

More Greeks allege

police torture

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FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

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Five more of the 34 defendants in the Athens sedition trial today repudiated confessions to the police, alleging that these had been obtained under torture. Since the hearings began on Friday, ten of the 34 leaders and members of the "Democratic Defence" organization standing trial before the Athens special military court have submitted statements revoking confessions.

Today, however, the military tribunal of five judges, countered the move of the defence which has invoked a legal technicality to compel the court to hear the torture statements, thus authorizing their publication in the Greek press. Judge Atsalis, presiding, invoked a provision of the code of military penal procedure empowering the court to prohibit the reading of a document "if it obstructed proceedings".

The court's ruling was given after counsel for the Defence had read out the first statement, from Demetrios Kotsakis, a 36-year-old taxi-driver who is accused of carrying explosives and propaganda material in his car. In his statement he claimed that immediately after his arrest last September he was beaten up by a gendarmerie captain, even after he "was vomiting thick clots of blood", for refusing to answer questions.

He was then taken over by the special branch of the Greek military police, and, he alleged, after refusing to make a confession, he was put in a cell in his underclothes and was forced to stand up without sleep, food or water for five days and nights. He said he was beaten unconscious at two-hour intervals by eight men.

"On Thursday, at dawn, I was in a state of terrible despair and when the guard went away to awaken the people who were to come and beat me, I urinated in my hands and drank my water, which was bitter as poison", the statement said. He claimed that the next morning, after another beating, he vomited blood and bile. He signed a confession after being promised some water. He was later moved to a hotel at Drossia, where he remained for 70 days in solitary confinement.

The ruling prohibiting the reading of the other four statements provoked sharp alterca-

tions between the court and the defence lawyers. The Crown prosecutor said that the Greek newspapers had "abused" their freedom and had printed the full texts of the allegations by the defendants.

The other statements, which the court accepted in evidence, were signed by Ioannis Kombotiatis, a telecommunications employee, Jean Starakis, a Greek-born French journalist accused of planting bombs, Spyros Loukas, a chemical engineer charged with the bomb explosion which injured 12 in the Olympic Airways passenger lounge, and Victor Papazissis, a book publisher.

Earlier the court had continued its investigation of allegations of torture. It called Major Spyridon Goumas, a cousin of the defendant Nicolaos Constantopoulos, who claimed that he had been tortured by the military police. The major, who had visited the defendant twice in his cell, said his cousin was anti-communist; he denied that he had been shown by his cousin signs of ill-treatment and that he had taken medicines to him.

Lieutenant-Colonel Mavroidis, deputy chief of security of the Athens suburban police, denied that Mr. Rokofyllos, one of the defendants, or anyone else had been tortured. He said Mr. Rokofyllos had had hallucinations (that his wife was being tortured to death in a cell next to his) because of a bad conscience that he had betrayed all his accomplices the very first day of his arrest. "They are now trying to calumniate the security men because they are a barrier to their nefarious aims", he said.

He denied that his department ever made use of hallucinogens. Turning to the defendant he said: "You feigned your hallucinations. Your ability to act is boundless."

Defence lawyers last night reported to the court that a prosecution witness, Elias Kalliakopoulos, a student who had also repudiated his statement to the military police, had been arrested as he left the court. The president of the court and the Crown prosecutor said they knew nothing of this and had not ordered his arrest.

The court tonight began hearing witnesses for the defence.