

Ousted Greek king wins payment for properties

F. O 29/11/02 p 4

By Nikki Tait,
Law Courts Correspondent

The former king of Greece won €12m (\$11.9m, £7.7m) damages yesterday when the European Court of Human Rights ruled that confiscation of property after the royal family fled their country in 1967 following a military coup had been a breach of human rights.

The Strasbourg court acknowledged that the former royal family had owned the properties in question – three estates, the “Tatoi” north of Athens, “Mon Repos” on Corfu, and the “Polydendri” near Lasrissa – as private individuals, rather than in the capacity at members of the royal family.

It said expropriation would have been legitimate if the

Greek state had paid compensation. However, in the absence of this, the court held by a 15-2 majority that there had been a violation of property protection rights.

It awarded €12m to ex-King Constantine, €900,000 to his sister, Princess Irene, and €300,000 to his aunt, Princess Ekaterini. A further payment of €500,000 must be made jointly to the three applicants to cover their costs.

But the payment, which the Greek government said it would make, is believed to be significantly less than the ex-king had been seeking. The Strasbourg court said the lack of compensation was the basis for finding a violation of human rights, and hence the compensation awarded did not need to

reflect the full value of the properties.

It decided to fix on an amount “reasonably related” to the value of the property taken.

The monarchy in Greece was abolished by a referendum in 1974, when the state seized various assets and placed some funds in a bank account as compensation.

The three properties involved in the case have been described as top-quality real estate, with the Corfu palace standing on about 60 acres.

The “Tatoi” residence is the largest of the three, encompassing more than 10,000 acres, while the provincial residence sits on about 8,400 acres.

Ex-King Constantine now lives in London.