Dedication
Alexander Ivanovich Yuriev (1942–2020)

We dedicate this volume to our friend, colleague, and collaborator Alexander Ivanovich Yuriev, who passed away November 26, 2020, from Covid-19.

In the preface to this series, reprinted here in Volume Two, we introduced readers to Alexander, or at least to our introduction to Alexander, in the tale of our 1992 visit to what we called “Stalin’s Dacha.” The result of that visit was a years-long collaboration, replete with exchanges, visits, discussions, and affection—a relationship that lasted until Alexander’s death in 2020. We came to know his wife, Valentina Fedorovna, and his daughter, Maria Alexandrovna Konovalova (Masha). And we were devastated by news of his death, especially coming right after what we had hoped would be another opportunity to visit Alexander and his family—a conference in St. Petersburg that had to convert to a virtual format because of the Covid-19 virus.

Alexander Yuriev was an innovative and forward-looking scholar. When we first met him, as we noted in the preface, he was running a training workshop for the regional governors, all newly appointed by Boris Yeltsin, teaching them, among other things, how to interact with the media—something Soviet politicos and apparatchiks had never had to do.

Alexander was born in 1942, in the village of Bolshoe in the Yaroslavl Oblast, about 170 miles from Leningrad; his mother, pregnant with Alexander, had evacuated from Leningrad over the ice on Lake Ladoga. Although the German Army encircled Leningrad in the Fall of 1941, some evacuations of women and children continued through March 1943. (346) They returned to the city in 1945, just before Alexander’s third birthday. According to Masha, little Alexander was given a large teapot to take care of during the journey home, something he often talked about. Alexander’s father was an engineer and his mother a teacher.

As a young man, he first worked at a ship-building factory (1960–1962), then was drafted into the Army (1962–1965). During his Army
service, which overlapped the Cuban Missile Crisis, Alexander was sent to Cuba; he worked monitoring US military communications, likely including bases of the Air Defense Command (ADC), the Strategic Air Command (SAC), and radio communications to and from pilots. It was this experience that sparked Alexander's interest in politics and led him to pursue political psychology.

David learned of this in a roundabout way in 1992, while driving Alexander from Iowa City, Iowa, to Kirksville, Missouri, a route that passes close to a number of current and former US missile silos and other defense-related sites.

After his tour of duty, Alexander worked at the Northern Machine Building Factory (1965–1969), which was part of the Soviet military nuclear industrial complex. Then, in 1969, at the age of twenty-seven, he enrolled at Leningrad State University, graduating from the Faculty of Psychology in 1977. Upon completing his degree, Alexander began working in the area of psychological assessment of professionals and the special psychological preparation of personnel for work under extreme conditions. For this work he received the USSR State Prize. We believe it was during this period that he worked at the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Zvezdny (Star City), evaluating prospective cosmonauts to determine their psychological fitness for the program.

In 1982, Alexander embarked on a career in teaching and research at Leningrad State University (after 1992 known as Saint Petersburg State University), focusing on the development of political psychology as a new scholarly field in Russia, and in 1989 he created the first department of political psychology in the USSR. His work gained international attention at this time, and in 1990 he joined the International Society of Political Psychology, wrote the “Ethical Code of the Political Psychologist,” and began serving on the editorial boards of several foreign academic journals. He also wrote a number of monographs, including *Introduction to Political Psychology* (1992) and *Systematic Description of Political Psychology* (1997). In short, he laid the foundation, in the nation's universities, for the training of specialists in political psychology, consulting for political parties, government officials, and members of the public. He viewed politics as the science for the study, design, formation, and implementation of governmental power; and he understood political activity to be an extreme form of professional work. He believed that the ability to set political goals was the primary basis for obtaining real power.
During perestroika, Alexander began putting his philosophy to work, developing workshops to prepare experts as consultants to government and political parties in the USSR. Beginning in 1986, he developed training workshops for Party and government leaders at the federal and regional levels in the “Diuny” Center (Дюны) outside Leningrad. In 1991 he led the training of the first cohorts of Russian governors and presidential representatives at the “Osinovaia roshcha” (Осиновая Роща) academic center outside Leningrad (which is where David and Marilyn met Alexander in 1992, along with Vladimir Vasiliev. Vasiliev was Director of the center, while Alexander was Chief Scientist).

