Overview of the Ludwik Kowalski papers

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Collection Summary
Title: Ludwik Kowalski papers
Dates: 1946-2011
Collection Number: 2011C18
Creator: Kowalski, Ludwik, 1931-
Collection Size: 8 manuscript boxes (3 linear feet)
Repository: Hoover Institution Archives
Stanford, California 94305-6010
Abstract: Diaries, other writings, computer disk interview recording, and correspondence, relating mainly to communism.
Physical Location: Hoover Institution Archives
Language of Material: English and Polish
Access
The collection is open for research; materials must be requested at least two business days in advance of intended use.
Publication Rights
For copyright status, please contact the Hoover Institution Archives.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Ludwik Kowalski papers, [Box number], Hoover Institution Archives.
Acquisition Information
Acquired by the Hoover Institution Archives in 2011.
Accruals
Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared. To determine if this has occurred, find
the collection in Stanford University's online catalog Socrates at http://library.stanford.edu/webcat . Materials have been
added to the collection if the number of boxes listed in Socrates is larger than the number of boxes listed in this finding aid.
Biographical Note
Polish physicist and communist; subsequently anti-communist émigré in the United States.
Ludwik Kowalski, a retired physics professor at Montclair State University in New Jersey, has an extraordinary biography. He
was born in 1931 in Warsaw to a Jewish family. Shortly after his birth, his naively idealistic parents, deceived by Soviet
propaganda, moved to the Soviet Union. In 1938, Ludwik's father, an engineer, along with tens of thousands of Polish
Communists and ethnic Poles, was arrested on false charges and sent to the GULAG. He died of exhaustion in the Kolyma
gold mines at the age of thirty-six. His father's tragic fate did not shake Kowalski's blind faith in the Soviet system, and he
became a dedicated young Communist. Ludwik spent most of his childhood in Moscow, receiving a thoroughly Stalinist
education; he and his mother returned to Poland a few months after the end of the war. He completed his secondary and
university education in Warsaw, followed by graduate studies in France, from 1957 to 1962; he received a doctorate from
the Institute of Nuclear Physics in Orsay. After a brief visit to Poland, the young scientist was invited to a scientific
conference in the United States. That 1964 visit led to a research position at Columbia University and his immigration to the
United States.
Scope and Content of Collection
The collection includes the original notebook diaries (in Polish), hundreds of letters, and personal documents and
photographs, relating mainly to communism.
Kowalski began keeping a diary in secondary school in Poland. In it he recorded his reactions to developments in his private
life, with observations on major developments on the national and international scene. Kowalski continued to write his diary
through much of his life, though his notes from the 1950s are most extensive and interesting as a source on Polish society,
education and culture during the early years of the communist regime.
The diary also provides a record of the author's gradual intellectual de-Sovietization and the search for his own identity.
Kowalski's reactions to the death of Stalin, the revelations of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the
Hungarian revolution, and the Polish October 1956 are important landmarks in the young scholar's personal liberation, a
process that was very private and took decades to complete. As a university professor and a scientist, he concentrated on
his teaching and research and did not reveal his complete political metamorphosis until he retired from academia in 2004.
Since that time, he has written two books: Hell on Earth: Brutality and Violence under the Stalinist Regime (2008) and
Tyranny to Freedom: Diary of a Former Stalinist (2009). Both books were published by Wasteland Press in Shelbyville,
Kentucky.
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.
Communism.
Communism--Poland.
Polish people--United States.