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Greek hope of leniency measures

From MARIO MODIANO

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Mr. George Papadopoulos, the Greek Prime Minister, is expected to announce tomorrow, at a press conference, the re-activation of Article 10 of the new constitution, which safeguards the Greeks against arbitrary arrest and detention. The move is likely to be combined with leniency measures involving the release of political prisoners now detained without warrant or charge.

The regime promised to re-activate the habeas corpus provisions of the constitution "before April, 1970, at the latest" in the timetable submitted to the Council of Europe last December; the Prime Minister clearly wishes to show the regime's good will by adhering to this timetable, although Greece has withdrawn from the council, and eventually to forestall a condemnation of the Government by the council's foreign ministers, who are due to meet next Wednesday.

The European foreign ministers will be asked to consider at their meeting a "concept resolution" approved by their permanent representatives last month. This condemns the Greek regime for multiple violations of the European human rights convention, asks it to stop using torture as an administrative practice, and authorizes the immediate publication of the 1,000-page report of the human rights commission on Greece. The Greek Foreign Ministry has been trying to persuade western European governments not to release this.

The reinstatement of habeas corpus procedure would eliminate another of the European criticisms of the regime's domestic practices. However, the timing of the trial of the 34 Greek intellectuals, as well as the allegations of police torture made in court, has proved awkward for the Greek regime.

It is pointed out that the alleged tortures refer to dates before last November's agreement with the International Red Cross, and Red Cross delegates have since given assurances they had no evidence of malpractices since then.

European diplomats in Athens feel that the conviction of five journalists and a former minister, which led to the closing of the Athens newspaper Ethnos last week, is likely to carry weight during the discussions at the foreign ministers' meeting. They seem to question the effectiveness of all the safeguards introduced by the Greek Government so long as martial law, which was imposed three years ago, remains the supreme law of the realm.

The trial of the 34 accused of sedition and bomb explosions continued today with speeches for the defence.