Histoire de l’art
Éditeur : DeVisu

91 | 2023
Ukraine

From a Pine Tree to a Telegraph Pole

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https://devisu.inha.fr/histoiredelart/132

DOI : 10.54390/histoiredelart.132

Référence électronique
Kateryna Filyuk, « From a Pine Tree to a Telegraph Pole », *Histoire de l’art* [En ligne], 91 | 2023, mis en ligne le 01 juin 2024, consulté le 04 octobre 2026. URL : https://devisu.inha.fr/histoiredelart/132

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PLAN

Pap's photographic practice in the context of Soviet press photography
The place of press photography in Soviet culture
Looking into Pap's archive

TEXTE

1 In order to construct a shared identity that eventually consolidates and legitimizes certain groups and communities, people may often resort to history and collective memory as viable tools. Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, but more intensely after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013–14, Ukrainian society has paved its way into the future by confronting and reinterpreting the official Soviet historical narrative. In 2015, Ukraine opened its Soviet-era KGB archives as part of the "Decommunization" laws aimed at cleansing public spaces of Soviet symbolism, uncovering and restoring historical facts that were hushed up in the Soviet era. This movement has nothing to do with the absolutization of the role of the past in the present. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the past as a frame of reference on which common values and patterns of behavior are based, allies are sought, and models of development are determined.

2 The body of photographic work produced by Iryna Pap (1917–1985), which documents life in the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic in 1957–72, must therefore be examined through this exploration of a highly contested past and through the way it projects into the country's present and future. The portion of Pap's works currently available for examination comes from the Kyiv editorial office of *Izvestia*. Other traces of Pap's work for local media outlets and other elements of her production for *Izvestia* may also be found in two Kyivian archives: the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS)

and the Pshenychnyi Central State CinePhotoPhono Archive of Ukraine. The photographs published in *Izvestia* are most likely held in the newspaper's archive in Moscow. The ongoing war makes it temporarily impossible to access these archives.

Pap's photographic practice in the context of Soviet press photography

3 During her tenure at the daily newspaper *Izvestia*, Pap produced more than 1,200 photoreports covering the everyday life of the working class, the visits of international delegations, party congresses, and the architectural transformation of Ukraine. Some 140 never-published reportages, alongside photographs that made it to the pages of *Izvestia*, provide a rich overview of Soviet photography's visual canon as embodied in her works. Pap's photographs established a visual frame of reference, which, despite its undeniable ideological charge, needs to be addressed and studied without bias, as much as possible. As an official photographer of a major Soviet news outlet, through her work, Pap had to adhere to, transmit, and cultivate values defined by the Communist Party.

4 Also noteworthy is the fact that she dedicated the last decade of her life to imparting knowledge and professional training to young photographers. She introduced the idea of peer-to-peer and portfolio reviews, inviting well-known Soviet photographers to conduct lectures and workshops with the students of the School of Journalistic Excellence at the Union of Journalists of Ukraine, which she established in the mid-1970s. Her educational undertaking addressed the lack of professional training for photographers in the Soviet Union—traditionally photographers were obliged to receive a basic education in vocational schools. The school became a cradle for a new generation of Ukrainian photographers active throughout the 1990s and still today, such as Vasyl Artyushenko, Volodymyr Falin, Viktor Marushchenko, Valery Orlov, and Rita Ostrovskaya.

5 At present, very few academic works are dedicated to the history of Ukrainian photography. For instance, the history of 19th- and 20th-

century photography in Ukraine written by Aleksander Trachun, the constructor-engineer of the Arsenal factory, which produced photographic equipment, gives a rather shallow overview of the field.[1] The work of researchers such as Tatyana Pavlova and Nadiia Bernard-Kovalchuk focus on the Kharkiv school of photography, whereas Andriy Boyarov studies the western region with a focal point on Lviv.

