

sanity.”⁹ Only the most ideologically dangerous political prisoners or “terrorists” were put in those infamous solitary cells. How grave was my father’s crime that he deserved such treatment? What an iron will he must have had to withstand it and survive.

During his exile in Siberia, Suren Ghazaryan was confined to a solitary cell for a time, like my father, and he described in detail how he spent that time with nothing to do during the endless, slow-moving days. Cut off and forgotten by the world, he reminisced, and that was the toughest, the most painful and intolerable time, he wrote, especially when memories of happier days came rushing into his mind.¹⁰

My father had all the time in the world to think about the happy days of the past, but there is no mention of those bitter-sweet moments in his memoir. However, as a benign memory he later chose to tell us, as something that would not hurt us nor hurt him, he once laughingly said that he had often visualized with pangs of longing the backgammon games he and my mother used to play, and wondered why he always lost, every single time. He had taught my mom how to play, and she, the novice, had figured out how to win. And she was happy, and he was happy. So that day when he told us this story of his pastime in exile, being in a better mood to talk about

9 David Hosford, Pamela Kachurin and Thomas Lamont, *GULAG: Soviet Prison Camps and Their Legacy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University, 2006 [?]), p. 18.

10 Suren Ghazaryan, «Դա չպետք է կրկնվի» (That should not be repeated) (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grogh, 1988), p. 195. This is the Armenian translation of the original Russian text, titled *Eto nie dalzžno pavidaritsa*, which was published in Yerevan in 1990.