

The significance of Oganessian's memoir, *Under Stalin's Sun*, is in the details it provides, not only of his own daily life but also of the life stories and circumstances and the "crimes" committed by other inmates of various creeds and nationalities with whom he made friends. Oganessian's memoir was yet another window onto my father's life story.

Cheating, lying, robbing and stealing went with the territory. They were considered necessary survival tools in the labor camps. My father attested to that too. But the fact of the matter is that such behavior was widespread in Stalin's Soviet Union and only intensified in the camps, as Anne Applebaum observed: "Both in the camps and outside them, it was possible to find the same slovenly working practices, the same criminally stupid bureaucracy, the same corruption, and the same sullen disregard for human life."⁴⁰ The practice of cheating on work norms was called *tufta*, without which, as Leonid Trus of Norilsk explained, "there would have been nothing at all."⁴¹

Tales of torturous interrogations fill the memoirs of ex-convicts. My father heard his fellow Armenian and non-Armenian inmates in Norilsk describe with abhorrence the dreadful tortures they had been subjected to in order to make them confess to imaginary acts of treason, but he insisted that he himself had not been tortured in the most brutal ways that others described. As some memoirs indicate, I can surmise that, curiously,

⁴⁰ Applebaum, *Gulag*, p. xxviii.

⁴¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 358. Characteristically, a Polish friend of Applebaum remarked, "You think prisoners invented that? The whole Soviet bloc practiced *tufta*." See *ibid.*, p. xxviii.