Contents

List of Illustrations

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CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (United States foreign intelligence service)
CPRF	Communist Party of the Russian Federation
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
FSB	Federal Security Service (successor of the KGB)
GKChP	State Committee on the State of Emergency
GFR	German Federal Republic
IAG	International Association of Gerontology
KGB	Committee of State Security
MCC	Moscow City Committee
MI-5	Military Intelligence, Section 5 (British Security Service)
NKVD	People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (predecessor of the KGB)
PCC	Party Control Commission
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SWP	Socialist Workers' Party
TASS	Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (News Agency)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VASKhNIL	All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences
WHO	World Health Organization

Note on Archives

Most archival documents and photographs used in this book come from Roy and Zhores Medvedevs' Personal Papers at the Central State Archive of Moscow (TsGAM): Department of Conservation of Documents from Personal Collections of Moscow (OKhDLSM), Fond 333.

Introduction

When a group of KGB agents showed up on Roy Medvedev's doorstep in October 1971, the Soviet scholar felt his blood freeze in his veins. In August 1938, when Roy and his twin brother Zhores were twelve, they woke up in the middle of the night to find men in uniforms searching their family's apartment. After going through the children's toys and searching their beds, the NKVD men led away their father Aleksandr Medvedev in handcuffs. This was the last time the twins saw their father, who was swallowed by the grinding machine of Stalin-era repression.

As the KGB men proceeded to seize whole files of newspaper cuttings that Roy Medvedev had carefully collected about the history of Stalinism, his mind was on the alert. He knew that the authorities found his research on the regime's past crimes inconvenient. Two years earlier, he had been excluded from the Communist Party for writing a large manuscript on the origins and consequences of Stalinism. In 1956, General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev had condemned these crimes in his famous "Secret Speech" under the euphemism of Stalin's "personality cult." However, after Leonid Brezhnev came to power in 1964, such historical inquiries were deemed detrimental to the regime if not outright "anti-Soviet." The Medvedev brothers knew to what lengths the authorities were prepared to go to stifle dissent: in 1970, Zhores was forcefully locked up in a psychiatric hospital for his writings criticizing various aspects of Soviet past and present reality, and only broad mobilization from Soviet and foreign intellectuals allowed for his liberation. Now the Medvedev brothers' memoir about this incident was about to appear in print. In addition, Roy expected the publication in the West of his research on Stalinism under the title *Let History Judge.*

The dissident historian decided that he would not let the authorities arrest him. When he was summoned for interrogation a week later, he took the fateful decision of going into hiding. The Soviet Union was the largest state on earth, with wide stretches of uninhabited land, and provided he escaped surveillance in Moscow, he could go off the radar for some time. For five months, Medvedev stayed with friends on the Black Sea, in Leningrad, and in the Baltic region. Neither his wife nor his brother knew his whereabouts.

Eventually, after hearing on Western radio stations that both of his books had come out, he returned to Moscow. In October, Medvedev had asked his wife to

send his employer a letter of resignation on his behalf. He was now an independent scholar—a risky status in the land of universal right and obligation to labor in the service of the state. Nevertheless, his fame protected him from repression, and over the years, he was able to publish dozens of historical and political studies in the West. Zhores was less lucky: in 1973, he was allowed to travel to London on scientific leave, only to be stripped of his Soviet citizenship after a few months. From then on, he became his brother's literary representative in the West, and the two brothers closely collaborated on numerous projects.

The Medvedev brothers were not the boldest critics of the regime and were not even anticommunists. Compared with such prominent figures of the dissident movement as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn or Andrei Sakharov, their views were largely loyal to communism. Paradoxically, precisely this moderate tone allowed them to remain free to publish their works and inform the Western public about the situation in the USSR. Many dissidents were prepared to go to prison to defend their views, but once behind bars, they remained voiceless and could only count on their Western supporters' protests. Martyrdom at the hands of the regime was a necessary stage in a dissident biography, and it was precisely the well-advertised account of Zhores Medvedev's psychiatric ordeal that had turned the Medvedevs into high profile dissidents in the eyes of the West.

Yet later, their conflicts with Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov and decision to adopt a socialist democratic line raised widespread criticism among their fellow dissidents. Accusations of collaboration with the regime were but a step away, and the infamous label stuck to the Medvedevs' image. Roy's successful political career in the Communist Party from 1989 to 1991, and his enthusiastic support of Vladimir Putin since 2000, have further tarnished his reputation and alienated his Western supporters.

