

TRIALS MAKE ROMAN HOLIDAY.

In Havana, foreign Pressmen heard rebel leader Fidel Castro defend the summary courts-martial of members of the deposed Batista Regime. He said 400 would face firing-squads. Relatives of 700 awaiting trial wait in long queues - each prisoner wondering, every hour, whether he will escape the revolution-quick-justice. Yet these men (Fidel Castro charges), were among those responsible for the killing of 20-thousand Cubans under the Batista regime. In the Sports Palace, 17,000 people, in carnival atmosphere, watched the Revolutionary tribunal of three men conducting Havana's first war-time crimes hearing. Rarely have newsreel cameras recorded such dramatic scenes in so explosive a setting. Major Sosa Blanco, 51, was accused of murder, torture, robbery. Reports written by correspondents rivalled fiction. One wrote, "I'm in the Roman Colosseum". Major Blanco protested that he was not a murderer, but a soldier, carrying out war-time orders. Among numerous witnesses against Blanco was a twelve-year-old boy Angelic Estrada. Above the shrieks of the gallery the loud speakers carried the testimony. Even before it was fully heard the crowd shouted "kill him". This was justice in Cuba, revolution-style. Apparently Blanco remained calm as the youngster pointed a finger at him and cried, "he killed my father". It's almost needless to say the prisoner was found guilty and sentenced to death. Since this conviction, largely because of foreign protests, trials will not be held in the Sports Palace, but they will go on.