist Mawardi, who died in Baghdad in 1058, he said that both this Islamic jurist and Augustine believed that there must be freedom, for “the work of God” to be “in the heart of men.” This is necessary, rather than to substitute a religious law for the free temporal power of human beings. Tincq comments: “Who could deny, that this ultimate lesson of Augustine is useful, as much in the West as in the Islamic world?”

Tincq ends his account, by quoting André Mandouze: “We have won, against fundamentalism. The assassins will be able to do nothing against the Algerian philosopher.”