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Marking of Absence: What is Contained in the Archive of Iryna Pap

Although there were many women involved in photography in the USSR, among them editors, retouchers, assistants, lab workers and photographers, very few female photographers made it to the top. One of them was Iryna Pap (1917-1985), Ukrainian photojournalist of Jewish origin, who established her career at *Izvestia*, one of the most prominent newspapers. The last decade of her life she dedicated to imparting knowledge and professional training to young photographers. Introducing the idea of peer-to-peer and portfolio reviews and inviting well-known Soviet photographers to conduct lectures and workshops with the students of the School of Journalistic Excellence at the Journalists Union of Ukraine, which she herself had established. Pap's legacy was largely forgotten during Perestroika and the following years and rediscovered in the late 2000s, only to be challenged again for being too ideological in the light of Decommunization.

The archive that contains her *Izvestia* productivity is composed of 140 envelopes, each numbered and dated. The overall number of negatives is approximately 1200. The majority of envelopes contain reporter's notes, contact sheets, press-prints, negatives and positives. The photographs in the archive are those which, for some reason or another, were passed over by the editor's office in Moscow, and thus never made it to the pages of the daily newspaper. Additional works may as well be found in two Ukrainian archives – TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) in Kyiv and the Pshenychnyi Central State Film, Photo and Sound Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv. A good selection of her photographs are currently available for view and purchase on the two specialized websites of the international media group *Rossiya Segodnya [Russia Today]*.

Pap served as a leading photo correspondent of *Izvestia* in Ukraine from 1958 till 1971, covering local news such as industrial achievements, constructions, official meetings and state celebrations, and less often – ordinary Soviet citizen's lives. Her works originally were made for publication in the press. During her career she participated in the official exhibitions and

even received awards for her photographs, although the traces of her exhibition activities are very hard to discover due to lack of documentation.

Her manifold engagement with photography places her work in at least about two discursive spaces, namely, mass media and art discourses. Complemented by her educational undertaking, Pap's legacy represents an interesting case for the further research and critical inquiry. Being a gifted educator who trained many of the Ukrainian photographers who would become active in the first decades after the Soviet Union's collapse, as well as a talented photojournalist, she has been, nevertheless ignored or written out of Ukrainian photography history, not simply because she happened to work under the unappealingly didactic and ideological Soviet cannon. The history barely exists for a number of reasons, among them the inherited marginal status of photography in post-Soviet Ukraine and its absence in the academic curricula, and of course, Russian colonial attempts to appropriate any significant artistic movement or personality, denying their origins and context in favor of propagating narratives of Russia-centric imperial cultural richness.