

# Greek writers risk death penalty

By Michael Manning  
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THE GREEKS this week received a lesson in political realities in the course of two broadly publicised mass trials:

They watched one military court pass what amounted to a death sentence on Ethnos, the truculent old Athens daily, for printing a text that called for the restoration of democracy.

They read for the first time since the coup, unexpurgated statements alleging police torture to extort confessions from some of the 34 intellectuals now on trial for sedition.

Yet, the Greek regime which celebrates its third anniversary in power later this month, still seems more concerned with providing the medicine to remedy relaxed discipline, than with the fact that the Greeks might find the medication too strong.

The two trials clearly reflected the Government's determination to suppress growing political impatience among the Press and the intellectuals which has come

naturally after three years of static military rule.

If doubts had lingered, they were sharply dispelled by an infantry major who was a judge at the "Ethnos" trial when he told one defendant: "You may not live long enough to see elections."

Even if the average Greek was appalled by the harshness of the Ethnos verdict, which sent its five proprietors and two editors to jail long enough to force the paper to close, as well as by the nightmarish quality of the torture allegations, the vast publicity which the regime has tolerated in both cases may have been a deliberate warning.

The dramatic outcome of the "Ethnos" trial will inevitably restrain other Greek dailies. If the crippling Ethnos sentences are a guide, the penalties expected at the trial of the 34 intellectuals next week should make it clear that even the printing of resistance leaflets can bring a sedition charge and a possible death penalty.

The prosecution has con-

veniently charged the 34 not under martial law, which prohibits anti-regime propaganda and carries a maximum five-year prison sentence, but under a 23-year-old law against Communist sedition that gives the court enough latitude to include capital punishment.

In the last 10 days, the prosecution has in fact tried to prove that the intellectuals were Communists, and therefore culpable of Communist sedition.

The defence, in turn, sought to show first that none was Communist and, secondly, that far from trying to overthrow the "established political system and social order," they had sought to restore it. The exercise involved lengthy explanations to disbelieving military judges as to why Socialism and Communism were not the same thing.

If anything, the two trials will have proved to recalcitrant Greeks that the regime means business and that it has now discarded a good deal of its previous sensitivity about its domestic and foreign image.