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# Greece's junta pulls back from the brink

By CAMPBELL PAGE

The Greek regime stepped back from the brink yesterday when it decided against putting a 40-year-old economics professor, Dionysios Karagiorgas, before a firing squad for his resistance activities.

When the professor received the heaviest sentence of all the 34 Democratic Defence defendants in Athens—life imprisonment—his wife, sitting in the crowded courtroom on the sixth floor of the court-martial building in central Athens, cried out: "Thank God."

Within the past few days official circles in Athens had so successfully spread the idea that the professor would be executed within hours of his capital sentence

that his widowed mother, Mrs Zoe Karagiorgas, aged 78, had sent a desperate plea to democratic Greeks abroad asking them to do what they could to save her son.

At the trial, which opened two weeks ago, the public prosecutor had asked for the death penalty for the professor, and in a broadcast to the nation on Friday, the Prime Minister, Mr Papadopoulos, had issued a clear warning to the judges at the court-martial against sentiment and humanitarian feelings.

The regime has no reason to love the professor. Indeed, the public prosecutor, expressing the Junta's indignation at the hostility of the intellectuals, borrowed the words of Socrates' accusers, and charged the professor with "introducing new gods and corrupting youth."

## Bold defence

Socrates is, as the Junta should have remembered, now better known than his accusers. Moreover, the professor's bold but thoughtful defence statement has already caused a considerable stir, and has aroused sympathy and approval in Greece.

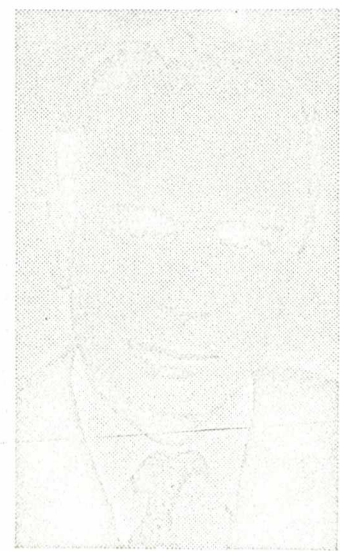
Why then did the regime stop at the brink? In part, it seems that the Junta realised it had lost the public relations battle—with the flow of detailed torture allegations from the defendants—and decided to cut its losses. It was not prepared to risk a sensational last chapter.

There has also been firm pressure from individuals in France and Scandinavia, and perhaps a cautionary word from the new American Ambassador in Greece, Mr Henry Tasca, who is now making his appraisal of the regime for Washington's benefit. Greek democrats abroad have written to Mr Wilson, other leaders in Europe, the Pope, and U Thant, to enlist their help.

Another obvious factor is the meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, on Wednesday, to decide whether to publish the Human Rights Commission's damning report on torture in Greece. Lenient sentences, combined with Mr Papadopoulos's announcement on

Friday of the end of arbitrary arrest, at least make a consistent case for a sympathetic response at Strasbourg.

By absolute standards, the court-martial sentences are harsh: life imprisonment in Greece means exactly that and Greek jails are not comfortable. But by the standards of the



Professor Karagiorgas

Greek regime, the sentences are fairly lenient, and in every case fall short of the stringent demands of the public prosecutor.

Seven of the defendants were acquitted and another seven, including two women, were given suspended sentences ranging from one to five years. The heaviest sentences after Professor Karagiorgas's life imprisonment were 18 years for the law professor George Manghakis, the Greek-French journalist Ioannis Starakis, and for the chemist Spiridon Loukas.

General George Iordanides, aged 69, a former Greek representative at NATO, who was accused of being a leader of the resistance organisation, was sentenced to eight years. So was Nicolaos Constantopoulos, a student leader who gave a scathing description of torture at the trial.

Among those sentenced are judges, doctors, lawyers, stu-

dents, clerks, and a taxi driver. The range of jobs emphasises the spread of anti-regime feeling, and also the readiness of the professional classes to give a lead.

Professor Karagiorgas was arrested last year after an accidental explosion at his home when he lost three fingers and the palm of his right hand. In court he said he had been tortured during his detention.

The professor, who held the chair of public finance at the Panteios School of Graduate Studies in Athens, and was secretary of the Government Economic Council before the coup, took a PhD at the London School of Economics in 1962. His former supervisor there flew to Athens to give evidence on his behalf.

The professor closed his defence statement in court with the remarks: "I had a duty to struggle for my country's liberty as a man who owes a debt to all those who have struggled before. I had a duty to my students at the university. It is not enough just to impart technical knowledge. I have tried to impart the belief that the great decisions shaping our nation's future must be taken through free democratic processes."

## Personal debt

"It would have been cowardice if I had refused to apply my ideas about liberty in practice. I have finally a personal debt to repay to my countrymen. This country has made considerable sacrifices on my behalf: it has paid for my studies at Greek universities, it has given me scholarships for postgraduate studies abroad, it made me a university professor and a senior civil servant."

"For all these sacrifices what return do the Greek people and our country demand of me? What do they ask of their scientists, intellectuals, and cultural leaders? Two simple things: that they should offer their services for the country's good; and that they should be guardians of the nation's spiritual values. I had an obligation to repay my debt to the nation even if I had to pay it with my life."

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