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Photos: Where Art Lies in Ruins and in the Streets

By William Meyers January 22, 2016



PM, the determinedly leftist New York tabloid daily, announced in its first issue, “PM is against people who push people around.” But also, “PM’s sole source of income is its readers,” and it never had enough to sustain its publication. Although short-lived, it published a distinguished roster of writers and photographers. Weegee (Arthur Fellig) was in the second issue, June 19, 1940, with a photo of a car wreck, and many of his most frequently reproduced pictures appeared in PM, such as “The Critic, Opening Night at the Metropolitan Opera” (Nov. 22, 1943) and “Their First Murder” (Oct. 9, 1941). The images are shown as prints and in yellowing pages from the paper.

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At PM, Margaret Bourke-White and Mary Morris became the first female press photographers on staff at a daily paper in the U.S. Several of Lisette Model's portraits from "Promenade des Anglais (Nice, French Riviera)" (1937) ran with an article about prewar European decadence, and Helen Levitt's signature "Third Ave., Upper East Side, Offers no Trees or Cliffs for Kids to Climb, but Porch of Abandoned Building is Excellent Substitute" (July-August 1940) was used to advocate for more parks. Morris Engel, Irving Haberman and Arthur Leipzig were PM photographers whose reputations continue, but those in the show such as Leo Leib, Max Peter Haas and Gene Badger, competent but forgotten photojournalists, also contributed their share of politicians, crooks, sports figures and babes in bathing suits to PM's pages.

