

Political trials in Athens *The Guardian.*

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Europe has seen nothing like the political trials which are now disturbing Athens since the young Russian intellectuals, Alexander Ginsburg and Yuri Galanskov, were sentenced in Moscow more than two years ago. Observers study the news from the Warsaw Pact countries to see whether Czechoslovakia may not return to a system of show trials, but in Athens, the capital city of a NATO country, the real thing is happening. Last week the editors and publishers of the newspaper, "Ethnos," were sentenced to prison for terms ranging from five years to 13 months. Their crime was publishing an interview with a former Minister who called for a Government of national unity and a return to democratic principles. The ex-Minister himself was sentenced to four and a half years. This week the verdict is expected in another political trial, that of 34 distinguished Greeks, charged with plotting the overthrow of the regime.

Nearly three years after coming to power, the Greek regime has lost the minimal support which it claimed. It has not built up new loyalty, but succeeded only in smashing the goodwill and toleration of the doubting few who were prepared to judge it by results. Those results are now known to be torture, mass arrests, and the denial of elementary human rights. The calm

which European holidaymakers profess to see as they look out from the Acropolis is the silence of a cowed and oppressed population.

The regime is apparently determined to teach the newspapers what "self-censorship" means. Under the new press law editors have to guess what they can or cannot print. The verdict in the "Ethnos" case shows that the margin is narrow and the penalty for misjudging it is heavy. In the other "sedition" trial, the regime's attack is directed not just against the liberal establishment but against most former politicians, including the right wing. The former right-wing Prime Minister, Mr Canellopoulos, was willing to go to the witness stand to defend the accused. By calling the trial, and by their attack on the press, the colonels appear to be thumbing their noses at the Council of Europe which brought about Greece's withdrawal in the autumn. No longer now do they bother to profess civilised standards. Last week the Greek newspapers were allowed for the first time to publish allegations of torture which some of the defendants made. The regime, some Athenians feel, deliberately intended the accounts of torture to be a warning to others who might try to resist. If true, this would add a new degree of cynicism to the junta's alleged brutality.