

of the infamous taiga. He had a sense of absolute freedom such as he had never experienced before, not even when he was released, but there was something he was still searching for, “something forgotten, something lost and never to be found. It was his youth lost in the prisons and forced labor camps set up by the mustachioed leader.”²⁰ I never asked my father how he perceived the irretrievable loss of his youth in the Gulag.

It was not easy for these “ex-convicts” when they returned home to Soviet Armenia or anywhere else in the Soviet Union. Sometimes these ex-cons were damned forever. The local authorities did nothing to help them ease their way back into society and start a new life. On the contrary, they were looked upon with some suspicion, or reservations at best. Very few were able to reestablish themselves in their former status and position in society or the workplace, or even within their immediate family. How was my father received after he returned to the family and the society from which he had been snatched away?

Reading Iren Ordukhanyan’s interview made me think about our own perception of our father when he returned. Iren confesses that she and her sister did not welcome their father on his return from exile. In fact, they couldn’t stand him. They argued with him about everything. Iren’s analysis helped me to see another side of our complicated coexistence. Were we with our behavior, especially my sister Roozan, taking revenge for

20 Aramyan, «Աղիլիս» (Kolyma), p. 237.