6 Fortunately, this lack of historical perspective and knowledge doesn't prevent contemporary Ukrainian photography from thriving; it does, however, urge researchers to address the questions of genealogy and succession. This task is anything but simple, because as early as the 1920s, the terms "Russian" and "Soviet" were used interchangeably, whereas "Ukrainian," "Georgian," and "Jewish" were dropped as obsolete and not suitable for the common goal. The situation worsened after World War II when "a term in its vague meaning but effective as regards its impact established itself—namely the 'Soviet nation.' From that time on, it becomes increasingly difficult to trace the path of Ukrainian photography,"[2] according to art historian Tatyana Pavlova. The unifying term "Soviet nation" was part of the colonial endeavor and paired with the affirmation of one nation's superiority—Russia. The equalization intended by the term "Soviet nation" led to the folklorization and trivialization of local cultures and the alienation of their stakeholders. As a result, a cohort of well-known photographers, including Aleksandr Rodchenko (whose father was Ukrainian), Arkady Shaikhet (born in Mykolaiv), Yevgeny Khaldei (born in Yuzovka, Donetsk), Max Alpert (born in Simferopol, studied photography in Odesa), and Boris Sheinin (born in Sevastopol), despite their Ukrainian origins or upbringing, were labeled Soviet. The situation is no different today, with Boris Mikhailov and Sergey Bratkov, both from Kharkiv, generally referred to as "Russian" or, in the best case, "Soviet." This roll call shows that despite the emancipation of women in socialist society, photography, and photojournalism in particular, persisted as a male-dominated world. One of the most famous war photo correspondents, Galina Sanko, is an exception, in the same way as Pap, who a decade after Sanko, succeeded in becoming the special photo correspondent in Ukraine for the second most important newspaper in the Soviet Union, *Izvestia*. In the numerous pictures of Pap at work taken by her second husband Borys Gradov, she is always the only woman surrounded by male

colleagues. It is perhaps for this reason, according to her daughter, that despite being very elegant and often wearing accessories, she only wore trousers.

7 This paper seeks to historicize Pap's photographic legacy and place it in the Soviet context, exploring both factual and conceptual registers of her practice. Pap's career in photography started in 1950 at the *Sovetskoe Zakarpattia* (Soviet Transcarpathia) newspaper in Uzhgorod, where Gradov had moved to work as a photo reporter. Graduated from the newly formed Ukrainian Institute of Cinematography in 1941 with a specialization as a "film industry electrical engineer,"[3] Pap most likely took an interest in photography thanks to Gradov. Due to her professional training, she was well acquainted with the technical aspect of photography and may have learned other aspects of the profession from her husband. Nonetheless, she made an astonishing upward move in her career in 1957, when she became a special photo correspondent for *Izvestia* in Ukraine. Gradov, in his turn, was a long-time correspondent for the illustrated magazine *Ukraina*.

8 The beginning of Pap's career at *Izvestia* roughly coincided with the debunking of the cult of Stalin and the subsequent years labeled "Khrushchev's Thaw." It was a moment of economic reforms, reconnection with the West and the Space Race, but, most importantly, partial liberalization of cultural life. Its peak occurred with the "Sixtiers" (the Thaw writers), which brought together authors Ivan Drach, Mykola Vingranovskyi, Vasyl Symonenko, and Lina Kostenko, artists Alla Gorska and Viktor Zaretsky, film directors Sergei Parajanov and Yuri Ilyenko, as well as translators Hryhoriy Kochur and Mykola Lukash. They played a pivotal role "in introducing into the public consciousness, through a new paradigm of Ukrainian history, a qualitatively new understanding of the Ukrainian nation as an independent subject, and not a constituent part of the 'Soviet nation.'"[4] This group of Ukrainian writers, artists, and academics were articulating their opposition to the Soviet state for the first time since the Executed Renaissance of the 1920–30s. During the temporary weakening of communist totalitarianism, they tried to liberate themselves from official dogmatism, professed freedom of creative expression, and cultural pluralism. The Ukrainian Helsinki Group, established in

1976, whose goal was to ensure implementation of human rights in the Soviet Union, stems from the Sixtiers.

9 This period ended with a decree issued by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU, *On increasing the responsibility of the heads of the press, radio, television, cinematography, cultural and art institutions for the ideological and political level of published materials and repertoire* (1969), which introduced a new wave of censorship and Operation Block, the arrest of a large group of Ukrainian dissidents (1972). The KGB arrested over a dozen Ukrainian writers, artists, and public figures, putting an end to self-publishing and silencing dissenters. How could these historical milestones be represented in Pap's photographic practice?

The place of press photography in Soviet culture

10 Boris Groys, in his seminal work *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, claims that the leading Soviet aesthetic theory, Socialist Realism, was "unappealingly didactic, devoid of entertainment value and divorced from real life."[5] Socialist Realism emerged in the 1920s, and was canonized in 1934 as a response to society's rapid transformation and a subsequent radical shift of historical representation. The dominance of oil painting, often monumental in size and epic in terms of content, in Stalin's epoch gave way to photography during Khrushchev's reign as a more modern and spontaneous medium. However, the canon of Socialist Realism endured.

