

the age of fifty-two, my father struggled to regain his physical and psychological health, to raise a bridge to the normal life of yesteryear and to fill the huge economic, social and psychic gap that his long absence had caused. With an iron will he overcame. He kept himself super-busy and buried his tormenting memories in various activities and the hustle and bustle of everyday life. He was one of the few who successfully overcame—well, almost—the trauma he had endured and returned to a relatively normal life.

Through Grigor Ajemyan's testimony about the successful and prolific life of his father, Gurgen Mahari, after his return from eighteen years in exile, we see that Mahari was another exception. Ajemyan writes, "Many revolutionaries succumbed to the hardship of the Gulag. They were physically or spiritually lost. If they were not buried in unknown graves, they returned as faded shadows or the living dead."³ And how about Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, my favorite writer in this field? Without the benefit of paper and pencil which were denied to prisoners, building on his extraordinary memory, he produced after his return an unprecedented and unsurpassed picture of the Gulag. Solzhenitsyn was only thirty-eight years old when he was released, still young and robust. The Gulag had not been able to wring the sap from his life.

Twenty years after my father returned from exile, having retired from teaching chemistry in public and Armenian high schools in Tehran, and having resigned

3 See Grigor Ajemyan's preface to his father's papers in «Սիբիրական» (Of Siberia, or The Siberian) (Yerevan: Yerevan State University, 2009), p. 9.