

Such monstrous tortures were truly abominable. But were late-night interrogations that continued until morning not sufficiently excruciating? And when the prisoner returned to his cell exhausted, he was not allowed to sleep. These were sufficiently torturous experiences in the Cheka prison in Yerevan. My father remembered that it was forbidden to sleep during the day and that if you collapsed in your cell the guard would wake you up with a thundering curse or come into the cell and kick you awake. Solzhenitsyn ranked night-time interrogation at the top of his list of thirty-one methods of torture that “break the will and character of the prisoner,” because, he explained, “at night, the prisoner, torn from sleep lacks his normal daytime equanimity and common sense. He is more vulnerable.”⁴⁵ And there were days of sleeplessness during the period of extended interrogation: “One can say that sleeplessness became a universal method in the Organs. From being one among many tortures, it became an integral part of the system of State Security.”⁴⁶ Vahram Alazan spoke of his night-time interrogations with the same vehemence.⁴⁷

Torturous interrogations and ridiculous questions were ways of wearing the prisoner down and making him confess. But confess to what? My father remembered signing a confession in the Cheka prison in Yerevan which contained all the allegations against him. His answers and explanations, his attempts to repudiate those

45 Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, p. 103.

46 Ibid., p. 112.

47 Alazan, «Տառապանքի ուղիներով» (Through the roads of suffering), p. 88.