

Feud over monarchy resurfaces in Greece

FROM JOHN CARR
IN ATHENS

A STRONG pro-royalist faction in New Democracy, the Greek opposition conservative party, has become restive after a war of words between the party founder and erstwhile president, Constantine Karamanlis, and the former King Constantine II, who is in exile in London.

Publication this week of a 12-volume personal archive by Mr Karamanlis — in which the crusty architect of Greece's membership of the European Union and restorer of democratic rule passes judgment on leading politicians — has set the cat among the parliamentary pigeons. Athens bookshops reported a brisk trade in the archive, probably the most exhaustive documentation of modern Greek history this century.

Passages leaked before publication indicate that the former King was plotting a coup to restore himself to the throne in 1975, the year after Mr Karamanlis restored democracy after the colonels' regime and held a plebiscite in which two-thirds of Greeks voted to have a republic. The former King has denied the story, claiming that Mr Karamanlis himself urged a coup from his own exile in 1966.

The dispute has revived a 30-year vendetta between Mr Karamanlis and the ex-monarch. Supporters of the former King distributed leaflets calling Mr Karamanlis a "traitor" during the official launch of the archive on Wednesday.

Mr Karamanlis, 90, was not present. The organisers said he was incapacitated with lumbago. Last week he had made his first public statement after stepping down from the presidency in 1995, capping a 60-year career in politics, by warning royalist sympathisers that the issue of the monarchy was "finished, once and for all".

New Democracy is believed to have between 30 and 50 royalist parliamentary deputies among its 111 MPs. Their opposition to Mr Karamanlis's republican tradition is so great they have even expressed guarded sympathy for Costas Simitis, the Socialist Prime Minister.