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THE EXECUTION OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR
ASIA-MINOR DISASTER.

The Tragic Story as seen by an Eyewitness.

*Either Return to
Papadakis or send him
Current History Review
of above*

As soon as "the Smyrna Disaster" came on that has uprooted a million and a quarter of people from their historical homes and has made an equal number of homeless, penniless refugees the awe of the misery and the indignation for the catastrophe created the great question "Who, after all, is responsible for all this?"

The Greek "Revolution of 1922", as it was named has found the most guilty for the disaster and after a brisk trial condemned them to death and proceeded forthwith to their execution disregarding the "threats" and "friendly recommendations" made by some of the foreign Representatives in Athens.

The decision of the condemnation to death of the former premiers of Greece D. Gounaris, N. Stratos and P. Protopapadakis of the ex-ministers N. Theotokis and George Baltadjis as well as of General Hadjianestis, ex Commander in Chief of the Greek Army in Asia Minor, was issued by the Special Court-Martial, held in the Parliament Building, at 6.30 A.M. at the daybreak of November 28, 1922. It was about midnight when the Revolutionary Court-Martial withdrew for decision and only at 6.30 that the decision was reached. It took the court six hours and a half to draw it!

Already by 2.99 P.M. the prisoners (who during their trial were lodged in a room in the Parliament building) were transported to the "Averoff" prisons on big trucks (they that only a month ago were driving on luxurious limousines!) under heavy military guard.

At 6.30 A.M., Exactly, the Judges, led by General Othoneos, President of the Court Martial, entered the meeting hall. And the audience that stood awake all through the night to hear the decision (and there were quite many ladies among them) listened in a thrilling silence to the sentence read by the President, while the guard "presented arms".

Messrs. Gounaris, Stratos, Protopapadakis, Baltadjis, Theotokis and General Hadjianestis were condemned to death while Admiral Goudas and General Strategos were sentenced for life. Of these the military were also condemned to military degradation. Aside from these there were different fines imposed on each one of them varying from 200,000 to a million drachmas.

Gounaris was sick in a clinic suffering from typhoid when the sentence was issued, but at 7.00 A.M. three trucks full of policemen called on the hospital and transported him to the "Averoff" prisons trembling with fever and wrapped in a blanket.

A little before 11.00 A.M. the pastor of the prisons ministered to the prisoners the Holy Communion, took their confession and asked their last wishes. What did the prisoners say in those tragic moments is a secret hidden behind a sacred veil!

A closed camion was stationed at the door of the "Averoff" prison and two police officers by the chauffeur. The parting of the prisoners with their family was heart-rending. The guard had difficulties in severing them. Stratos in parting with his son was heard to say: "You will have my curse if you ever interfere in politics". The prisoners entered one after the other the camion, the back part of which was closed only by curtains flopping in the air, that allowed me to see the pale faces of those that were the autocratic rulers of eight millions going to their death. As they were entering the camion a laborer shouted to them, "Farewell, farewell!" The camion started followed by the cars of the accompanying officers, the pastor and some trucks with armed policemen. Two cars with newspaper men, in spite of all forbidding orders succeeded in breaking the line and following the line of cars.

None of the relatives was allowed to accompany the prisoners save Dr. Vlachos, the family doctor and a cousin of Gounaris. Some neighbouring inhabitants and children followed running after the line of cars, which, passing the "Thon" Villa stopped at the foot of Mount Hymetus. Infantry was stationed on the spot since the early hours of the day and had taken position and fixed exactly the place where the sentenced leaders were to be shot. The camion drove through a double line of soldiers whose sides were closed by policemen, forming thus a parallelogram in whose center were the sentenced ministers, the Revolutionary Procurator, the Secretary of the Court Martial, the Pastor of the prison and a few officers. We, the newspaper men, with some hundred other people stayed a few steps behind the line of soldiers. Gounaris white-pale from his sickness and staggering had to be supported successively by Stratos and Baltadjis. As they were marching, Gounaris addressing a near-by officer said: "Only let the story end as soon as possible". Stratos with nervous movements offered from his cigarette case to Theotokis a cigarette. Theotokis wearing his monocle lighted the cigarette and puffed apparently calmly. Stratos had taken off his hat and was smoking nervously. He stamped with his feet on the ground as if to choose a firmer basis to stand against the bullets. Baltadjis took off his monocle, cleaned it and replaced it on his eye as if to see more clearly. Only Gounaris was staying motionless with his hands deep in his overcoat pockets.

An officer with his sword pointed out where each one of the condemned was to stand. And they all marched silently to their positions. They were placed in a straight line, each at a distance of five meters from the other in the following line: Theotokis, Stratos, Baltadjis, Gounaris, Protopapadakis, Hadjianistis.

The Revolutionary Procurator, Colonel Gregoriades, approached General Hadjanesti and said the formal phrase of military degradation: "General Hadjanesti, you are unworthy to wear the military insignia. I degrade you!" And he took away the insignia.

At a short distance of about five meters there was a special line of soldiers in groups of six opposite each condemned. Then followed an agony of five minutes during which the Secretary of the Court Martial read the order of the Execution. All the soldiers presented arms during the reading.

The very moment that the reading ended the officer on the head of the executionary detachments raised his naked sword and shouted steadily the military command: "Attention!" Then, "Take aim!" Then was the most

tragic moment of the whole scene. No one moved and there was a chilly silence during which all of us held our breath. "Fire!" And a unison of shots brought to the ground the six sentenced men. Of the six soldiers of the executive detachment corresponding to each condemned only five soldiers fire together. The sixth, after the unison of shots, approached the already dead man and fired through the head what is called in military language the "coup de grace".

Immediately after this policemen lifted the bloodstained corpses and placed them on the same camion on which the former political leaders were carried to the place of the execution.

And as our reporters' car followed for sometime the camion, I distinguished through the flopping curtains of the back part of the camion the white-haired head of Protopapadakis moving to-and-fro with the jerks of the car.

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The bodies were taken to the first cemetery of Athens where at 4.00 P.M. of the same day they were buried (by permission of the Revolutionary Committee) by their families. Few men have followed the funeral service of these men who in life were followed, for some time at least, with half the voters of Greece.

S.S.P.

Athens, November 30, 1922.