

**Sergei Kovalev Collection**  
**1974-1990**  
**Mss.Ms.Coll.35**

American Philosophical Society  
2003  
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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	American Philosophical Society
<b>Creator</b>	Kovalev, Sergei Adamovich, 1932-
<b>Title</b>	Sergei Kovalev Collection
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1974-1990
<b>Call number</b>	Mss.Ms.Coll.35
<b>Extent</b>	1.0 Linear feet
<b>Location</b>	LH-B-41-6
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The electrophysiologist Sergei Adamovich Kovalev (1932- ) was a prominent Russian dissident and human rights activist. After earning an international reputation for his research on the electrophysiology of myocardial tissues, Kovalev became involved with Andrei Sakharov and others in founding the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR, and he was a major figure in the distribution of <i>The Chronicle of Current Events</i>, a samizdat news letter that became the primary uncensored source for information about the dissident movement. He was arrested by the Soviet authorities in December 1974 and sentenced to seven years in prison and three more in exile. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Kovalev entered politics and won election to the Russian Duma. The Kovalev Collection consists of files of correspondence, circular letters, and miscellaneous published materials pertaining to the Soviet dissident scientist, Andrei Kovalev. The collection is arranged in two Series of approximately equal size, representing the activities of two of Kovalev's supporters: Paul F. Cranefield of Rockefeller University, who</p>

helped mobilize support for Kovalev in the United States, and Silvio Weidmann a physiologist at the University of Bern, who operated in Europe. Both Cranefield and Wiedmann were in regular contact with one another and both worked with professional organizations, with human rights groups such as Amnesty International, and with fellow activists such as Rosa Last.

**Preferred Citation**

Cite as: Sergei Adamovich Kovalev Collection, American Philosophical Society.

## Background note

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In 1969 Kovalev was working as a senior fellow in biology at his alma mater, Moscow University, when he was released due to his political activities. Already known as a dissident, he joined Andrei Sakharov and others in 1969 in founding the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR. Despite his dismissal, Kovalev managed to continue his scientific career, working at an experimental fish hatchery on problems in chemical mutagenesis, and he persevered as an activist. In 1974, however, the Soviet authorities once again intervened and his scientific career ended. In 1973, Kovalev and two colleagues, Tatiana Velikanova and Tatiana Khodorovich, resumed publication of *The Chronicle of Current Events*, a samizdat news letter that became the primary uncensored source for information about the dissident movement. Produced secretly using typewriters and carbon paper (since the Soviet authorities restricted use of photocopiers), the *Chronicle* defended the gamut of repressed and dissident groups, and was correspondingly perceived as a significant threat to the government. One year later, Kovalev also became a founding member of the USSR branch of Amnesty International, while his increasing visibility as a supporter of other dissidents added further fuel to the fire.

On December 23, 1974, the KGB raided Kovalev's apartment in Moscow, confiscated his files on prisoners of conscience, and sent him to a prison in Vilius, Lithuania, to await trial. Charged formally with anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda carried on for subverting or weakening the Soviet regime, Kovalev faced a laundry list of specific allegations: association with *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, the longest running dissident journal in the Soviet Union, being a member of the Initiative Group, signing appeals on the first anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, supporting other dissidents and political prisoners, sending information on the Soviet gulag abroad, and resuming publication of *The Chronicle of Current Events*. Sakharov responded by denouncing the charges as little more than a pretext to clamp down on dissidents of all sorts.

Kovalev pleaded not guilty, and in an "open" trial filled with irregularities, he was sentenced to seven years in a labor camp and three years of exile. Fresh off his Nobel Prize, Sakharov led protests against the conviction in Russia, while colleagues, concerned scientists, and other human rights activists outside of Russia began a campaign to petition Soviet authorities for his release. Although these efforts kept Kovalev's case in the public eye, they did little to shorten Kovalev's term, and after his release in 1984, he was barred, as the court had directed, from living in Moscow, making a living at menial jobs.

Kovalev was finally allowed to return to Moscow in 1987 and resumed his activities on behalf of human rights. After the fall of the Soviet Union, he entered politics, winning election to parliament beginning in 1990. Even in office, he remained consistent in his stance on human rights, protesting against human rights violations in Chechnya, arguing that "the most influential forces in Russia today are attempting to establish an authoritarian regime."

