

arrest and his or her whereabouts afterwards. It was only in the 1980s and 90s, after the archives had been opened, that some pursued the truth. There were also the mass exonerations and sometimes the posthumous acquittals, and the documentation that came with those acquittals through which some cases were clarified. But again, Armenians were cautious about disturbing the hornets' nest. Perhaps this was due to their experience. They had seen the persecutions of 1929, the purges of 1937–1938, and the mass arrest and exile of entire families to Altay in southern Siberia on June 14, 1949.¹⁸ The irony is that on

18 The mass exile of 1949 was the result of a secret agreement between Stalin and Beria and the special decree that followed. It concerned the people of the three republics of the Caucasus, but the great majority of the exiles were again Armenian families, including immigrants from Greece, Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries as well as the United States. The implementation of this infamous decree was cruelly accomplished in towns and villages by Armenian bureaucrats who showed no respect for human dignity, gave families half an hour to get ready, rounded up young and old, loaded them into cargo trains and sent them off to a grim destination for good. The excuse given for this mass deportation was that the deportees were Dashnaks or Kulaks or spies or legionnaires or some combination thereof, in other words, "traitors to their homeland" and "enemies of the people." Writing in the Beirut-based periodical *Pakine* in 1989 (No. 7–12, p. 8), the Soviet Armenian writer Sero Khanzatyán put the number of deportees from Soviet Armenia at nearly 100,000, adding that about that many Armenians were also deported from Georgia, Azerbaijan and the then autonomous oblast of Nagorno Karabagh.

The same issue of *Pakine* contains several other important articles about the catastrophic events of 1949, including one by Anton Kochinyan. The future First Secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia (1966–1974) had taken part in the organization and implementation of the project in Gyumri. "That was real barbarism against patriotic people," he wrote in 1989, "people imbued with love of and yearning for the homeland who had left their homes and belongings abroad and come to Soviet Armenia from every corner of the world, only to be sent into exile just as they set foot on the paternal soil." According to Kochinyan, American Armenian repatriates suffered the most, having left comfortable situations and thriving businesses and repatriated purely out of love for the homeland.

For additional information on the 1949 mass arrest and exile of repatriated families, see also Armenak Manukyan, «Քաղաքական ընթանշումները Հայաստանում, 1920–1953» (Political persecutions in Armenia, 1920–1953) (Yerevan: "Areresum"-Ani, 1999), and Armine Koundakjian,