

Nothing is wrong with the story of legendary photos of Day D (Unsigned)

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(Google Translate version)

If you had to list the twenty decisive images of the 20th century that almost burned into collective consciousness, some of Robert Capa's photographs would surely appear on the list. They would include photos taken at Normandy on June 6, 1944, which captured the first day of the invasion of American and British troops in France. The landing in Normandy meant the beginning of the end for Hitler's realm, and it was decided that at least Western Europe would be liberated from the German rule by the Anglo-Saxon powers - and not by the Red Army approaching the East. Capa, who has been a legendary correspondent of the world's most famous photographer since the Spanish Civil War, was on Day D in Normandy in the US Army as a freelance photojournalist at Life magazine.

In the "Light Red" section of America's Omaha Beach, Coleville-sur-Mer received a taste of the battle:

I floated between floating, drifting corpses behind the stump of our spent amphibious tanks, held up for a few photos, and gathered all my courage to get to the shore with a last rush. [...] Our Coastal Light, "Light Red", probably seemed like an open sardine box in the air. As I was photographed from a sardine point of view, wet boots and green figures stood in the foreground of my recordings. The boots and the jaws filled my pictures with the smell of srapnel, the background of mostly burnt tanks, sinking squashes.

He wrote in a slightly blurred title in his 1947 war autobiography.

Capa - with seemingly disarming sincerity - claimed to have received a panic attack as the bullets fell and the soldiers fell in a row. He first tried to dig a pit on the ceiling, then, holding his camera over his head, began to run backwards, and didn't even stand up to the safety of the crew ship. He could have run, because he did not have to endure life as a correspondent, unlike unlucky soldiers.

Five photos of the landing will soon be published in the January 19th issue of Life:

Particularly famous was the image of "The Soldier Between Waves" and depicting an American soldier lying in shallow water. This photograph made the ordeal of the landing, the exposure that the soldiers could have experienced on the coast under continuous German fire, where, without any major cover, they had to crawl in the cold water to the low hills where the Germans fired. Allies lost at least 4,500 people that day.

Capa's photo gave a face to this heroic and trying-on action, because it was made from the front - all the other photos only showed the soldiers from behind.

Not that Capa would have made so many photos that day. Only eleven slightly blurred photos were born - this became the legendary "fabulous eleven". Why so little has its own canonized story, which for 70 years has been equally talked about in biographical books and films, anniversary articles, and honors.

The story is at least as strong a cultural product as the pictures themselves.

Capa's works are all the same: they became an icon mainly because of the special, usually dangerous situation and background history depicted, or the stories were either made by Capa itself, or the audience - and Capa later "confirmed" the stories. This is also the case with D-Day images. This is the story in the CV:

Seven days later, they were told that no one had done better than landing my pictures of "Light Red". But in the excitement of a technician working in the dark room, he connected the dryer too hot, so that the emulsion was melted down in front of the London office manager's eyes. So only eight of my 106 recordings could be saved.

Capa claimed to have made a lot of photos on the shore. The first picture was taken on the ramp of the ramp of the landing unit for a minute, then photographed from the cover of a semi-watered German metal barrier (these obstacles appear on the pictures), then slid out onto the sand and holding the second Contax machine over his head after one picture. he was working feverishly until the film was exhausted. He took a new roll, but it became wet and ruined, and then came the panic attack and escape.

Capa's story was confirmed by John G. Morris, editor of Life's London office:

Over time, Morris himself has become a living legend, the leading international editor of large international magazines, and has many awards and awards. He claimed that the photographer had four film rolls sent to the editorial office as a shipment, and he handed them over to the lab to call the pictures immediately, as the deadline for delivery was approaching, and the long-awaited exclusive image material had to be forwarded to the New York center as soon as possible. . The treasure rolls were entrusted to the 15-year-old technician boy Denis Banks by the leader of the dark chamber, Braddy Bradshaw. Well, he spoiled everything! Soon, the boy ran into Morris's office desperately, with the movies breaking. In his hurry, he closed the door of the film drying cabinet after the opening, and in the closed space, the electric heater made the heat in a few minutes to melt the emulsion. Morris desperately ran to the closet, held the rolls high, but the first three were completely empty. Only the fourth frame left the few frames that were saved.

The legend of the "fabulous eleven" also includes the feeling of loss: how great, irreplaceable footage has been lost from the technician's fault, and even that little remains in our injured!

Unfortunately, it looks like an orphan is not true of this great story.