Upon returning to the United States that January 1992, David, Marilyn, and Michael formed the International Center for the Advancement of Political Communication and Argumentation, based at Florida State University in Tallahassee, with chapters at Northeast Missouri (now Truman) State University and at Saint Petersburg State University in Russia, including—at least initially—the training center at “Stalin’s Dacha.” Later in 1992, David and Marilyn arranged for Alexander and Vladimir to come to the United States on a “speaking tour”; they visited and made presentations at the University of Iowa, Northeast Missouri State University, and Florida State University. In addition, they attended the Speech Communication Association annual convention, held in Chicago that year. An account of their visit follows at the end of this dedication.

From 1993 through 1996, Alexander served as an adviser to the government of the Russian Federation, specifically working with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. For example, he was part of the Russian team for the (Vice President Al) Gore-Chernomyrdin talks in the mid-1990s. It was toward the end of this period that he was the victim of an attack that remains officially unsolved. (An account of the attack follows below.)

Alexander eventually recovered from the assault, resuming his work at the university. In 1999 he joined the Center for Strategic Research in Moscow as an expert consultant; he continued in this position until 2017. Also in 2017, approaching retirement, he and Valentina sold their dacha and bought an apartment in the suburbs; meanwhile, Alexander left the faculty at Saint Petersburg State University and, along with several of his colleagues, transferred to A. I. Pushkin Leningrad State University near Tsarskoe Selo (Pushkin), where he became Director of the Institute for Political Psychology and Applied Political Research. Here he continued
the work he had begun in 1986 and pursued until the end of his life. According to Masha, Alexander even took work with him to the hospital as he made his life’s last journey:

With him to the hospital, he took his summaries and tables, hoping not to interrupt work on them, even when he was sick with Covid. It’s always been like this. He took work with him on all trips and vacations. He couldn’t stop thinking; working was his natural state, not an annoying necessity. He was also an optimist and continued to believe in people despite painful disappointments. He didn’t consider politics a “dirty deed”; he claimed that politics should be scientific, and political activity should be hard work. For this, many considered him a dreamer. But, no, dreamers don’t start their lives with a trade school, army, and factory. He very practically believed that an illiterate political project, made of rotten materials, would inevitably collapse and bury all of us. He loved life and wished everyone well. He did everything he could.

Throughout his life, Alexander Yuriev was also a devoted family man. His wife, Valentina Fedorovna, was by his side throughout; the light of his life, daughter Maria Aleksandrovna Konovalova—who also became an academic, taught with him at Saint Petersburg State University, and transferred with him to Pushkin—carries on his work and his legacy; his great joy was his grandson, “Aleksander II,” also known as “Little Sasha.” Besides his beloved family, Alexander left many devoted colleagues and former students, and friends, such as the three of us.

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Two Stories

The following are two stories involving Alexander that we recount from personal experience.

The first is both humorous and insightful, while the second, an account of the assault on Alexander, is a sad commentary on the state of politics in 1996 Russia.

From David:
October, 1992
Da!
In October 1992, Alexander Yuriev and Vladimir Vasiliev traveled from Saint Petersburg to Iowa City to begin a four-stop “tour” that Marilyn and I had arranged as a way for them to speak to American audiences, especially students, and in doing so to promote the new International Center for the Advancement of Political Communication and Argumentation. From the University of Iowa in Iowa City, the two Russian scholars were to travel to Kirksville, Missouri, then on to Chicago for the Speech Communication Association (SCA, now named National Communication Association or NCA) annual conference and, finally, to Tallahassee, Florida.

Before making the three-hour drive from Northeast Missouri State University, located in Kirksville, Missouri, I received a call from Bruce Gronbeck, the University of Iowa professor who was hosting the two Russians. There were problems. Alexander and Vladimir had had a falling-out, and they were no longer willing to share hotel accommodations. Indeed, it was not clear that they were even speaking to each other beyond what was minimally necessary. Although their presentations were able to proceed without difficulty, other arrangements had to be changed at the last minute. Professor Michael Calvin McGee agreed to host Alexander at his home, while Vladimir remained in the hotel. After securing new directions on where to pick each up in Iowa City, and now very much uncertain of what to expect, I began the drive to Iowa. Knowing that neither Alexander nor Vladimir spoke English, I had arranged for a Northeast Missouri State student then in his second year of Russian language study to accompany me as an interpreter, albeit one with quite limited proficiency. It was the best that could be arranged under the circumstances, because both of the Russian language faculty members were engaged in teaching classes and preparing a reception for Alexander and Vladimir to be held at my house that evening.

