

Chapter Three

In the flames of World War II: Abducted and jailed in Tabriz

World War II broke out on September 3, 1939.¹ Hitler's military campaign aimed at procuring vital space for the German people, and in order to realize this goal, he rapidly captured Czechoslovakia, Poland, Holland, Belgium, France and the Balkans. That campaign stopped upon meeting with a fierce defense by the British. Hitler realized his mistake and changed course to the East. On June 22, 1941, German forces invaded Russia, whose vast territories and rich mineral resources could provide the coveted vital space. Meeting little resistance, German

1 As noted in the introduction, the content of this and the next chapter is the English translation of the abridged and rearranged version of Baghdik Minassian's unfinished memoir, «Տասը Տարի, Տասն Ամիս և Տասնութ Օր...» (Ten years, ten months and seventeen days...). It is narrated in my father's voice and reflects his views and analysis of the situation in Tabriz before his abduction, the events in the Yerevan prison, his indictment and sentence of exile to Siberia, and his journey toward that destination. I have interjected only where necessary to provide explanations, either in brackets in the main text or in the footnotes. The narrative stops at the Krasnoyarsk transit distribution camp on the shores of the Yenisei River where my father was imprisoned before being sent on to Norilsk.