## Scope & content

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The Kovalev Collection consists of files of correspondence, circular letters, and miscellaneous published materials pertaining to the Soviet dissident scientist, Andrei Kovalev. The collection is arranged in two Series of approximately equal size, representing the activities of two of Kovalev's supporters: Paul F. Cranefield of Rockefeller University, who helped mobilize support for Kovalev in the United States, and Silvio Weidmann a physiologist at the University of Bern, who operated in Europe. Both Cranefield and Wiedmann were in regular contact with one another and both worked with professional organizations, with human rights groups such as Amnesty International, and with fellow activists such as Rosa Last.

Because Cranefield and Weidmann worked closely together on the Kovalev case, the two Series both complement one another and provide a measure of duplication. Both series include correspondence to and from Cranefield and Weidmann attempting to rouse support for Kovalev, circular letters from other activists and human rights organizations regarding the case and regarding the conditions of Kovalev's health, and the well being of his family, and numerous clippings from newspapers, professional journals, and the mass media providing a gauge of public and professional opinion.

## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 2003

## Provenance

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### Acquisition Information

Gift of Paul F. Cranefield, June 1990 (accn. no. 1994-78ms).

### Processing Information

Catalogued by rsc, 2004.

## Related Materials

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### Related Material

The APS houses a small number of collections with material on Soviet science, all from an earlier period and mostly centered on Lysenkoism. The papers of [Theodosius Dobzhansky](#), (B D65), [L. C. Dunn](#), (B D917), [I. Michael Lerner](#), (B L563), [Conway Zirkle](#), (B Z67), [Ernst Caspari](#), (Ms. Coll. 1), and [Milislav Demerec](#), (B D394) all have material on Lysenko in Russia. The papers of Dunn, [Bronson Price](#), (Ms. Coll. 16), [Raymond Pearl](#), (B P312), and [Franz Boas](#), (B B61) include material on scientific exchange with Russia in the 1930s, and [Curt Stern](#) (Ms. Coll. 5) in the 1960s.

## Indexing Terms

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### Corporate Name(s)

- Amnesty International

### Genre(s)

- Photographs

### **Personal Name(s)**

- Adler, Judith
- Boitsova, Lusya
- Cranefield, Paul F. (Paul Frederic), 1925-
- Eisner, Thomas, 1929-
- Gallone, Selene
- Hesburgh, Theodore Martin, 1917-
- Kovalev, Ivan
- Last, Rosa
- Sakharov, Andrei, 1921-1989
- Weidmann, Silvio

### **Subject(s)**

- Human rights--Soviet Union
- Political prisoners--Soviet Union



## Series I. Paul F. Cranefield material

## Collection Inventory

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<b>Series I. Paul F. Cranefield material</b>	<b>1976-1990</b>	<b>0.5 lin. feet</b>
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Cranefield's files are a diverse assemblage of correspondence, circular letters, newspaper and magazine clippings, and other miscellaneous materials pertaining to Paul Cranefield's activities on behalf of Sergei Kovalev and, to a lesser degree, other prisoners of conscience. In addition to documenting Cranefield's numerous letters to professional journals, colleagues, public officials, and the media, the series includes extracts of letters from Kovalev's wife, Lusya Boitsova, and from other concerned Russians that appear to have circulated widely among supporters of the dissidents, and numerous circular letters conveying news of Kovalev's precarious health in prison. The clippings from newspapers and journals provides a gauge of public and professional response to Kovalev's imprisonment.

One of the best documented parts of the Cranefield series is the 1979 effort to arrange a boycott of the Comparative Electrocardiology meeting held at Syktyvkar and the XX International Symposium on Electrocardiology held at Yalta. Responses to the call for boycott by Cranefield and Weidmann were predominantly positive, however some colleagues felt that such action would only worsen Kovalev's case, while others felt that politics should not intervene.

The Cranefield files are arranged chronologically by year.