Upon arriving in Iowa City, I went to McGee’s home first to pick up Alexander. He and McGee had evidently really hit it off, and McGee reported having had fascinating discussions with Alexander. I was relieved because that indicated Alexander’s housing change had not been an unappreciated burden on the McGees. But I was mystified, because so far as I knew, McGee knew no Russian, and of course Alexander spoke no English. How, I wondered, had Alexander and McGee managed a discussion without an interpreter present? It was a mystery to which I never learned an answer.
After picking up Vladimir from the hotel, I turned the car south toward Missouri. Both Alexander and Vladimir were enthralled by my car, a white-vinyl-topped, bright red 1976 Cadillac Coupe de Ville. Had it been fifteen years earlier, they would have been riding in style. But they were not disturbed by the age of the car: it was an American Cadillac, and it seemed to represent to them a taste of the American Dream.

Efforts at conversation in the car did not succeed well: the student lacked the proficiency to conduct an unscripted conversation or to interpret one. He could recognize occasional words and convey broad topics that might come from those words, but his training to that point was insufficient for much more. By the time we had driven south on Highway 218 to Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, efforts at conversation had dribbled out, and we mainly rode in silence along the two-lane road from Mt. Pleasant to Ottumwa, Iowa. As we passed the sign announcing our arrival in Ottumwa, however, Alexander surprised everyone by saying, “Ottumwa. Da.” The student asked what that was about, or at least he tried to. But Alexander did not respond, and it was unclear whether he understood the student’s attempt to frame the question in Russian.

At Ottumwa, we turned south toward Kirksville on Highway 63, another two-lane road through an area that was mostly farmland. Silence again reigned in the car. But when we passed the sign welcoming us to Lancaster, Missouri, Alexander rather excitedly proclaimed “Lancaster. Da!” Again, no further explanation was attempted—and I was befuddled. Alexander could not know the small Missouri town of Lancaster; most people in Missouri did not know the town of Lancaster. I knew that Alexander’s only previous trip to the United States had been to Hofstra University on Long Island, which was where Marilyn, Michael, and I had met in February with Alexander and Vladimir to prepare the official documents to charter ICAPCA. What was going on with Alexander?

The silence was again interrupted as we passed Queen City. “Queen City. Da, da!” exclaimed Alexander. The student and I looked at each other with arched eyebrows, but no one said anything. A few miles down the road, and only about ten miles north of Kirksville, we passed the sign for Greentop, Missouri. Greentop is very small. It may have had a traffic light, but it may have only been a blinking yellow light. There is no real commercial district. Even so, Alexander jerked upright in his seat and loudly proclaimed, “Greentop!! Da, da, da!!” Again, no explanation. But we were only eight miles from Kirksville, where the reception was
waiting. We were fortunate that the hotel was not full, and we could secure another room, so that Alexander and Vladimir would not have to share accommodations.

There was a large turnout for the reception. It was less than a year after the dissolution of the USSR, and curiosity about the radical changes in Russia was quite high. Among those gathered were professors Shannon Jumper and Faith Beane (who both taught Russian language courses), as well as Patrick Lecaque, John Ishiyama, and Mike Davis, who were also in varying degrees proficient in Russian and were affiliated with our local ICAPCA chapter. Thankfully, they would all serve as interpreters. As the reception progressed, I asked one of the Russian speakers to ask Alexander what was going on when he was proclaiming “Da!” as if in recognition of those small Iowa and Missouri towns through which we had passed. What emerged was a story that exceeded even my wildest imagination. The following paragraph represents my recollection of Alexander’s story as relayed to me through one of the interpreters present at the reception.

In 1962, young Alexander began his military service in the Soviet Army. He was immediately sent to Cuba, where he was assigned to the group whose task it was to sight the new Soviet nuclear missiles that were being sent to Cuba by the USSR. The missiles were targeted on the United States, and Alexander’s task was to sight missiles designed to reduce the American offensive and defensive capabilities in the event of a war, targeted at known US missile silos and at US Strategic Air Command radar installations in the Midwest. There are reportedly many missile silos hidden in and beneath the fields of southern Iowa and northern Missouri. Alexander did indeed know all of those small towns through which we had passed that day, but he knew them from the unusual perspective of having sighted potential targets for the Soviets missiles in Cuba!

However, Masha provided us a different version of Alexander’s military assignment, this from his memoirs:

After being drafted I completed radio school, and for two years—day after day, month after month, day and night—I would listen in, write out, and print live [communications] that were intercepted. A very strong impression was created by the actual communications of B-52 pilots, that carried nuclear weapons on board as they approached our borders, and 24/7 teletype comms on the White House-Kremlin line (discussions between US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and USSR
Trying to reconcile this account with my memory of that 1992 conversation with Alexander, we did a couple of things. Marilyn and I tried to verify the local references to Greentop as a SAC radar base and discovered that that was not technically correct. The radar station was built in 1952, affiliated with the Air Force, and part of the Air Defense Command (ADC) and, later, NORAD.\(^2\) \((401)\) Michael consulted some friends who had experience in this area and are old enough to be familiar with 1960s technology. What we determined is that either version is plausible, so we have presented both of them here. While the second account is not as dramatic as the first (at least from our perspective), it is fascinating in its own right and provides a snapshot of the tensions surrounding that moment in history.

