

like that of the narrative he had already written: factual, straightforward, impersonal. The scientist in him would not have allowed him to get too personal and detail his own personal torturous, traumatic and tragic experience.

In my English rendering of my father's narrative in chapters 3 and 4 of the present book, I tried to stay close to the original Armenian text and emulate his style, without artistic elaboration or creative embellishment. Then, taking the lead from his outlines, I looked elsewhere for details on life in the Gulag prisons and labor camps, and those details helped to fill in the picture of the years my father spent in that hellish system.

My father spent sixteen months in solitary confinement in an underground cell in the NKVD building in Yerevan before he was sent onward to Siberia, a most tormenting psychological punishment. Yet, in the brevity and pointedness of his style, he avoided pathetic description, saying only "How unbearable loneliness is! How sad it is to live one's life in solitude, punishment within punishment." There are no other details of his unparalleled ordeal in that cell and its consequences except for this short confession: "Months of solitary confinement had affected me gravely, and every so often I was visited by excruciating nightmares."

I learned that those dark, vermin-infested cells "were typically no larger than a couple of steps in each direction and could get extremely frigid in the winter time. By most accounts, people could spend only a short time in these cells before losing both their health and their