These circumstances no doubt explain the lack of interest Western historians have shown in these two controversial figures. While Sakharov's and Solzhenitsyn's fascinating lives have been the subject of numerous biographies, the Medvedevs have remained in a blind spot and have hardly been the object of any academic research since 1991: too socialist and not liberal enough for the West, not consensual enough for Russian historians. Yet their biography offers a remarkable glimpse into the paradoxes of the post-Stalin era, a time when unauthorized publishing of a literary work in the West could land a writer in the camps, and some authors of such works could use their foreign royalties to buy high quality consumer goods from restricted access retail stores. A high-profile dissident could get away with expressing support for a piece of legislation adverse to the Soviet Union's economic interests examined in the US Congress, while others were arrested for raising a banner on Red Square.

As new scholarship on Soviet dissent begins to focus less on the heroic figures of the movement and more on the "grey zones" between loyalty and dissent and the material worlds and cultural practices of the movement, the liminal position of the Medvedev brothers can help us better understand the paradoxes of the times. The key to their success was arguably their very broad social network, which encompassed not only dissidents but also prominent establishment intellectuals, old party veterans who had been through the camps, as well as younger party members working in the Party's Central Committee and with connections at the highest level. This broad range of contacts played a key role in helping the Medvedevs conduct their collaborative historical research by providing them with insider information about Soviet politics, which they made public in the West, and in saving them from repression. What was unusual about the Medvedevs was the hybridity of their DNA: although by their loyalty to the Soviet system they resembled their more conformist peers from the intelligentsia, their outspokenness and fearlessness was characteristic of more oppositional figures.

As this biography was going into print, Roy Medvedev was aged ninety-seven and still professionally active. My personal acquaintance with the Medvedev brothers dates to 2011, when I started research on my PhD dissertation, published in 2019 under the title *Dissident Histories in the Soviet Union*, a central figure of which was Roy Medvedev. Over the years, I have taken about forty hours of interviews with Roy at his country house on the outskirts of Moscow and by phone and had two encounters with Zhores at his London home. I have also done extensive research in their very rich archival fond and read Zhores's huge corpus of memoirs, entitled *A Dangerous Profession*.

These sources reveal a multifaceted portrait of two men who went through perplexing political evolutions, becoming or ceasing to be dissidents depending on the political climate, but who never sought to fit any mold, least of all the mold of "Soviet dissidents" which Western media built for critics of the Soviet regime. Roy Medvedev's support for Vladimir Putin and his benevolent attitude towards other "strong men" in the post-Soviet space are not the least of the paradoxes of a man who first became known for his calls for socialist democracy. This biography attempts to make sense of these two ambivalent figures, by placing their trajectories in their historical context. I have striven to reflect in this work the complexities of their position, to do justice to their ideas without hiding the contradictions of their stance.

Writing the biography of twin brothers is an unusual exercise, but the lives and dissident careers of Roy and Zhores Medvedev were entangled to such a degree that their stories could only be told jointly. While I have sought to give each of

them equal attention, in my narrative the focus continually shifts from one to another following a roughly chronological structure.

My gratitude goes to the Swiss National Science Foundation, which has been generously funding my PhD and post-doctoral research and has funded the Open Access publication of this book, but also to Academic Studies Press for encouraging me to write this biography and providing benevolent guidance. By assisting me in turning dozens of hours of interview transcripts into a book manuscript and conducting additional interviews, my husband Oleg Ustinov has also given a new impulse to this research. This book would probably not have seen the light of day without the active assistance of Roy, Zhores, Rita and Dima, who supported this endeavor without ever interfering into the book's content. I thank the staff of the Moscow City Archive for giving me access to the Medvedev brothers' papers before they were properly inventoried and for putting up with my presence all these years. I am also grateful to colleagues who shared with me materials and testimonies about the Medvedev brothers: Gennadii Kuzovkin, Kathleen Smith, Vsevolod Sergeev, Viacheslav Dolinin, and others, and of course peer reviewers whose thoughtful remarks helped me improve this manuscript.

