

every time the reins have been loosened since the Khrushchevian thaw, the outpouring of facts and evidence of Stalin's punishment system has spun out of control. As Solzhenitsyn put it, "If we start to recall the sufferings of millions, we are told it will distort the historical perspective! If we doggedly seek out the essence of our morality, we are told it will darken our material progress!"⁴⁰

My father began writing what became this book in order to let at least Armenians know about what the Soviet regime had been, what Stalin had done when he ruled over millions of people who were shackled by fear and apprehension at best, or isolated and condemned to gradual death in the hard labor camps, far from the eyes of humanity. My father knew who Stalin was. Dashnaktsutun knew who Stalin was. As early as 1931, a typical characterization in *Droshag*, the ARF organ, was the following: "Stalin is the most notable chemist in the Soviet Union. He can turn a human being into dirt, as he did with Trotsky. But he can also turn dirt into a man, as he did with Mikoyan."⁴¹ Now, my father was penning his memoir at a time when some Diasporan Armenian leaders were attempting a "rapprochement" with the Soviets, believing in the post-Stalin transformation of Soviet policies. They were playing it "safe" and they

40 Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, p. 94.

41 Anastas Mikoyan, a famous Armenian communist, was a close collaborator of Stalin who played a dirty role when it came to escalating repression, arrests and persecution in Soviet Armenia. His visits to Yerevan were always the harbinger of ominous events. He was instrumental in the implementation of the 1937–1938 purges in Armenia. For this quote from an article in *Droshag*, 1931, No. 12, p. 318, see *Pakine*, 1995, No. 7–8–9, p. 75.