

about my father's past if I had insisted?

Valodya remembers an interesting episode that took place after his father returned to his native village. Returning from work one day in 1962, Samson noticed a group of fellow villagers gathered around Stalin's statue in the main square. In reply to his query, the village chief said they had come to topple the statue but nobody dared to do it. "Let me do it," Samson said. "I suffered in Siberia for nothing I did wrong," and he threw a rope around Stalin's neck and dragged him off with a tractor.¹⁶

Abel Ordukhanyan served his life sentence in Norilsk. Did he meet my father? Did he tell him how the Cheka executioners had extinguished their cigarettes on his skin, or pushed needles under his nails to make him confess?¹⁷ Abel told his daughter about the visit of a group of high-ranking officers from Moscow. They had come to inspect the prisoners' living and working conditions and had hypocritically asked them if they were content. Abel had audaciously spoken up: "Wouldn't it be better if you shot us all at once rather than gradually starving us to death?" Once in a while though, Abel received a parcel of foodstuffs from home. Did he give a small share to my dad who couldn't even dream of receiving such things from distant Iran? His one experience of a trashed and looted package from home was enough to deter him from asking for another one.

Iren Ordukhanyan testifies that her father wrote a long

16 See Valodya Martirosyan's testimony in Kharatyan et al., «Ստալինյան բռնաճնշումները Հայաստանում» (The Stalinist persecutions in Armenia), pp. 286–305.

17 See Iren Ordukhanyan's interview in *ibid.*, pp. 314–320.