

Greek confessions revoked

From MARIO MODIANO

Athens, April 5

Six of the nine accused who gave evidence today at the Athens sedition trial revoked statements that they had made to the police, implying that these had been obtained under duress.

Quite unexpectedly, the five uniformed judges of the special military court and even the Crown prosecutor did not question this attitude and seemed tacitly to accept the repudiations. They refrained from pressing questions whenever a defendant said: "I beg you not to refer to my police statement. I would rather not say why."

One of the defendants, Theoharis Papamargaris, aged 33, a London-trained economist, said that his only involvement in the case was that he had translated into English some texts critical of the Greek Government's economic policies.

When the Crown prosecutor, Major Liapis, reminded him that in his police statement he had declared repentance for his anti-Government activities, he said: "Please do not insist on that statement." The prosecutor remarked: "I understand the reason. I can imagine what you have been through."

All but one of the nine who gave evidence today denied that they were either communists or members of the "Democratic Defence" organization.

One said he was in the dock for having given 50 drachmas (about 14s.) to another defendant, which the indictment described as "financing a subversive organization".

A young woman said that she had made copies of two proclamations and had repaired a duplicating machine at the request of another defendant.

A student, who said that his statement to the police had been

written by others and signed by himself at a time when "I was in a frightful condition, unable even to think", said that Professor Karayorgas, the principal defendant, had given him four stink-bombs to employ at Government-sponsored student meetings. He had not used them.

Another student told the court that he had scattered leaflets which read, "Democracy will win" and "Long live freedom".

Demosthenes Konaris, a lawyer, stated that he had been brought up to cherish the ideals of freedom and human dignity. He was therefore absolutely opposed to the present Greek regime. He had been initiated into the principles of the "Democratic Defence" while in London in January, 1968, by Mr. George Yannopoulos, a lecturer at a British university.

When he had returned to Athens he had made contact with members of the organization and had had long discussions on what could be done to restore democracy in Greece. He had no connexion with the organization's bomb activities.

When the Crown Prosecutor quoted extensively from his confession, Mr. Konaris questioned the accuracy of the statement, saying: "My police statement must be disregarded. Only what I have testified here is true."

The court, which is trying 34 intellectuals on charges of sedition and bomb explosions, adjourned until tomorrow.

Greek explosions are 'the nation's cries of agony'

The Guardian. 7.4.70.

Athens, April 6

About half of the 34 people accused of plotting to overthrow the Greek Government by force filed one by one into the dock of a military court here today and pleaded not guilty. The others are expected to make their final pleas tomorrow.

General George Iordanides, retired, described in the indictment as the leader of Democratic Defence, to which the group are alleged to belong, denied the charges that this group had struggled to overthrow the regime and establish communism. The perpetuation of the present regime, not the defendants' actions, he said, would shift Greece towards communism.

"Western Europe stands by our side to overthrow the present military-supported regime," he said, "because as long as it stays in power it hinders European progress." The wave of bomb explosions had been the "nation's cry of agony. The people are being

strangled so they are making choking noises."

The explosions had not constituted a serious threat against the regime. "We needed at least the armaments of a battalion in order to achieve something. The exhibits in front of you confiscated in the hands of the defendants are leaflets, two or three revolvers, cables, and electric lamps," he said.

An example

The General, formerly Greece's representative at NATO headquarters in Paris, claimed that the present authoritarian regime in Greece constitutes a threat of war, and said that democratic governments were a guarantee that a nuclear war would be averted. Dictatorships were more likely to become the instigators of a nuclear war.

He added that Greece's example of setting up a dictatorship might find imitators, and declared that "this is a real danger that confronts Europe and America."

Among other defendants to

make their final plea today was Judge Antonios Mihalakeas, described as a ringleader of the group, who said he had become a member of the organisation to help in the struggle for the restoration of democracy in Greece. Like all the other defendants, he, too, denied charges of plotting to establish a Communist regime.

The court is expected to reach a verdict this weekend. —Reuter.