

in 1945 because of derogatory comments he had made in written correspondence about “the Wisest of the Wise, whom we labeled with the transparently obvious nickname of *Pakhan* or *Ringleader of the Thieves*.”¹⁷ Solzhenitsyn was brought to Moscow and given eight years in Siberian prison camps, but when his sentence was up in 1953, he was sent to permanent internal exile in a village in Kazakhstan. His case was reviewed in 1956 and he was exonerated. Solzhenitsyn's works shocked the world and introduced the West to the horrors of those infamous camps and the inhumane methods of isolating and eliminating all those who came under suspicion of opposing Stalin's policies.

Many of these details are mirrored in memoirs by Soviet Armenian survivors, memoirs finally taken out of locked drawers and published starting in the late 1980s. It is through the memoirs of both Armenians and non-Armenians that I was let into the world of my own father's suffering and emotional tumult. In one of those memoirs, an autobiography for instance, Gurgun Mahari described his life as a political prisoner in Soviet labor camps.¹⁸ It

17 Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, p. 134.

18 Grigor Ajemyan, Gurgun Mahari's son from his first marriage, collected his father's writings about his life in prison and in exile—his short autobiography as well as poems, prose, letters, etc.—and published them in «Սիբիրական» (Of Siberia, or The Siberian), an 850-page volume funded by the Armenian section of the Galuste Gulbenkian Foundation.

After Mahari's death in 1969, but long before his son's great endeavor, his second wife, Antonina Mahari (née Povilaitite), wrote his biography in Russian. That text was ready for publication in 1972 but was only published in 2003 and was subsequently translated into English and other languages. The Armenian version is titled «Իմ Ողիսականը» (My odyssey). Mahari's first wife had renounced him after his arrest, and years later in Siberia, he met and married Antonina, a much younger woman in exile from Lithuania.