CHAPTER 1

A Youth in Stalin's Shadow

On December 1, 1934, Roy and Zhores Medvedev had just turned nine when politics suddenly entered their lives. Sergei Kirov, the First Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee, was killed in what Stalin claimed was a terrorist attack ordered by his political adversaries, Lenin's former comrades Grigorii Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev. Roy and Zhores, who had grown up in Leningrad and whose father was particularly fond of Kirov, followed the events very closely. Aleksandr Medvedev had started his career as a political commissar during the Civil War in Astrakhan by the Caspian Sea, after joining the 11th Army, one of the leaders of which was Kirov. Aleksandr Medvedev was a sacred figure to the twins, the embodiment of the "Red Commissar" veteran of the Civil War, which achieved a cult status in the 1930s. "My father was precisely such a commissar of the 1920s, and I had all the reasons not only to love him, but to be proud of him," remembered Roy.

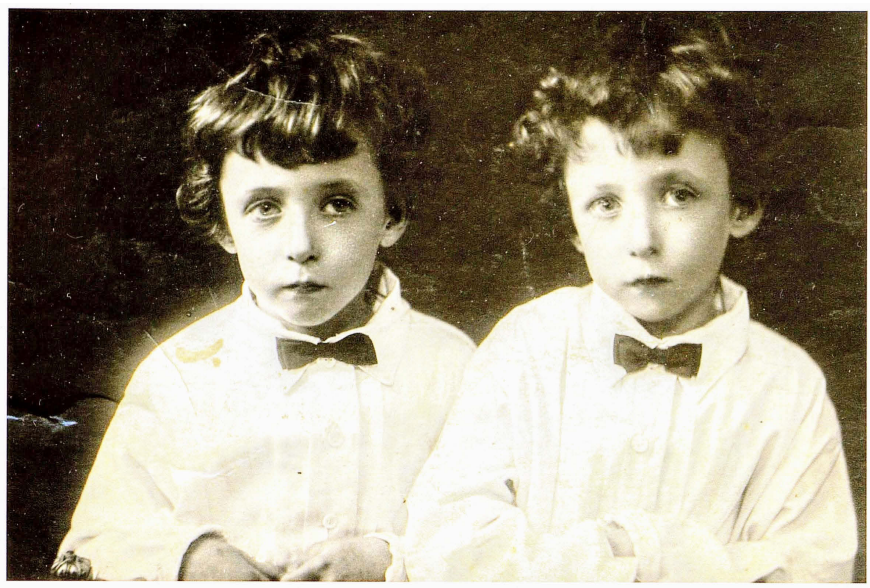
Aleksandr Medvedev, 1936. OKhDLSM, F. 333, op. 16, d. 19, l. 1.

Born in 1899 into a family of merchants, Aleksandr Romanovich Medvedev had lost both of his parents by age twelve. The eldest sibling of a family of three, he was a brilliant pupil and was offered financial support to finish secondary school. He was more fortunate than his younger sisters: Antonina was placed in a family as a housemaid, while the youngest, Ekaterina, was given away for adoption. In those times of political turmoil, the student corpus was highly politicized, and by the time Aleksandr graduated, he was a convinced communist. In 1918, he joined the ranks of the Communist Party, and when the Civil War spread to his home region, he joined the Red Army as a political worker in 1919. The 11th Army, to which he was attached, marched on the Caucasus, occupied Baku and Tiflis, and helped to install Soviet power. Aleksandr soon thereafter began to teach at the Military Political School in Tiflis.

Iuliia Reiman. Courtesy of Roy Medvedev.

In 1923, Aleksandr Medvedev met Iuliia, a twenty-one-year-old handsome girl with short dark hair and a languid gaze from Tiflis. Iuliia Isaakovna Reiman came from a well-off Jewish family of Swiss origin, and her mother was a renowned midwife. In those post-revolutionary days, as Roy remembered, "bourgeois" conventions were no longer in fashion, and young people simply started living together, without a formal wedding. Iuliia moved into the dormitory of the Military Political School, and on November 14, 1925, she gave birth to two sons. The birth of twins was an unexpected and joyous event, celebrated by