11 Since the early days of the Soviet Union, photography was seen as a particularly important technological tool for the new world under construction, a tool that would have the capacity to transform existence, serving communicative and educational goals at the same time: "The Soviets understood—better than their political rivals—that mass politics required mass communication."[6] This is why the press, and therefore press photography, experienced an unprecedented advancement in the Soviet Union. In 1913, there were only 859 newspapers, with a circulation of 2.7 million copies, whereas in 1933 there were already 8,319 with a total circulation of 35.7 million copies, and

in 1967, 7,087 with a circulation of 119.8 million copies (excluding the newspapers of collective farms).[7]

12 Among these was a monthly magazine on photography called *Sovetskoe Foto* (Soviet photo), published from 1926 until 1997. Its audience was both professional and amateur photographers. It contained theoretical and practical advice as well as showcasing the latest achievements of Soviet photographers. Important guidelines on the ethics and aesthetics of a photojournalist's work could be found there, such as by a certain I. Sokolov, an art critic:

> A snapshot for the press, and above all for a newspaper, is an objective, truthful reflection of reality, it is an accurate and most complete fixation of real facts covering the widest sphere of human activity—life, work, everyday activities, documenting social, political, and cultural events. The specific signs of such a photograph are documentary, the absolute reliability of the captured fact, event, or phenomenon, excluding any doubt about the authenticity of the photographic image.[8]

13 This may sound in line with the description of the photographer given by Tim Gidal in his book *Modern Photojournalism: Origin and Evolution, 1910–1933* as the one "able to reflect [events and happenings] in a precise and accurate form,"[9] although since then a more complex approach to news photographs has developed, which among other things, emphasizes their constructed aspect. In the case of Soviet news photography, in the 1920s, all sorts of visual manipulations were already applied to images as a response to the quickly changing political agenda, as yesterday's party comrades suddenly became foes and had to be erased from photographs after their physical extermination.[10]

14 From Khrushchev's Thaw onwards, the Soviet press experienced less of this kind of manipulation: most contrivances consisted of cropping images or complementing an image with a suitable caption to enhance its impact. At this point, photographs had to be staged, whereas previously they would have been manipulated at the post-production stage. A younger colleague of Pap, the photo reporter Victor Kochetov, claimed in an interview that "the entire Soviet reportage was staged and edited": it didn't make sense to take a

picture of someone hammering a railroad trestle without a uniform, because such a photograph would be immediately discarded and the photographer accused of not taking care of the "model's appearance."[11]

15 Thereafter, press photography had to be scientifically accurate, to transmit the truth about Soviet people's life, and to simultaneously educate them, being a universal language that could reach the illiterate. In his introductory article for *Sovetskoe Foto* in 1961, Pavel Satiukov, the president of the Union of Journalists and *Pravda*'s chief editor, declared:

> A wise old proverb says: "It is better to see once than to hear a hundred times." Articles are not read by everyone, but illustrations are seen by everyone. This means that our photojournalists reach many millions of readers every day. The photograph is strong in its credibility; that is why there is an especially large reliance on it in newspapers nowadays.[12]

16 Another novelty that emerged in discussions about photography during the 1960s was an emphasis on high artistic quality, that is, the expression of individual artistic vision. In his introductory article, Satiukov, stated that photography was now being regarded "as a political document truthfully reflecting the life of our people constructing Communism and at the same time as works of art."[13] This is echoed in the collection of short essays composed in 1967 by two photo-journalists, Gennady Koposov and Lev Sherstennikov. They jokingly outline 13 commandments of a photographer; one of them reads: "The fact is a pine tree; the photograph is a telegraph pole. Think about how to turn one into the other."[14] This metaphor allowed for, or even invited, a certain amount of artistic freedom and experimentation in the execution of photographs. Talking about various technical aspects of shooting and so-called strategies, Koposov and Sherstennikov eventually arrive at a fundamental question: "What do I want to say with this photo?"[15]

Looking into Pap's archive

17 Juxtaposed with the reflection of historical events in Pap's photographic practice, this question may help to create a framework in

