

# Pioneers Of Photojournalism

• Dov Levy

## Two Jews Who Helped Define Photojournalism

*Erich Salomon was a German who became legendary during his lifetime for his candid, inside shots of celebrities and high public officials—as well as the way his images were obtained. Robert Capa was a Hungarian-born journalist who entered war zones to bring back iconic images that drove home the human side of the events. These two Jews were among an elite corps of pioneering photojournalists who defined the medium at its infancy.*

The air is charged in the Berlin courtroom. It is 1928 and the high-profile trial of an alleged police killer is about to commence. The newspapers have been parroting the sensational story for months and now the entire city has riveted its attention on the court proceedings. What evidence will the prosecution present? What will the defense team counter to the accusations?

The judge slams his gavel and the courthouse quiets. Before beginning, the stern-faced judge looks around the room and announces, "No cameras permitted in this court."

The court attendants glance around the room again. If there were any cameras present, they would be spotted immediately. Cameras of the time are bulky and must be mounted on a tripod. A photographer would be standing behind it to focus the lens, trigger the shutter and insert and remove the glass plates used for the exposures. Anyone can see that there are no photographers in the courtroom today.

The usher standing at the door relaxes as the trial begins. The rush of people entering the courtroom, whose credentials it has duty to check, has ended. As he listens to the proceedings, he misses a quiet, middle-aged man walking through the door with an assured step. A second too late the attendant catches the motion out of the corner of his eye. However, the balding, slightly round figure with the attaché case does not seem worth making a fuss over. He is clearly one of the lawyers who, no doubt held back by some urgent legal business, arrived late for the trial.

The man strides in purposefully and takes a chair behind a table. He carefully sets down his attaché case on the table. All eyes are turned toward the judge, who calls on the lawyers to begin presenting their case. No one pays attention to the man fiddling inconspicuously with a barely visible dial on his attaché case.

Too bad the door attendant failed to stop this man. He is about to capture dramatic images of the court proceedings that will be



Private Riley struggles to the beach in one of the most famous images of World War II.

published all over Berlin that weekend. The sensational murder trial will be delivered right into the living room of tens of thousands, who will glimpse firsthand the drama in the court that took place during the week.

The morning of June 6, 1944, dawned gray and cloudy over the coast of Normandy, matching perfectly the mood of the Allied soldiers about to invade. At Omaha Beach, hundreds of landing boats approached the shoreline, disgorging their human contents in waves. The soldiers charged off the landing ramps into the water and waded ashore, struggling amidst the obstacles placed there to block their advance.

In minutes, the water turned dark red and became clogged with bodies. Mines and shells exploded everywhere. The soldiers ran straight into devastating heavy machine gun fire as they fought off seasickness and lugged their heavy equipment into battle. Two thirds of these men became casualties in the first hours of the invasion.

In the midst of the sudden explosions, one man stood up wielding not a rifle but... a camera. He shot photo after photo as hundreds of men sacrificed their lives to

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