Aleksandr's colleagues and dormitory neighbors, who suggested calling the newborns Romul and Rem, after the twin founders of Rome. After Lenin's death, in 1924, revolutionary names were in fashion within the Communist elite and the intelligentsia, and many children were given names commemorating the founding fathers of Communism, from Vladlen (for Vladimir Lenin) to Oktiabrina. Two versions exist as to the origin of the Medvedev brothers' unusual names. Roy claimed that the twins had been named after French and Indian revolutionaries Manabendra Roy and Jean Jaurès. Zhores, however, recalled that their parents had initially settled for "Roi" and "Reis," supposedly in homage to the Revolution although the exact meaning remains unknown. However, Zhores was ashamed of his funny name, spelled as "Ress" on his birth certificate, which triggered mockery in school. When he applied for his first passport, at age sixteen, he added two letters to his name, turning it into the more common Soviet name "Zhores."



Roy and Zhores Medvedev in childhood. OKhDLSM, F. 333, op 9, d. 361, l. 1.

Theirs was a happy childhood within a loving family, although Roy noted that their mother lacked the skills to raise two boys and entrusted much of their education to a nanny, a kind woman from Byelorussia. Roy believed that from an early age luck had played an important role in his fate. His oldest memory dated back to when he was two-and-a-half-years-old. As the twins were in the countryside with their mother, Roy escaped her attention, went out into the courtyard,

and climbed up and tumbled into a large vat of water, kept for fire extinction purposes. However, a man passing by witnessed the scene and jumped to save him from drowning. Luck saved Roy once more when he nearly drowned into the Black Sea, when he was ten, during a summer camp. And later it would save him from the tragic fate of many young men of his age who died on the battlefield.

In 1926, the family moved to Leningrad, where Aleksandr Medvedev was appointed lecturer at the Military-Political Academy. After a few years at the Academy's dormitory on Vasilevskii Island, they enjoyed the rare privilege of living in a separate apartment near the Taurid Garden. And when Iuliia took up studying cello, their aunt Tosia moved in to help raise the twins. Roy and Zhores felt closest to their father, whom they rarely saw but deeply admired. Aleksandr Medvedev was now a professor and vice-head of the department of dialectical and historical materialism at the Military-Political Academy and lectured at Leningrad University. He had the rank of Lieutenant colonel and wore a military uniform, but was also a philosopher, who collected a library of several thousand books and instilled in his sons the love of knowledge. He filled notebooks with texts of his lectures, book summaries, and his own works, in small, neat handwriting. He planned to start publishing after turning forty, waiting for the maturity and wisdom that come with age. Little did he know that he would reach this age in prison.

Kirov's assassination came as a shock to many people, but for Aleksandr Medvedev and his colleagues at the Military-Political Academy, it was a personal tragedy. On December 2, Medvedev took his sons to the Leningrad main square to watch Kirov's funeral procession, amidst hundreds of thousands of grieving Leningraders. A year later, on the first anniversary of Kirov's death, Roy penned a poem commemorating Kirov's memory, which was published by the Communist Youth newspaper *Change* (*Smena*). With his first royalties, the young boy bought a box of chocolate for his mother, but most of all, he wished to earn his father's praise.

Besides Kirov, the figure Aleksandr Medvedev held in highest esteem was Lenin. When Roy and Zhores were ten, their father read them the poem "Vladimir Ilich Lenin," written by the revolutionary poet Vladimir Maiakovskii, with whom Medvedev was on friendly terms. It speaks to Roy's phenomenal memory but also his youth devotion to Lenin that he immediately memorized the six-thousand-word poem. Maiakovskii warned against "processions and mausoleums, the established statute of worship" filling "Lenin's simplicity with luscious unction." Yet not only the founding father of the Soviet regime, but also his successor, Stalin, were becoming the object of quasi-religious worship.