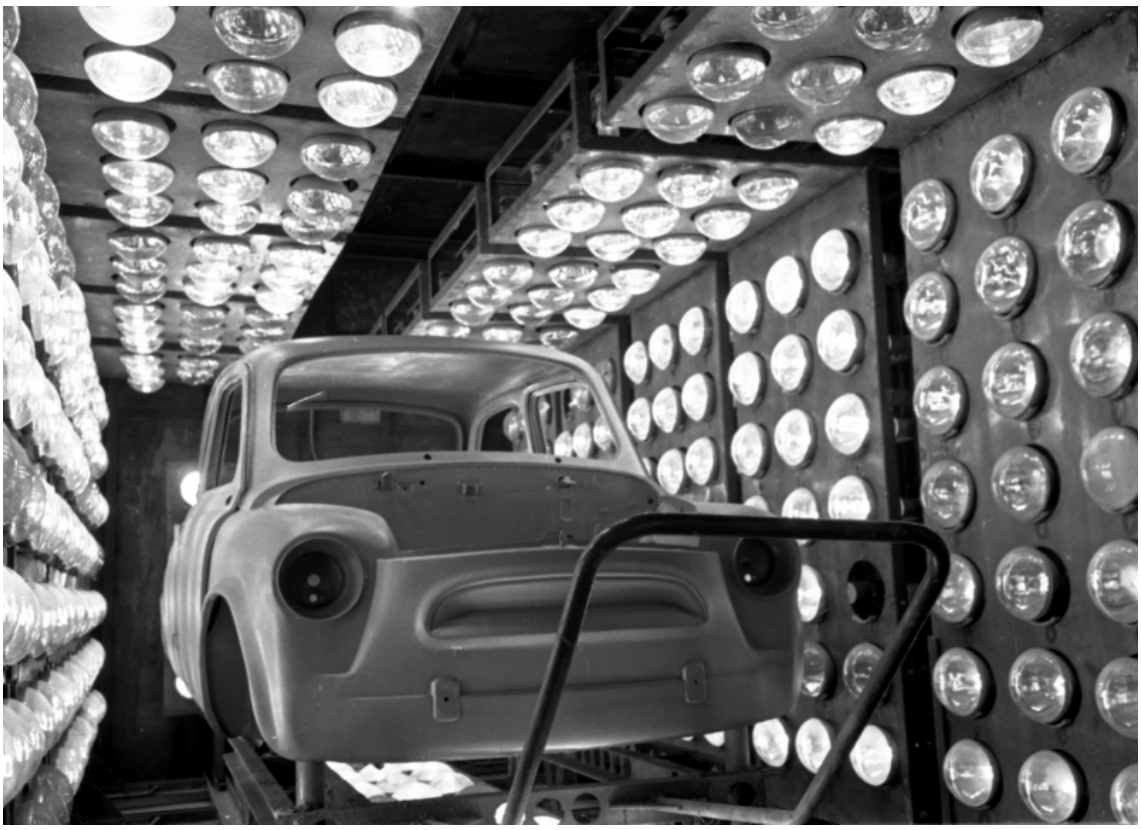
which a number of her reportages could be examined more closely. This undertaking is done on the basis of Pap's *Izvestia* archive, currently preserved at Fotohof Archiv in Salzburg, Austria. After Pap's death in 1985, the archive had been forgotten in the journal's office, where she used to have her dark room. In 1991, a young photo reporter of *Izvestia*, Valeriy Miloserdov, dug out the boxes with Pap's photographs from the pile of rubbish and kept them, as no one claimed them. In subsequent years, he digitized the negatives and reached out to the photographer's granddaughter, Christina Liubov Karminsky. The first public presentation of the substantial part of the photographs found by Miloserdov took place in 2017, in Kyiv. The exhibition titled *Playing the Past*, which I curated, included an interactive element; it encouraged visitors to engage with the photographs placed on the shelves. Subsequently, in 2019, the exhibition traveled to Fotohof in Salzburg, as did the archive in 2021.

18 The archive contains 142 envelopes, each numbered and dated. Overall there are some 1,200 negatives. Most envelopes contain reporter's notes, contact sheets, press prints, and negatives. As no personal notes or diaries by Pap have been found, this investigation is heavily based on the available visual materials and general context. Thematically, the archive can be roughly divided into the following categories: construction; industry achievements; top performers; international delegations and party congresses; leisure; cultural events, and personalities; and Kyiv. The most complete years are 1958, 1960, and 1965, whereas 1972 has only two envelopes, however one is a sizable photo reportage from the construction of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. Quantitative examination proves that the newspaper favored Pap's portraits of workers, female more than male (based on the scrutinization of issues from 1958, 1960, and 1961), with less focus on Ukrainian industrial achievements.

19 The first example is from envelope #579, from June 1961. It is a rare case where the photograph, published in issue 184, was kept in *Izvestia*'s editorial office in Kyiv; in 1991 the entire archive was found and rescued by Miloserdov. In contrast, a large majority of the photographs in the archive are the ones which were turned down by the main editorial office in Moscow. This raises questions: were they judged as not good enough, censored, or just put aside as irrelevant.

