long walk from the railway station. We came to a large building that turned out to be the prisoner distribution center. The grounds were surrounded by high barriers of barbed wire studded by watchtowers from which armed soldiers overlooked the premises. Inside the building, there were thousands of detainees, already adjudicated and sentenced, waiting to serve their time and take their punishment. Some sat idle, some were pacing, miserable creatures speaking in hushed voices, perhaps talking about their families now left fatherless. Their faces expressed deep anxiety and all the evil of the world. It seemed that the making of the Soviet citizen, or *homo sovieticus*, started right here in the distribution center, a project embodying the Soviet ideological aim, a grand endeavor engaging communist theoreticians and the entire social, political, economic and cultural leadership of the Soviet Union.

Despite all the misfortune around me in that huge detention camp, I felt better there. I was surrounded by others who shared my destiny. I could move, I could speak to other prisoners. Months of solitary confinement had affected me gravely, and every so often I was visited by excruciating nightmares.

Alas, a vicious call cut short my few days of "happy" life in the camp: "Prisoner Minassian, *saberay sveshchami*."

The guard took me outside where the "Black Raven" was waiting, the infamous black cargo truck used to transport condemned prisoners to the place of their execution. An eighteen- or twenty-year-old Russian girl at the door shouted at me with sadistic pleasure, "Go,