

criminal prisoners took care of them by beating them up and throwing them out of the barracks.

It is ironic what the famous Russian writer and poet Mikhail Lermontov said during his incarceration: “At least here I can speak freely.” Apparently there were no spies in tsarist prisons. That was a Bolshevik invention.

My formal interrogations were long, brutal, depressing and soul-destroying, but I must say, without physical torture. I remember the first session. I am sitting on the seat of the accused without any formal accusation against me. Ruben Ghazaryan is behind his desk. As a psychological ploy, to intimidate me and break my self-confidence, he takes his *Nagant* revolver out of the drawer and places it on the desk.⁴ Then he opens a fat, bulging file to give me an impression of how much material has been collected on me and how grave my crime is. To show my indifference toward the spectacle, I ask,

Please tell me where I am.

You are in Yerevan in the National Security Building.

I am a foreign citizen. Why have you arrested me and brought me here?

It is war time and power is might, he replies coldly.

The interrogation begins and the questions cover a lengthy period, from 1921 to 1944, that is, from the Sovietization of Armenia to the day of my arrest.

Almost every night during the five or six months of

4 This must have been a common practice during interrogations. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn explains: “As long ago as 1919 the chief method used by the interrogator was a *revolver on the desk*.... The frightening revolver lies there and sometimes it is aimed at you....” *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation, I–II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 97.