20 In this respect, it is interesting to look at envelope #344 from 1966, which contains numerous negatives from the Kommunar plant in Zaporizhzhia, which had then just released a new model of the Zaporozhets car, ZAZ-966. The news article appeared in *Izvestia* in March 1967, but with a photograph taken by the special photo correspondent I. Kogan and text written by A. Dolenko. Pap specifically mentioned in her notes that her photographs were meant for Dolenko's article. However, the preference was given to another photographer and her reportage remained unused. Analyzing these photographs retrospectively, some of them may have looked too glamorous and "Western" to the editors. Especially those in the coating mill, with lateral bright lamps and a frontal view of the car frame (**fig. 1**). In light of the continuous fight against the bourgeois formalism of Western photography, the Soviet editors may have considered it too squeaky-clean, the angle of the shot too experimental, and thus the overall effect not convincing enough for their purpose. Exactly this photograph, not a photograph from a party congress or a worker's portrait, appeared in *Une histoire mondiale des femmes photographes* (2020) edited by Luce Lebart and Marie Robert, representing Pap's oeuvre.[16]

1. Iryna Pap, *Zaporozhets ZAZ-966 in the Coating Mill*, 1966.



Negative, dimensions unknown, Iryna Pape Estate, Kyiv (digitized by Fotohof).

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

21 In envelope #579 is a short reporter's note:

> On the fields of the collective farm named after Lenin in the Belgorod-Dnestrovsky district of the Odesa region there is a battle for a strong harvest. Stanislava Vaskovskaya, the collective farm librarian, also has a lot of work. In the morning and in the evening, she hurries with fresh newspapers and magazines to the field camps. Stanislava has already graduated from the Kyiv Cultural and Educational College, and now the young woman is preparing to enter the correspondence department of the Kharkiv Library Institute. [17]

22 In the image, the photographer captured a smiling young woman next to a shiny new bicycle (**fig. 2**). In one hand, she holds flowers, in the other, a newspaper. On the bicycle rack, there is a pile of books that she is presumably bringing to the field workers. The staged nature of this image seems undeniable. Controversy is already hiding

in the caption, where “a battle for a strong harvest,” multiplied by the Soviet concept of a top worker, counters the precariously piled books on the bicycle rack. Do these workers even have time to read? Smiling broadly for the shot, the young woman looks away from the picture, whilst a symmetrical row of trees on the picture’s left side creates a perfect linear perspective. In the newspaper, the image appears cropped (the tree trunks disappear, eliminating the perspective) and inclined to better fit the corner of the page, although Pap’s original caption remains (**fig. 3**). Presumably, the aim of the image is to demonstrate the diligence and education of the Soviet nation. This is also emphasized by the fact that Vaskovskaya, a recent graduate, wants to continue her education without stopping work.

2. Iryna Pap, *Stanislava Vaskovskaya*, 1966.



Negative, dimensions unknown, Iryna Pap Estate, Kyiv (digitized by Fotohof).

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

3. Iryna Pap's photograph, 1961.



ОТКРЫВА

ЭТИ письма приходили задолго до первого космического полета человека, еще до полета первых благополучно вернувшихся на Землю животных. Их стало еще больше после 12 апреля 1961 года, когда из полета вокруг нашей планеты возвратился Юрий Гагарин. В них одна мечта, одно желание: стать космонавтом, окунуться в романтику «звездных» полетов. Люди предлагают свои услуги бескорыстно, им не надо ни славы, ни признания, они готовы на любой самый рискованный полет.

Эти письма принадлежат разным людям, заслуженно нашедшим хорошую жизнь на Земле. Людям, которые любят жизнь, любят свою землю, любят свою профессию, свою страну. Это инженер, успешно работающий на крупном заводе, это студент, рабочий — это наши советские люди.

Что же заставляет их писать такие письма?

Преданность делу коммунизма, любовь к социалистической Родине, те высокие нравственные принципы, которые, как это сказано в проекте новой Программы партии, присущи строителям великого будущего. Именно эти качества рождают горящим, жажду познания, стремление самому участвовать в каждом большом и новом деле. Об этом говорит убедительный, страстный тон писем, а их — многие тысячи.

