

'Martyrdom' of 34 in Athens trial

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Athens, April 9

A defence lawyer said today that 34 people on trial for sedition were not terrorists and traitors, but symbols, national heroes, and martyrs.

"This trial is a political trial dealing with political crimes," said Mr Evangelos Yannopoulos. "The defendants are political opponents of the Government, and their actions were purely ideological."

The Government alleged that the 34 plotted to overthrow the regime which came to power three years ago in a coup.

Six of 40 defence lawyers spoke during the morning session after the prosecutor Major Ionnis Liapis, had called for one death sentence, four life imprisonment terms, and a total of 264 years in prison for 21 other defendants. He also recommended three acquittals and suspended sentences for five men.

Death penalty call

All the defence lawyers rejected Government allegations that the 34 aimed at the violent overthrow of the Government. The evidence did not support the Government charges, they said.

The death penalty was urged for Dionysios Karageorgas, an economics lecturer accused of belonging to Democratic Devence. Life imprisonment for another professor, George Manghakis, and also for Ioannis Starakis, Ioannis Kombotis, and Spyridon Loukas.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, Mr Papadopoulos, is expected to announce some liberalisation measures during a press conference tomorrow. It will be his first since last October, when he announced a partial restoration of civil liberties and press freedom.

Sources suggest that he might announce a modification of martial law in force since the coup or a limited amnesty and release of some of the 1,800 political prisoners detained as dangerous to public security.

In BONN the Justice Mini-

ster, Herr Jahn, said that Greece's relations with West Germany will be seriously encumbered if Professor Karageorgas is convicted of sedition and sentenced to death.

He said, "I have not given up hope that in its judgment the court will reject the verdicts demanded by the prosecution with the aim of destroying the Government's political opponents." He added that he was shocked at the "extravagance" of the prosecution's demand for a death sentence for Karageorgas and life imprisonment for Manghakis.—UPI and Reuter.

Socialists ready if talks fail

Vienna, April 9

The Austrian Socialist Party decided today to form a minority Government if coalition talks with the conservative People's Party prove unsuccessful by April 25, a Socialist spokesman said.

The Socialist Party chairman, Dr Bruno Kreisky, told President Jonas of the decision and Dr Jonas was expected to approve a minority Cabinet under Dr Kreisky's Chancellorship if the talks fail.

The Socialists won 81 Parliamentary seats of 165 in the general elections on March 1. The People's Party, which had ruled Austria for the past four years, now holds 79 seats and the small Freedom Party five.

A coalition of Socialists and People's Party ruled Austria from 1945 to 1966 with the Socialists as junior partners, but new coalition talks have so far failed to bridge wide gaps between the two parties on economic and social problems.

A small coalition between the Socialists and the Freedom Party was ruled out by the latter during the election campaign.