

rebuilding the shattered Soviet economy: using half-hungry prisoners, skilled and unskilled workers as well as those who had never worked with their hands, to raise the infrastructure of factories, warehouses, barracks and buildings, and excavate the ores of mineral-rich Siberia. Did this inefficient method of exploiting labor boost the economy as it was originally intended to do? If it did to some degree, it was because those underfed human creatures worked in the most inhumane conditions, on a heavy work schedule, with clothing and bedding that was inadequate for the climate, all totally unacceptable in the free world. They worked and they lived at the whim of the warder who could slam on an extra punishment whether they deserved it or not. My father was just one among that enormous number of wretched men, many of whom did not survive the endless darkness of hardship to see the light of freedom.

During a recent trip to Armenia, as I was talking to my historian and social scientist friends about my project of writing my father's life story, I learned that the Norilsk prison camp, at least the original one after World War II, was built by an Armenian architect named Mazmanyán. "Of course," they said, "there's nothing surprising in that. All the labor camps and the buildings around them were built by inmates carrying out their sentences." My curiosity about this man, whom they knew only by his last name, took me to the «Հայկական Սովետական Հանրագիտարան» (Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia), volume 7. There he was, Mikayel Mazmanyán, architect, born in Tbilisi in 1899, died in Yerevan in 1971. The