Ю. А. Гагарин — один из тех, на кого теперь многие смотрят с хорошей «завистью» и, наверное, даже думают, что вот, мол, и я мог бы также быть космонавтом, совершать героические дела во славу Родины. И этим людям — авторам многочисленных писем, и тем, кто хотел, но не написал, и тем, кто будет писать, хочется сказать следующее: дело завоевания космоса еще только начинается, а Юрий Алексеевич Гагарин не только счастливец, который был выбран для первого полета, но и человек, много потрудившийся для того, чтобы этот выбор был сделан.

Романтика — заманчивая красивая даль. Но для того чтобы она стала реальностью, необходимо познать и преодолеть трудности обыденного. Романтика космических полетов требует настойчивости, упорства и в будничных делах. Удастся ли в таких буднях видеть прежний ореол романтики? Да, удастся, но только тем, для кого повседневные трудности не заслоняют цели, тем, кто понимает, что ничто в жизни не дается без напряженного труда. Подготовка к

На полях колхоза имени Ленина Белгород-Днестровского района Одесской области идет битва за высокий урожай. Много хлопот и у Станиславы Васковской — колхозного библиотекаря. Утром и вечером спешит она со свежими газетами и журналами на полевые станы. Станиславе уже закончила Киевский культурно-просветительный техникум, а сейчас девушка готовится к поступлению на заочное отделение Харьковского библиотечного института.

Фото Ирины Пап.

«КУБОК ИТАЛИИ» В ЛУЖНИКАХ

В бассейне Центрального стадиона имени В. И. Ленина 5 августа начнется розыгрыш спортивного приза ватерполистов — «Кубка Италии». В состязаниях примут участие шесть сильнейших команд Европы. Эти соревнования, которые проводятся четвертый раз, часто называют неофициальным первенством мира.

Почему же «Кубок Италии» разыгрывается в Москве? Дело в том, что итальянская федерация водного поло, учреждая этот приз, решила проводить турнир шести в странах, завоевавших в предыдущих состязаниях почетный приз. Наши ватерполисты получили это право в хорватском городе Загребе, заняв там в 1957 году первое место. В 1949 году кубок выиграли голландцы, в 1953 году — югославские ватерполисты.

Трудно предугадать исход турнира. Ведь в нем примут участие команды Италии — победитель XVII олимпийских игр, неоднократные победители и призеры олимпиад команды Венгрии, Югославии и СССР и, наконец, сильные коллективы Румынии и ГДР.

В. ГОРШКОВ, мастер спорта.

Published in *Izvestia* 184, August 3, 1961, n.p.

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

23 The original photograph, due to its artistic value, could have been included in a photography exhibition such as All-Union Art's *Seven-Year Plan in Action* 1961, where another of Pap's pictures, titled *Wedding*, received a prize. Alternatively, it might have been displayed in the window of the *Izvestia* office in Moscow on Pushkinskaya Square, where there was a constantly changing exhibition of photographs by its reporters. So far, no records have been found; both of these notions are speculation, based on the verbal testimonies of Pap's grandchildren. [18]

24 A nod in the direction of the Space Race can be found in envelope #518, dated April 1961, and titled Students Reading Newspaper Reports of the Flight of Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin into Space, Taras

Shevchenko State University of Kyiv (**fig. 4**). This envelope contains no notes but 42 negatives and two press prints. The latter give an idea of which images were eventually chosen by Pap. In both selected shots (horizontal and vertical), students on the steps of the main university's building are reading newspaper reports of Gagarin's flight. The group looks perfectly representative of diversity, featuring both women and men, as well as local and international, including African, students. Captivated by the incredible news, no one looks at the camera. The newspaper headline declares: "Space submits to the country of the Soviets. We firmly believed this day would come." The universal unity and rejoicing of the Soviet nation caused by the most important breakthrough in the field of space exploration is also reflected in the photograph's composition. The photographer clearly asked her models to strike the pose to arrange a perfect image of success shared by each citizen of the Soviet Union. As students, they suggest a shared, unshakable belief in progress and science, which had taken the place of religion. The future of the country can be seen: its students are united, concentrated, and inspired by their compatriot's achievement.

4. Iryna Pap, *Students Reading Newspaper Reports of the Flight of Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin into Space*, Taras Shevchenko State University of Kyiv, 1961.



Negative, unknown dimensions, Iryna Pap Estate, Kyiv (digitized by Fotohof).