During their stay in Kirksville, Alexander and Vladimir gave public programs about the political and economic changes in Russia. They showed taped footage of Gorbachev while he was held captive in Crimea during the August 1991 coup attempt. They analyzed his nonverbal communication, and they talked about the Presidential Representatives and the political transformations then occurring. They also spoke with students directly as guest speakers in political science, communication studies, and Russian classes.

In an interview by a writer for the *Kirksville Daily Express*, they emphasized their work training “political leaders” of the new Russian Federation. Vladimir “explained that one week after the Soviet Union was disbanded, every region had its own representative from Boris Yeltsin. It is these leaders the center [the Center for Social Stability, Justice, and Social Ecology] works with currently.” \((8: 14)\) Alexander explained the dire need for such training: since most of the new Presidential Representatives “have come from industry and science backgrounds,” they are ill-prepared to slide directly into political leadership roles. Using a metaphor that seemed designed to appeal to American audiences, Alexander expounded on this need for training for the new Representatives: “They look like an inexperienced rider on a bucking bronco. It’s hard for them to determine their location when they are bouncing around so much.” \((8: 14)\) But it is the other metaphor—not the bucking bronco but the vehicle of
“location”—that shaped Alexander’s central message. He compares Russia to a ship, lost and in some distress

Russia resembles a ship sailing on the ocean. We have torn sails and now we have a mission to save this ship. . . . Our state doesn’t know where our ship is in the ocean. We need a scientific map. We have to figure this out on our own. . . . It’s the same as in personal life. Whether you’re a student, a poet or a gangster. Each of us has to look at where we’re located on this map . . . the Soviet Union no longer exists. Only Russia remains. We have to establish our coordinates in the political system. And that’s not all. We also have to figure out the direction of travel. (8: 1)

“And how well did they think the training was working to overcome the challenges facing the new political leadership?” In the interview, Alexander suggested it was a difficult process, with the article indicating that “most of the political figures they consult are difficult at first, but then they listen to what is being said to them.” Alexander compared it with going to the doctor: “It’s like a sick person going to a doctor when they have no other way. Then they listen.” (8: 14)

Following their visit to Kirksville, Alexander and Vladimir joined other Communication faculty from Northeast Missouri State and me in traveling by car to Chicago for the annual conference of the Speech Communication Association, where Marilyn and I had worked with SCA President Dale Leathers to secure a program slot for a panel discussion including Alexander, Vladimir, Marilyn, and me on the topic of “Collaborations in Argumentation Studies between the International Center for the Advancement of Political Communication and Argumentation and the Organization for Social Stability, Justice, and the Ecology of Personality (St. Petersburg, Russia).” Dale also arranged an SCA-sponsored reception for Alexander and Vladimir following the program so they might meet other interested communication scholars.

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From Marilyn:
Saint Petersburg, 1996—The Attack

I was in Saint Petersburg with a student group from Florida State University when I learned Alexander was in the hospital. We had been
trying to reach him to organize a visit, without success, when a Russian friend told us that she had seen on television a story about Alexander being attacked. We finally reached Masha, who arranged for me to visit him in the hospital.

Never having been inside a Russian hospital, I did not know what to expect; but I have to say I felt as if I had traveled back in time, to a Hollywood movie set depicting a 1940s hospital. At the same time, it was very clean, and I knew Alexander was receiving the best care available in the best hospital in the city. Still, it was an eye-opening experience, even though, by 1996, I had been to Russia, especially Saint Petersburg, many times. Nevertheless, Alexander was in good spirits; Valentina was there with him, and through my interpreter, then and later, I gradually learned the story of the attack.