Like most of their peers, Roy and Zhores were raised as children of Stalin's cult. When the family moved to Moscow, in 1936, their father took them to another demonstration on Red Square. Sitting on his fathers' shoulders, Roy saw Stalin for the first time on top of the Mausoleum. He was deeply impressed by this event. By that time, he was keenly interested in politics, read the Party's newspaper *Pravda* and actively discussed the political trials against "enemies of the people" with his classmates. Stalin had accused Lenin's closest friends Lev Kamenev and Grigorii Zinoviev of forming a leftist opposition and plotting Kirov's assassination. Although these accusations were hardly believable, it would be years before the Soviet people uncovered that Stalin had used Kirov's assassination to get rid of his political opponents. Soon, Stalin would turn against another prominent Communist leader, Nikolai Bukharin, a gifted orator who enjoyed popularity at the Military-Political Academy, accused of "rightist deviation." The show trials, staged to demonstrate the accused's guilt through a public confession of their alleged sins, produced a strong impression on Soviet audiences. Few people realized that behind the humiliating admission of guilt of Lenin's former comrades lay the use of torture. Even fewer knew that, in the wake of these trials, hundreds of thousands of alleged political opponents were arrested and sentenced to death or prison. All those who had once raised their voice to express a different opinion, a disagreement with the official line, were now at risk. In retrospect, Roy observed that his father never mentioned Stalin. He likely disapproved of the Soviet leader's action, although he did not share his doubts with his sons.

Indeed, following Kirov's death, the atmosphere had begun to change at the Academy. In 1927, the Academy's teaching staff had protested a military reform that led to the suppression of political commissars, which the Academy had been training. As the Soviet leadership was moving on to a new stage in economic reform, the collectivization of agriculture, which was bound to encounter popular resistance, it could not tolerate any dissent in the army's midst. At the time, however, the Soviet leadership only took mild disciplinary measures against the Academy's protestors, many of whom publicly recanted.

In June 1937, however, the whole country witnessed the trial of first-rank military commanders Marshal Tukhachevskii and others, all of whom were executed for forming an "anti-Soviet Trotskyist military organization." The Academy, which bore the name of Nikolai Tolmachev, a military commissar of the Civil War, was renamed after Lenin and transferred to Moscow. Roy remembered that the family moved in 1936, although the transfer was probably finalized in January 1938. A few months later, the so-called "Byelorussian-Tolmachev army opposition" was singled out for repression for its alleged anti-Soviet activities

and betrayal of the motherland. In July 1938, a commission was placed in charge of identifying culprits within the Academy's teaching staff—more than 400 names were included, leading to the dismissal from the army of 187 of them and repression of about 130.

As the pressure mounted, Aleksandr Medvedev grew increasingly nervous. His sons saw him come home late from endless meetings at the Academy; he locked himself in his office at night, worked and smoked a lot but slept little. Eventually, he slid into a nervous breakdown. This was not the only harbinger of the oncoming catastrophe. Roy and Zhores spent the summer of 1938 at an Academy's summer camp. However, shortly before the end of the camp, the boys were publicly shamed for their "bad conduct and lack of discipline" and sent back to Moscow. They came home ashamed and worried about their parents' reaction. However, they soon found out that they had nothing to do with the expulsion: their father had just been dismissed from the Academy and demobilized from the army.

When the secret police showed up on the Medvedevs' doorstep late at night on August 23, 1938, Roy and Zhores woke up to an "unusually loud and insistent knock" on the door, followed by loud voices and a slammed door. The scene would remain etched in their memories forever. Years later, Zhores would write down his memories of the event, hoping that the act of writing would bring him closure. After relapsing into slumber, he woke up again at dawn to the noise of furniture being moved. The police officials then started searching the children's room, overturning mattresses and pillows, digging through toys. Suddenly, Aleksandr Medvedev appeared on the doorstep of the children's room, wearing his uniform, but without his belt or military insignias. He hugged his sons and broke into tears. The boys, who had not yet turned thirteen, understood what was happening without a word and started crying too. Their father kissed them goodbye and left swiftly, never to return.

The following day, the twins found their mother sitting dumbfounded, holding a bottle of wine and muttering about their father's innocence and a slanderous denunciation by his colleagues: "They should set him free soon… We'll now go to the Central Committee right away…" When she emerged from her stupor, she set off, first for the Kremlin, then for the Procuracy, dragging her sons along. After standing in endless lines among other distraught relatives of the repressed, she wrote a petition against her husband's wrongful arrest, which the twins signed as well. In the following weeks, she turned to all possible official bodies, from the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) to the People's Commissariat for Defense, from the Procuracy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Everywhere the responses would be falsely

encouraging. "Don't worry … The NKVD will solve this… They don't condemn innocents…" At home, Iuliia sometimes broke down in hysteria, insulting not only NKVD head Ezhov, but even Stalin himself. These breakdowns frightened her sons. Two months after her husband's arrest, she started working as a cello player in a cinema to feed her family.

