



Obituary for Professor Alexander R. Margulis

Boris Brkljacic¹ · Yves Menu² · Maximilian F. Reiser³

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“Our life cannot always be full of joy, but always full of love”. This quote of Thomas Aquinas, an important thinker of the 13th century, may apply to the life of Professor Alexander R. Margulis, who passed away on September 7, 2018, at the age of 97.

Alex, as we had the privilege to call him, indeed had to tolerate arduous times in his long life. His beloved wife, Professor Hedvig Hricak, mentioned that, even in his last months of life when he was affected by severe health problems,

he remained kind, friendly, and polite. These characteristics were witnessed by all who were in touch with him, irrespective of their status, age, and origin.

Professor Margulis was born on March 31, 1921, in Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia. He was a medical student at the time of the German invasion in April 1941. As impressively described by Ruth Gruber [1], President Franklin D. Roosevelt decided in 1944 that 1000 refugees should be brought from Italy to the United States of America in order to protect them from Nazi persecution, disregarding the migration quota at the time. Alex and his family were among those refugees and thereby, survived. Despite having to leave his home country, Alex never lost his confidence and positive attitude.

In the USA, Alex trained in radiology and accomplished an impressive academic career. He specialized in abdominal radiology and published numerous scientific articles, authored more than 280 articles and 21 books and became a highly respected and acknowledged imaging scientist. In 1963, he was appointed Chair of the radiology department of the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), a position he held for 26 years. Under his leadership, the UCSF became one of the leading institutions in research, clinical care, and education. He and his team became pioneers in many fields of radiology, such as MRI, spectroscopy, molecular imaging, and many others, which became indispensable for modern imaging and image-guided therapy. Alex was able to attract many talented doctors and researchers, who themselves became eminent scientists and leaders. It is no overstatement to say that UCSF radiology, during his time, became the Mecca of modern radiology worldwide.

Many students and research fellows from North America and from all over the world, not the least from Europe, came to San Francisco to learn and to do research under the mentorship of Alex and his team. When returning, they often spoke about the high level of research, clinical care, and education at UCSF and the warm, personal welcome and supervision they were so happy to receive.

When his wife, Prof Hedvig Hricak, was appointed Chair of radiology at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in

✉ Maximilian F. Reiser
Maximilian.Reiser@med.uni-muenchen.de

¹ Department of Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology, University Hospital Dubrava, School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia

² Department of Radiology, Hôpital Saint-Antoine, UPMC Sorbonne Universités, Paris, France

³ Department of Radiology, Ludwig Maximilian University Hospital, Munich, Germany

New York, Alex also moved to the East coast and became a Clinical Professor of Radiology at The Weill Medical College of Cornell University, where he was repeatedly elected by the students as “Teacher of the Year.”

Alex had a unique talent to identify new needs and trends. He cared about the future of radiology and healthcare in general, and how they could contribute to the well-being of mankind. He was always globally-oriented in his outlook and constantly worked toward fostering international cooperation. He recognized at an early stage that radiology is obliged to cope with the financial restrictions of healthcare systems and that close partnership with associated industry is mandatory for a foresighted and value-based practice in radiology. Already in the early 80s, he founded a society which later became the “International Society for Strategic Studies in Radiology” (IS3R) which morphed into an influential think tank for modern radiology.

He was a brilliant and visionary leader as well as a humble, kind, and friendly person who wrote a worth-reading book about leadership [2] which is full of wisdom and practical advice. Moreover, he was hard-working and this discipline was oriented toward the success and up-growth of the institutions and people he felt responsible for. *Praesis ut prosis, non*

ut imperes (“*Stay at the forefront to serve, not to dominate*” by Bernard of Clairvaux) may well describe the maxim of Alex’ life.

Despite becoming a US citizen soon after he had to emigrate, in his heart he always remained closely connected to Europe. He was a dear friend, knowledgeable advisor, and altruistic mentor for innumerable European radiologists. For many years, Alex and his wife have greatly supported and enriched the European Congress of Radiology (ECR) and the European Society of Radiology (ESR). In recognition of his outstanding merits and achievements, he was bestowed the ECR gold medal in 1993.

We will dearly miss Alexander R. Margulis as a brilliant mastermind of our discipline and as a true friend, and will forever keep him in grateful memory.

References

1. Gruber R (1983) Haven: The dramatic story of 1,000 world war II refugees and how they came to America. Coward-McCann
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