Working at home on April 29, 1996, Alexander received a call, purportedly from the university, telling him that a student would be bringing papers to his apartment for him to sign. Here, in Alexander’s words, is what happened next:

[T]he bell at my apartment rang; I went to the door, and through the peephole I saw a young woman who was holding some papers in her hand. . . . Through the door she told me she was a student in the Philosophy Department. She was asked by the Dean’s office to bring me some mail. My mind was fixated on my next political project and, without thinking, I opened the door. I instantly understood that I had acted incorrectly, but it was too late: the door was pulled open brusquely from the outside and a hulk of a man in camo and a black mask with eye slits appeared. The next moment I felt a terrible slicing pain in my eyes and on my face with such force that I involuntarily collapsed onto the floor. Then everything went quiet. After a minute I rose blindly from a stinking puddle of acid, made it to the telephone, and also blindly dialed the telephone number of Viktor Kruchinin, staff director for A. A. Sobchak. I told him I had been attacked and needed medical help. Then I managed to reach the kitchen and, again only by feel, found a jar of baking powder, poured it out into a bowl, filled it with water and began to rinse my eyes. Very quickly a medic from the 62nd police precinct rushed in, an ambulance arrived along with a crowd of unknown people, and I was taken to the hospital. I had been maimed, but because of the baking powder there remained a chance for the doctors to save my sight.
Alexander spent the next two years recovering, receiving medical treatment at the Military Medical Academy in Saint Petersburg, plastic surgery in Tallahassee, Florida, and postoperative care in Finland. He and Valentina made two trips to Tallahassee during this time, first to meet the plastic surgeon who would repair the scarring on his neck, discuss the process, and learn about the costs; the second trip was for the surgery itself followed by a recovery period. Michael and I had approached our physician in search of a surgeon who could help Alexander by repairing the scar tissue, which was becoming a problem. She recommended Dr. Louis Hill, who graciously consented to work his magic in one operation rather than the four that were projected by Alexander's Russian surgeon. During both trips, Alexander and Valentina lived with Michael and me at our home in Tallahassee, which led to at least one humorous incident I would like to share.

One evening, Alexander and Valentina stayed home while we went out. Upon returning, we noticed a car in the driveway. “Oh, Debbie’s here,” I commented, thinking nothing about how strange that was. Walking into the kitchen, we encountered a very sheepish Alexander and Valentina sitting at the kitchen table with our friend Debbie. “You missed the excitement!” Debbie proclaimed, while Alexander began conversing in Russian with Michael. It seems that they (Alexander and Valentina) had tried to make some toast, which burned and set off the fire alarm. The alarm service had called our house, but, of course, Alexander (who answered the phone) could not understand them, nor they him. So the service called Debbie, who is our “person to call if no one answers at the house.” The operator explained that they had called and someone did answer, but “the man was speaking Spanish or something”; the operator could not understand him and had dispatched the fire trucks. “Well, that would be Russian,” Debbie responded before hanging up and driving over to our house.

When she arrived, there were fire trucks out front, lights flashing, and firemen tromping through the house, looking for the fire. Of course, Debbie does not speak Russian, so she could not find out exactly what had happened until we returned and Michael could interpret for her. Nevertheless, having found no flames, the firemen had departed, and by the time we got home only Debbie, Valentina, and Alexander were left. Con- trite over the disturbance, Alexander and Valentina were concerned about what we would be charged for the false alarm. We had no idea, but, as it turned out, no fine was ever levied.
Aside from the reasons for their visit, we very much enjoyed having Alexander Ivanovich and Valentina Fedorovna live with us for a month. Meanwhile, the motives and the persons behind the attack remain obscure. A criminal investigation was opened but produced no results. At the time, we understood that Alexander was working on the re-election campaign of Anatoly Sobchak, then running for re-election as Mayor of Saint Petersburg, and the assumption was that political rivals were behind the attack. But Alexander’s written account of the incident disputes his role in Sobchak’s campaign, and we never heard any speculation about its being connected to his work for Chernomyrdin. Typical of Alexander, he put it behind him and moved on.

—Marilyn Young, David Cratis Williams, and Michael Launer
July 2021

NOTES

1. Alexander’s daughter kindly provided information about her father for this volume. She read a draft of our Dedication, filled in some gaps in Alexander’s biography, pointed us to some autobiographical information, and corrected some misapprehensions on our part. In some areas, Masha contradicted the description of events that are embedded deep in our memories of conversations that occurred twenty to thirty years ago. With apologies to Masha, we have recounted those events and conversations as we remember them. If nothing else, they informed our understanding as our work and friendship with Alexander developed through subsequent years. However, out of respect for Masha and Valentina Fedorovna, and to acknowledge Alexander’s account of his time in the Soviet Army, we have included the alternate version below.

2. The actual location of the radar was nearer to Sublette, an unincorporated community two miles southwest of “downtown” Greentop (and roughly six miles from Kirksville). The facility was originally designated Sublette Air Force Station, but was renamed Kirksville Air Force Station in 1953. The Kirksville Air Force Station radar was associated with a “gap-filler” radar station in Washington, Iowa, located loosely between Iowa City and Kirksville. (402)