Chronological file	1976	12 items	Box 1
Chronological file	1977	1 item	Box 1
Chronological file	1978	29 items	Box 1
Includes correspondence with Rosa Last, Petitions, etc.			
Chronological file	1979	4 folders	Box 1
Chronological file	1980	8 items	Box 1
Includes updated biography of Kovalev.			
Chronological file	1981	34 items	Box 1
Chronological file	1982	10 items	Box 1

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**Series I. Paul F. Cranefield material**

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Chronological file	1983	8 items	Box 1
Chronological file	1984	12 items	Box 1
Chronological file	1987	2 items	Box 1
Chronological file	1989	1 item	Box 1
Chronological file	1990	2 items	Box 1

## Series II. Silvio Weidmann material

<b>Series II. Silvio Weidmann material</b>	<b>1974-1990</b>	<b>0.5 lin. feet</b>	
<p>Silvio Weidmann's files includes valuable documentation of the European response to Kovalev's arrest and imprisonment, and contain the same scope and range of materials as Series I.</p> <p>The Weidmann files are arranged topically, in essentially chronological order. The collection begins with some biographical material on Kovalev and photographs, followed by material on Kovalev's arrest, a series of petitions from European cardiac electrophysiologists, files on Kovalev's imprisonment, and groups of correspondence with Rosa Last and Amnesty International. The arrangement reflects the order of the collection as received from the donor.</p>			
Photographs, bibliography, biography	n.d.	1 folder	Box 2
Includes "A survey of the scientific activity of S. A. Kovalev."			
Material on Kovalev's arrest	1974-1975	15 items	Box 2
Includes, inter alia, letters from Yuri Yakobson and Je. Rivkin to Weidmann, 1974, from Yuri Golfond to the <i>New York Times</i> , Mar. 27, 1975, and petition of electrocardiologists to V. Kotelnikov, Pres. Of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, July 15, 1975.			
Replies to Weidmann	1975-1979	1 folder	Box 2
Includes 47 letters from fellow scientists, mostly offering support for Kovalev.			
<b>European cardiac electrophysiologists</b>	1978 Dec. 19-21	1 folder	Box 2
Petitions to Anatolii Alexandrov, President of the Akademia Nauk SSR, and Leonid Brezhnev			
Petitions denouncing the arrest of Kovalev.			
<b>European cardiac electrophysiologists</b>	1979 Nov. 20	1 folder	Box 2
Petition to Anatolii Alexandrov			
Petition denouncing the imprisonment of Kovalev.			
<b>European cardiac electrophysiologists</b>	1980 Oct. 17	1 folder	Box 2
Petition to Sergei Kovalev			

## Series II. Silvio Weidmann material

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Petition denouncing the imprisonment of Kovalev.

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<b>European cardiac electrophysiologists</b>	1981 Oct. 12	1 folder	Box 2
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Petition to Leonid Brezhnev

Petition denouncing the imprisonment of Kovalev.

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<b>European Cardiology Society</b>	1982 Sept. 27	1 folder	Box 2
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Petition to Prokuratura at Moscow and Magadan

Petition denouncing the imprisonment of Kovalev.

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<b>European Cardiology Society</b>	1983 Dec. 10	1 folder	Box 2
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Petition to Prokuratura at Moscow and Magadan

Petition denouncing the imprisonment of Kovalev.

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<b>European Cardiology Society</b>	1984 Sept. 18	1 folder	Box 2
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Petition to Prokuratura at Moscow and Magadan

Petition denouncing the imprisonment of Kovalev.

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Updates on Kovalev	1976-1980	10 items	Box 2
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Includes extracts from letter of Elena Sakharov, July 1976, and from co-detainee Wolf Zalmanson, June 3, 1979 .

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Christophol Prison	1980-1982	13 items	Box 2
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Internal exile	1980-1982	6 items	Box 2
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Material concerning Kovalev's release	1983-1989	8 items	Box 2
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Kovalev, Ivan	1978-1988	11 items	Box 2
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Soviet boycott	1976-1980	54 items	Box 2
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**Series II. Silvio Weidmann material**

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Includes invitation from M. Roshchevsky to attend the National Symposium on Comparative Electrocardiology after the International Symposium in Yalta, 1979; clippings from newspapers and magazines on Russian political prisoners.

Soviet boycott, colleagues' responses	1979	45 items	Box 2
Last, Rosa	1979-1986	26 items	Box 2
United States institutions	1975-1986	34 items	Box 2
Amnesty International	1976-1990	1 folder	Box 2
Miscellaneous	1976-1981	1 folder	Box 2