

# Modern Buildings Rise from Roman Baths in Carthage

By MICHAEL DEURE  
**United Press International**  
 Tunis, Tunisia — A city that stood here was once described as "after Rome, the busiest and most corrupt center of the West."

The City was Carthage and it was a Roman governor, who so described it almost 1,200 years ago, Carthage was already 1,600 years old.

Modern buildings rise now from the Roman baths to look over the Mediterranean toward Italy. Freighters and oilers push through nearby waters, once the domain of the Barbary Coast pirates.

The Phoenicians, sailing west from what now is Lebanon founded Carthage about 800 B.C. Through the next 2,700 years Romans, Arabs, Turks and French claimed the area. Spain made a pass at it in the 18th Century and the British controlled the seas around it 300 years later.

### Driven From Tunisia

The Allies drove the German army from Tunisia into the Mediterranean in World War II.

From this battering culture a predominantly Arab state arose to independence in 1957. A poor country by American and European standards, Tunisia is neutral, pro-West and proud.

Tunisia is an agricultural country. Much of the land, though fertile, is underdeveloped.

The country covers 48,332 square miles, a little less than North Carolina and a little more than Indiana. It is halfway between the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal and, with Sicily, forms the barrier between the eastern and western Mediterranean. Tunisia's 900 miles of coastline gave it economic and political importance hundreds of years ago.

### Smallest of States

Tunisia is the smallest of the north African states in area, sandwiched between the Mediterranean on the north and east, Libya to the south and Algeria to the west.

There are 4,255,000 persons living in Tunisia, about the same number as in Missouri. About 4 million of these are Tunisian Moslems. The remainder are Europeans, mostly French and Italians, Jews and "foreign" Moslems.

The native Tunisian is either Arab or Berber, a fairer people than the Arabs.

The country became autonomous March 20, 1956, after receiving increasing self-government measures from France since 1947. She became a full-fledged republic one year later under President Habib Bourguiba.

Bourguiba was reelected president in 1959 for a five-year term.

The president's Neo-Destour or "new constitution" party is the only one in the country since the Communists were banned Jan. 1, 1963.

Internationally, Tunisia belongs to the growing group of "neutralist" or non-aligned nations—the young emerging countries of Africa and Asia who put their respective developments before membership in either of the world's power blocs.

North Africans, particularly, with their history of colonial domination, see identification with the Communists or the West as submitting to "neo-colonialism."

A "Young Country" Tunisia is a "young" country. More than half its population is under 19 years of age.

Arabic is the national and official language although most educated Tunisians also speak French. Schooling is obligatory up to the equivalent of the ninth grade.

For higher education, there

is the Moslem University of Zitouna in Tunis and the Institute of Advanced Studies. These will be incorporated into a new Tunisian university within six years.

Students wishing to study abroad are encouraged by government grants. Many of the civil servants were educated in France for instance.

Geographically, Tunisia is mountainous, fertile and fairly well watered. On the coast, the climate is temperate. Inland, in the Atlas Mountains, soft Mediterranean breezes give way to whipping winds

like Upper Michigan on a November day.

The Tunisian Sahara occupies the whole of the southern division of Tunisia. But it is not all desert. Mountains, in the southeast, reach more than 4,000 feet and vegetation is abundant.

Rainfall averages about 22 inches a year compared to slightly more than seven inches in Arizona and 43 in New York. In the Tunisian Sahara rainfall is uneven. Two or three years may pass with none, then there may be violent floods and storms.

Besides agriculture, which employs more than 80 percent of the work force, Tunisia also has minerals—lead, phosphates and zinc. Since independence her light industry, most fertilizers, carpets and shoes, has increased. So have her tourists.

But the country is poor. More than one-third of her population earns less than \$37 annually.

### Farm Laborers

People at this level would be farm laborers and peasants living in primitive conditions

in the country on a diet of bread and dishes made from rice, oats and barley.

At a higher level there are people like Amer Ben Khaimas, a railway office clerk, who earns about \$1,200 a year. He represents the growing middle class as Tunisia becomes industrialized.

Amer, 37, his wife Lallah and their three children share a three room apartment with a kitchen and bathroom overlooking the sea in Tunis.

The apartment is immaculate, but lightly furnished like most homes in hot coun-

tries. It has a small patio where the family often sits after the evening meal.

### Some for Rent

Amer and Lallah pay six dinars a month for rent. Most of the rest of his salary goes for clothes for himself and food. He is also buying a German-made radio on time and putting some money away. A national health program pays doctor and hospital bills.

As the world shrinks in the air age, Tunisia is discovering her potential as a tourist attraction.

Hotels rise above spectacu-

lar stretches of white sand. Their Moorish arches, patios, fountains and mosaics blend with the surt, palm tree and cactus.

Fifty miles southeast of Tunis is Hammamet, the best-developed holiday spot in the country. The ornate houses and swimming pools of European colonial officials have been replaced by hotels and motels against the background of orange and lemon groves.

Tunisia is encouraging foreign firms to build hotels and is already developing tourist regions itself.

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