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

25 Earlier the same year, Pap captured *The Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Group of Leaders and the Chairperson of Collective Farms* (**fig. 5**), another example of collective unity referring to Khrushchev's corn campaign as well as the allegedly participatory nature of governance in the Soviet Union. Apart from the negatives and press photographs, there is a newspaper clipping with the photograph and the text (**fig. 6**), as well as a longer caption, which was eventually not accepted. The newspaper's text reads as follows:

> The Communist Party holds council with the people. Thousands of advanced people of the village participate in the work of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Here meet the noble leader of the Collective Farm named after Stalin of the Ternopil region, twice Hero of Socialist Labor Evgenia Dolinyuk, the leader of the Collective Farm named after Kirov of the Zastavnovsky district of the Chernivtsi region, Hero of Socialist Labor Maria Mykitei, the milkmaid of the collective farm Leninsky Way of the Sekiryansky district of the Chernivtsi region Maria Moiseevna Gonchar, young specialist Elena Chernaya, farm manager of the Collective Farm named after Stalin, Mikulinetsky district, Ternopil region. [19]

26 An additional unpublished caption continues: "the cultivation of high yields of corn, [and] obtaining large milk yields is facilitated by the study and implementation of best practices," [20] which is why the workers have to meet and exchange their knowledge as well as compete and thus stimulate better results.

5. Iryna Pap, *The Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party*, 1961.



Negative, dimensions unknown, Iryna Pap Estate, Kyiv (digitized by Fotohof).

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

6. Unidentified newspaper clipping with Iryna Pap's photograph, 1961.



Salzburg, Fotohof, Iryna Pap's archive (IPA06105).

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

27 The photograph features four women of different ages, three of them wearing traditional Ukrainian village head scarfs. They are in an animated discussion; papers and books are laid out on the table in front of them. Their proximity and concentration suggest a deep involvement in the common goal. For the newspaper, the shot where none of them is smiling has been chosen, though a much more joyful version of the image was left in the envelope.

28 In *104-Year-Old Hero of Shipka with Children* (envelope #275, 1959, **fig. 7**), an old man is reading something to a group of children. He is Fedor Ivanovich Taranov, a hero of the Russo-Turkish War, and he is reading a letter from his Bulgarian friends, who express their gratitude for being liberated from the Turks. In Soviet historiography, the

Russo-Turkish War is considered an ideologically legitimate, liberatory event that brought independence to part of Armenia and the Balkan countries. Thus, the photograph tackles a number of tasks at the same time: it shows the great respect for the elderly cultivated in the Soviet Union; the glorification of the ideologically appropriate past; the continuity and transition of knowledge; as well as gratitude and respect from another Eastern Bloc country.

7. Iryna Pap, *104-Year-Old Hero of Shipka with Children*, 1959.



Negative, dimensions unknown, Iryna Pap Estate, Kyiv (digitized by Fotohof).

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

29 The final set of photographs to be examined represents the famous Ukrainian writer Oles Honchar at home in 1964 (**fig. 8**). The photographs were taken four years before the publication of *The Cathedral*, a novel that was banned and confiscated due to its symbolic meaning for the Sixtiers. Here we see a renowned Soviet writer enjoying the company of his wife Valentyna and their son Yuri. The trio is photographed in their apartment; the interior is simple, yet with paintings on the walls and a large library—attributes of the Soviet intelligentsia. In one sequence, father and son study the maps and look at books,

whereas in another, the parents listen to the boy reading. Aside from this, one portrait of Honchar is marked by Pap as successful. The envelope contains no notes, so it's not clear on which occasion the pictures were taken or why the writer was photographed with his family rather than on his own.

8. Iryna Pap, *Oles Honchar with His Family*, 1964.



Negative, dimensions unknown, Iryna Pap Estate, Kyiv (digitized by Fotohof).

© Iryna Pape Estate / Fotohof.

Between 1959 and 1971, Honchar was the Head of the Union of Ukrainian Writers. In 1960, he was awarded the Taras Shevchenko National Prize for the novel *Man and Arms*. He also received the title of Hero of Socialist Labor. Thus, he was clearly one of the most recognized and honored writers of his generation, although he was hit by criticism and miraculously escaped political repression precisely because he openly supported and defended his younger

colleagues, the Sixtiers. Symbolically, he was the one who, at the session of Ukraine's Parliament, after the historic referendum on December 1, 1991, announced the results of Ukrainians' decision to live in an independent country.

31 It is possible to make a strong didactic reading of the photograph, an impulse to depict ordinary people, who allegedly stand at the core of the Soviet state, as educated, thirsty for new theoretical and practical skills, respectful of tradition and open to novelty. As those who made it to the pages of the important newspaper, they are more role models than real people with their own flaws and doubts. Being an official photographer of a state news outlet meant, despite its declarations of truthfulness and objectivism, constructing a particular version of reality that may help the people in achieving the dream of socialism in the future. Because of this, Pap did not have much freedom in the direction of her practice.

