

Chapter One

The beginning of a new life

It was a hot day like any other day in Tehran in July 1954. My sister Roozan and I came home to find my mom surrounded by our neighbors and acquaintances, everyone holding a newspaper in their hand. *Keyhan*, the leading Persian-language daily, had published a story about a group of Iranian prisoners of war who had been acquitted and released from Soviet prisons and turned over to the Iranian government. They were being detained in a special camp and would be released after thorough examination and investigation. Among the detainees, *Keyhan* reported, was a chemistry professor named Dr. Baghdassar Minassian. Curiously, his was the only name mentioned in the story. Every one of our friends and relatives who had heard the news had bought a copy of the paper and rushed to our house to share the story.

The news was both astonishing and incredible. Was it really true? Was our lost one coming back to us after so many years? Or was this another cynical joke played by the press in the context of Iranian-Soviet relations