Reputed by A. D. Coleman, a well-known photographic historian, in a paper published in the Medium online magazine, he reported on the results of a scientific investigation that lasted for several years and carried out with three other researchers. They found that the story was completely unrealistic and questioned the testimony of Capa and Morris, who had carefully built their own myth. The Capa historians work on almost all of the materials of the International Center of Photography, or specifically on their behalf, and are therefore not considered unbiased. The center is trying to protect the canonized version of the life course; when in 2007 another legendary Capa picture, The History of the Death of the militia, was questioned, a real PR campaign was launched to protect Capa.

Coleman has decided to accept only the story that primary sources justify. All the statements in the criminal investigation are detailed in this blog. Their main findings are:

The story did not happen in this form because the dark chamber technology did not work that way. The door of the drying cabinet blue is just about to close and the still wet coil should not be porous.

The "Light Red" coastline was a weak point in the defense system of the Germans, but it was a light fire, because German jobs were far from both sides. Capa's photographs do not contain water-floating bodies or burnt tanks, as he later described, depicting soldiers carrying shrinking objects in shallow water.

Nothing proves that Capa really made 106 images or that more than 36 images were made on the spot. On the shore, only the ten (and not eleven) photos we knew could succeed. The first five pictures were actually made on the team carrier ramp, then Capa went closer to the shore, reached the German obstacles in the water and the no-burned combat vehicle, made five more pictures - and that's it. Capa spent up to 15-30 minutes on the shore, then rushed back to the ship. It may have been a panic attack, but a more practical consideration was behind his decision, as he knew he was working with at least 10 photographers in Normandy, and his images would be world-renowned for the first time to publish them. He didn't know that his competitors' photographs would be much worse, and he could assume that the ten photos he had made would be enough for the new legendary work - if they get to the editorial office fast enough.

Nothing proves that there has been a disaster in the dark chamber, the existing negatives have not been damaged. Capa probably sent blank scrolls to London (except for the 10 photos known).

The captions of the time were not written by Capa, but by the editors of Life, so they had no source of value, because no one else knew what had happened on the shore.

The soldiers do not use German obstacles to cover the images, but they are just being removed from the disarming units. On the shore, the demolition unit 10 of the special engineering units worked, and was particularly successful due to the weak German fire.

John G. Morris, the only living witness of the story, was forced to face the results of the

research. Morris reached an astonishingly high age, in 2014, when Coleman came up with their first results, was 98 years old, but remained completely fresh spiritually and physically. The 70th anniversary of the Normandy landing was called into CNN's studio, where the channel star Christiane Amanpour made a respectful interview.

Morris tells it in a light voice, with some kind of cheerful hunch, but in fact, she was back in the moment behind her life story. Amanpour was so surprised that he didn't know how to react: "Oh, this is the news," he says shocked, but then quickly navigates the conversation on the dangerous topic.

For Morris, obviously, it was much more uncomfortable than he had shown, and he appeared as a preventive blow to the fact that the legend was not true. It was easier for him to do so, because he never claimed to have seen the emulsion melt, the technicians had called him the empty rolls - and he didn't understand the technological part of photography as an image editor. (Capa, of course, she took the name of Morris, she had to know exactly, it couldn't be true. Morris was her friend and editor at the same time, probably she didn't want to publicly disprove it - and of course she came out better for the lay ear sztoriból.)

Maybe not Morris knowingly lied, but the technical staff led the naive image editor aside? This is possible in principle, but why would they have done so if they did not make a mistake? Unfortunately, this version is unlikely - its motive alone was Morris: he had to justify to his bosses and the world that the world's most famous - star-paid photographer war correspondent was able to take 10 (!) Pieces of life from the biggest battle of the war. for.

Two years later, at the age of 100 in the New York Times birthday article, Morris once again said that he had been misunderstood for 70 years of the story of D-Day images. "I don't think he knew how many photos he made," Capa said. - I think there was nothing on three rolls. Thanks to the heavens that the fourth is yes. "

Morris passed away a year later, and Robert Capa himself was lost in the Indochina in 1954. We do not know anything about the technicians mentioned by name, they have not spoken about the matter, and they are almost no longer alive.

In the end, of course, it is worthwhile to say the obvious: Robert Capa does not deduce anything from the iconic value of his D-Day imagery that the legendary elements associated with them have proved to be untrue.

Yeah, respectable, well-meaning people sometimes go crazy to look better. Yeah, that day didn't have as many pictures and no circumstances as we knew it for 70 years - but that still makes these 10 photos the D-Day forever. And of course, they had to be terribly brave to make them even if they were fired somewhat less on the shore than the rest.