

# THE LIFE OF ALEXEI NAVALNY



Alexei Anatolievich Navalny, a lawyer, political figure, and an anti-corruption activist, was born June 4, 1976, in Butyn, a village near Moscow. His father was in the Russian military and the family moved frequently. As a young man, he had seen himself as a liberal and backed the reforms of Boris Yeltsin, a position he later regretted because he came to view it as the beginning of modern Russian authoritarianism.

He earned a law degree from the People's Friendship University of Russia in 1998, plus another degree in economics at the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation. (A fellowship at Yale University followed in 2010.) After earning his law degree, he worked for several Russian companies. More important to him, however, were his political activities. As he matured, he assumed a political philosophy, as one book described, "reminiscent of democratic, center-right politicians in the West."<sup>1</sup>

In 2000, Navalny married Yulia Abrosimova. They eventually had two children, a daughter and a son. Arrested during protests in 2011 and 2012, Navalny called on Russians to unite against Putin and eventually joined the People's Alliance political party; he was then generally considered the most prominent opponent of Vladimir Putin. In 2020, like other opponents of the Russian leader, he was mysteriously poisoned.

Navalny became ill during a flight to Moscow; only an emergency landing of the plane and immediate medical attention prevented his death. When this guide was originally written (in April 2023), Navalny was a prisoner in permanent solitary confinement at Penal Colony #2, a notorious prison about 150 miles from Moscow, and was identified by Amnesty International as a "prisoner of conscience." In December 2023, Navalny went missing for more than two weeks while being transferred to a maximum security penal colony north of the Arctic Circle. Alexei Navalny died as a political prisoner in the Polar Wolf penal colony on February 16, 2024.

The film *NAVALNY* begins with an interview of Alexei Navalny by film director Daniel Roher, right before Navalny's flight back to Russia after a period of recovery from the poisoning in Germany. Facing the likelihood of arrest, he nevertheless returns to his country with his wife and a planeload of reporters. The film reviews the events of the last few years — the attempt on his life, the rescue efforts of Russian and German doctors, and the attempts of a team of reporters and computer sleuths to locate the would-be assassins and to prove their guilt. The film reveals a masterpiece of detective work, and the documentary is all the more poignant because of Navalny's current imprisonment and mistreatment.

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<sup>1</sup> Morvan Lallouet and Ben Noble, *Navalny: Putin's Nemesis, Russia's Future?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021)