One winter evening upon returning from school, Zhores and Roy found their mother in tears. Their father had just been condemned to eight years of imprisonment during a closed trial. As he told them later in a letter he managed to smuggle out of the camp, he had withstood torture and refused to sign false confessions. It may have been a rather mild sentence for the time, but it seemed a "monstrous injustice" to his family. The accusation against Aleksandr Medvedev linked him to the "rightist" opposition of Nikolai Bukharin. Roy believed that, in his father's case, the accusation of Bukharinist deviation was intended to translate into legible political terms the real ground for repression: participation or tacit support for the 1928 rebellion of the Tolmachev Academy.

A week later, the Medvedevs received an order to vacate the apartment provided by the Academy within two days. Despite Iuliia's protests, the family was thrown onto the street with a heap of furniture and belongings laying in the snow, which were sold on the spot for a cheap price. Iuliia had nowhere to go, and for the first year, she had to leave her sons with relatives in Moscow, while she took up a job in a small town a hundred kilometers north of Moscow. In August 1939, she and the boys moved in with Iuliia's mother and sisters, first in Leningrad, and, after an apartment swap, in Rostov-on-the-Don, in Southern Russia.

In the summer of 1939, Aleksandr Medvedev's first letters began to reach his family. They came from the distant Kolyma region in the Siberian Far East, the deadliest "island" in the Gulag archipelago. Prisoners worked in gold mining, tree felling, and other deadly activities, which rapidly led them to exhaustion. Yet his family never heard about any of this from the heavily censored letters that inmates managed to send their family. In his letters to his sons, Medvedev advised his sons to study hard:

> Precisely now, as you enter teenagerhood, a time of blooming of life, I would like to be by your side—to communicate you my knowledge and experience and, as much as possible, keep you from youthful mistakes. But fate has decided otherwise! . . .
>
> Most importantly—study, steadfastly, insistently, without limiting yourself to the school program. Make use of this time when your receptivity and memorization skills are particularly strong. Don't spread yourself too thin, be disciplined in your work . . .

> Learn to think and be organized, work out a strong character and will. Patience, tenacity—this is what you need most. Learn to overcome difficulties, no matter how great they turn out to be.

Although Aleksandr Medvedev advised his sons to learn a trade at a technical school to help their mother financially, the twins knew from a young age that science was their calling.

Roy and Zhores had no idea about the terrible life conditions in the camp and their father's deteriorating health. Years later, Ivan Gavrilov, their father's friend, would tell them how he had met Aleksandr Medvedev in the Kolyma region in 1939, on his way to work in copper mines, where deadly work conditions necessitated a constant influx of new workforce. Medvedev had been evacuated as part of a convoy of prisoners too weak for common work. They suffered from dystrophia, pellagra, scurvy, and severe vitamin deficiency, causing night blindness. The convoy, guarded by German shepherd dogs, walked in temperatures of - 50°C towards a camp nicknamed "the camp of living corpses." The two old friends hugged each other, reflecting with emotion on their fates, but soon enough, they had to part ways. However, they met again when Gavrilov was himself evacuated and sent to a state farm. This time, Medvedev looked healthier; he had been working in the hothouses and taking part in the camp choir and theater group. According to the testimony of another former prisoner who contacted Roy Medvedev in the 1960s, she had met his father after he was transferred to work in the hothouses in 1940, following a hand injury in the copper mines. But he grew weaker over time, until he had to be transferred to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with bone cancer.

In early 1941, Aleksandr Medvedev wrote to his family that he was in the hospital but "recovering," and asked them to send vitamins. Yet this was too little, too late. At the end of March, a money transfer was returned stamped "death of the addressee." In shock, Iuliia initially refused to believe the news, even as more transfers were being returned. Roy and Zhores could not fathom the tragedy that had befallen them. The tragedy of their father's death left a deep imprint on Zhores and Roy Medvedevs' lives. It would take a few more years before they realized the true scale of the political repressions that Stalin had unleashed against his own people and his own party. But when they did, the memory of their father's fate would spur them to denounce Stalin's crimes in front of the tribunal of History.

Losing a father was not the only trial that the Medvedev brothers had to face in their teenage years, however. Rostov-on-the-Don was only a safe haven in peacetime, and when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the