



One of 15 army tanks which surrounded the Pyramid road area as hotels burn.

lightly on already sore toes — those of the Egyptian masses who have regularly revolted against increased food prices. Dr. Ragaa Rassoul, director of Egypt's Institute of National Planning, says, «The IMF writes its prescription but we have to be very careful about how we implement this.» Nevertheless, a team headed by the prime minister and economist, Ali Lutfi, has begun what the government calls a series of «reforms». They started by introducing a 20% increase in consumer good prices but have been careful about not publicizing the fact for fear of the social and political impact. A 10% deduction from the paychecks of government employees (one-third of the work force) is being made, although officials insist this is «voluntary contributions». Coupled with the 20% inflation rate, their \$50 a month wage does not stand a chance of making ends meet.

These «reforms» are accompanied by a massive publicity campaign where Mubarak calls on the millions to join in a «great awakening to arouse the slumbering economic giant that Egypt could become.» Yet according to an editorial in *Al Akhbar* newspaper, «Egyptians would have to consider sacrifices to cope with worsening economic circumstances.»

Mubarak vs. Abu Ghazala

With the uprising, Mubarak made a feeble attempt to diffuse the charged atmosphere by dismissing Ahmed Rushdi, interior minister and comman-

der of the security police conscripts. Imperialist circles are anyway having second thoughts as to Mubarak's ability to maintain the stability vital to their interests. In a recently released study from Frost & Sullivan's Political Risk Services Division, Egypt was listed among the nine countries where «conditions for international business during 1986 will get increasingly risky.» Creditors are expressing increasing doubts as to Egypt's ability to maintain its current rate of repayment. No extensions of grace periods for payment of debts are granted, and no dramatic injection of aid seems forthcoming, to bail Mubarak out of his dilemma.

Mubarak, sensing that his abilities were being subject to question, tried to broaden his political support by meeting with opposition leaders even before the uprising was quelled by the army. He feared that Abu Ghazala's success in putting down the uprising would only further the defense minister's already blooming popularity with the US administration. Such a show of force is of particular importance now, because of the deteriorating economic situation and the negative social impact of this. Imperialist circles seem to prefer a strongman who knows how to run an efficient operation.

Even the Zionist press began to signal dissatisfaction with the present Egyptian regime, hinting that a «change would be met with approval» and that Abu Ghazala should take over, because he «is the strongman in Egypt now.»

Mubarak is obviously on a losing streak. He is unable to come up with real solutions for the economy. He must use force to suppress popular discontent. He is suffering the disfavor of his allies as well. Is this the beginning of the end? Was the conscripts' revolt just the tip of the iceberg of the Egyptian masses' potential to rise up? One opposition figure had this to say about the uprising: «There is an economic and social condition behind the feeling of anger. If the economic situation is not corrected, these incidents will be repeated.» The regime's orders to dismiss 22,000 conscripts, purportedly «social misfits», is hardly a solution. Moreover, 8000 armed conscripts escaped arrest, and are hiding among the people. ●

People line up for bread during curfew lift.