32 Applying Groys's formula, cited above, her photographs can be described as not "devoid of entertainment value," albeit inescapably "divorced from real life."[21] Regardless of their ideological orientation, they are not stripped of artistic quality and individual artistic vision. Pap often gives preference to an up-close position, creating an intimate connection within the shot. The composition is well-thought-out and balanced, and the props have symbolic meaning. She practices little experimentation with composition, angle, lighting, and focus, although she tends to emphasize the poetic and expressive purpose of the pictures. She shows a better version of a human being —sincere, devoted, honest—and a better version of the country—flourishing, taking care of its citizens, prosperous. This fully corresponds with the Party's cause.

33 The historical events shaping her epoch are touched on obliquely by her photographs insofar as it was permitted by the official media policy and the position she assumed within it. As far as it is known, she did not maintain any friendly contacts with the Sixtiers, nor did she undertake the internal migration so common for the whole generation of artists shaped by the enthusiasm of the Thaw and disappointed in the following years by the strengthening of state control. Due to her pedagogic activities fostered by her professional photojournalistic skills, she played an important but little-

investigated role in the history of Ukrainian photography in the middle and second half of the 20th century. Her archive provides rich yet non-exhaustive data for study. Enhanced by scrutinization of the *Izvestia* archive, it may provide interesting findings and suggest further propositions on the editorial policy of this daily newspaper, as well as the aesthetic criteria applied to visual materials and artistic choices that it informed. In regard to the ongoing anti-Russian decolonial struggle and to the war in Ukraine, Pap's archive stands as a historical document, encapsulating the ambiguities of its time and affirming the Soviet state's oppressive nature. As the survey of the archive proves, certain events and topics are eloquently absent from it; this testifies to the strictly limited frame of any photographic practice that was not clandestine and which shapes a particular version of history. Whereas an amount of folklorism or focus on the rural as in Vaskovskaya's portrait should not go unnoticed and could trigger a decolonial interpretation of Pap's oeuvre. A slavish comparison to the description of the metropole published in *Izvestia* in 1960, accompanying the picture of the newly opened metro in Kyiv, can be interpreted in the same way:

> In Kyiv, subway trains went underground. Five stations—each more beautiful than the next. The Kyiv Metro is a worthy rival of the Moscow and Leningrad underground roads. Take a look at the picture by Iryna Pap. This is the Universytetska station. Is it lesser than the underground palace in Moscow with the same name!? [22]

NOTES

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17 Iryna Pap, untitled reporter's note, June 1961, Iryna Pap's archive, IPA06303, Fotohof, Salzburg.

18 Interview with Christina Liubov Karminsky, Kateryna Rohova, and Valentyn Karminsky by the author, via Zoom, January 24, 2022.

19 Iryna Pap, untitled newspaper clipping, January 1961, Iryna Pap's archive, IPA06105, Fotohof, Salzburg.

20 Iryna Pap, untitled reporter's note, January 1961, IPA06106, *ibid.*

21 Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, p. 8.

22 Unknown author, untitled article, *Известия* 266, November 7, 1960, p. 3.

RÉSUMÉS

Français
Iryna Pap est largement sous-représentée dans l'histoire de la photographie ukrainienne. Son œuvre, accessible sous la forme de ses archives pour *Izvestia*, a été sauvé en 1991 à Kiev et déposé au Fotohof Archiv de Salzbourg, en Autriche, en 2021. Souvent qualifié de soviétique, et donc taxé d'idéologie, son travail a été très tôt écarté par les chercheurs. Avec un regard neuf, cet article cherche à aborder la pratique photographique de Pap à travers des séries prises entre 1959 et 1964 et à l'historiciser en juxtaposant ces images avec les événements historiques de l'époque.

English
Iryna Pap is vastly underrepresented in the history of Ukrainian photography. Her work—accessible in the form of her archives for *Izvestia*—was saved in 1991 in Kyiv and deposited at the Fotohof Archiv in Salzburg, Austria, in 2021. Often described as Soviet, and therefore accused of ideological, her work was dismissed early on by researchers. With a fresh look, this article seeks to approach Pap's photographic practice through different series taken between 1959 and 1964, and to historicize it by juxtaposing the pictures with the historical events of that time.

INDEX

Mots-clés
photographie, art ukrainien, photographie de presse, art soviétique

Index géographique
Ukraine

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XXe siècle, années 1950, années 1960

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