

Tunisia - Morocco

Once Again, the Hungry Rise Up

Before the quelling of the popular uprising in Tunisia, in early January, a new one had started in Morocco. Besides the great similarity in the causes of both, the masses in the two countries used the same methods of protest. This led to widespread clashes with the regimes' forces, and as a result, hundreds of victims. Both the Tunisian and Moroccan authorities answered the protesting masses with iron and fire.

In Morocco, the uprising coincided with the Islamic Summit Conference, a fact of great embarrassment to King Hassan II, who promptly clamped a news black-out on events in the streets. Both regimes employed tanks, besieged universities and schools, and imposed martial law. In Tunisia, brute force was rounded off with a political maneuver: The Interior Minister was made to resign, serving as a scapegoat for the price rises which sparked the revolt. And as spoke Bourguiba in Tunis, so did King Hassan in Morocco, on local television and radio, accusing "communists, Zionists, Khomeiniists" and other foreign forces whose names were not mentioned, of instigating the events.

The events in Tunisia started on December 29th, the date when the decision

to enact an increase in the price of bread, flour and other staples was announced. The city of Nakrawa, in the Saharan south, was the point from which the demonstrations and clashes started, later spreading to the four largest oases, as well as the cities of Al Kasrarn and Gafsa. The demonstrators were beset by the regime's forces, which led to the injury and death of at least 60 persons. When the Tunisian government first acknowledged the uprising, the Foreign Minister issued a statement accusing the unemployed, the lazy and enemy forces of being the instigators and spreaders of the protest. That, however, did not calm the situation. The Tunisian president was prompted to send a message over the local media, promising to freeze prices and prepare a new budget. Martial law,

however, continued for a month, attesting to the regime's fear of the masses, whose problems will not be resolved by stop-gap measures.

In Morocco, the spark began from Agadeer and Anzaan and focused in the high schools, but the uprising was soon joined by broader sectors of the people and spread to the center of the country, to Marakash, Souwaiyra, Asfi, Jadida, Wajda, Rabat (the capital), Al Quinaitra, Al Khamaisiyal, Sidi Kasim, Wazan, Meknas, Fez, Taza, Al Nadour, Malila, Selta and Casablanca, where almost three millions live and where there is the largest industrial compound in Morocco, as well as the largest expanse of shanty towns and poor workers neighborhoods. The regime's response was immediate and decisive, though shrouded by the news black-out. Still, the regime's forces were unable to stop the spread of the events, despite killing almost 200 people and injuring hundreds more. Appearing on television, King Hassan II announced the cancellation of price increases on basic consumer products. However, campaigns of arrest continued, covering many cities and villages. Schools and universities in the capital were closed, and some towns were blockaded for a number of days. Many issues of the opposition's newspapers were censored, and a number of opposition leaders were detained.

The main cause driving the masses in both Tunisia and Morocco to revolt is the constant decrease in their standard of liv-

State of emergency in Tunis

