

The Guy Who Shot Trump



What's long seemed inevitable has finally occurred, and one wonders whether this is the end of it, or just the beginning. Someone tried to kill Donald Trump. To be clear, I didn't think an assassination attempt on Trump in particular was inevitable; rather, I thought deadly violence against politicians and in the political sphere as a whole was inevitable. I also didn't imagine that violence would only come in the form of clear assassination attempts, as the toxic slurry of politically flavored hatred in America seems to promise far more generalized violence, perhaps culminating in something not far from a modern civil war (with all of that term's usual physical implications as well as some newer technological ones). This has been simmering for a long time, coming closer to a boil since Trump's election in 2016, and now that it's happened... I want to talk about the would-be assassin, 20 year old Thomas Matthew Crooks.

Everyone has heard the basics by now, about how he was apparently not the most popular kid in school but also not seen as a "weirdo" or threatening presence, one whose fundamental decency made an impression on others and who as a young adult appeared to be in all ways conscientious and kind. He worked as a cook for the elderly at a nursing home after finishing high school and some sort of technical degree, his fellow students describing him as "cool and friendly", one who "got along with his classmates", and someone who "seemed nice, like he wouldn't hurt a fly." Co-workers and residents at the nursing home also noted he never even talked politics, much less debated them. By all accounts, he did not seem like the stereotypical "angry young man".

It also appears Thomas grew up in a politically tolerant and well-balanced household, with a Libertarian father and Democrat mother, while he himself had registered Republican. At 20, he obviously didn't have a long track record of electoral involvement, since this country sees fit to disenfranchise all youths until they are almost too old to develop any real political passion. His donation to a Democratic group after Mr Trump's dethroning in 2021 suggests he could've been anything from an American super-patriot who supports whichever president is in office, to a deeply disaffected conservative whose disgust over 4 years of narcissistic pseudo-populism simply left him deeply relieved and grateful to those who'd evicted

Donald Trump.

Let's assume the truth is closer to the latter. Why did he go up on that roof with a gun? There's so much denture-grashing over the "why? How?" questions that everyone seems determined to ignore one painfully obvious likelihood: Tom Crooks probably chose to sacrifice his life in order to be a hero. That's what he thought he was doing. Of course, as bright as everyone says he was, he couldn't have failed to realize he would be called a demon by at least as many people as would remember him as an angel, but that didn't matter because he felt his act would be squarely on the right side of history. We've all heard the endless hypotheticals about, "If you could smother baby Hitler in his crib, would you do it?" or "why didn't someone at one of those huge rallies just blow Hitler's head off?" The moral presumption is always that murdering Hitler would be the right thing to do. It's so easy to forget, or fail to grasp, that in his time and to his supporters, Hitler was no dangerous demagogue, but a force for the redemption of the German people... after all, he was only trying to make his country great again, wasn't he? Literally, that was Hitler's plainly stated goal from Mein Kampf to his death, and it's no secret that millions of Americans today see considerable parallels between that story and the one we're living now. Thomas Crooks took the old thought-experiments to heart and tried to do what he thought was the only moral thing to save a country he seems to have loved. Granted, I do not share his apparent fondness for our homeland, but I certainly sympathize with the efforts of any would-be martyr who acts in self-destructive good faith for a sincerely held belief. That's why I can't find much to criticize in the actors of January 6th 2021, those aspiring insurrectionists, other than that far too many of them were motivated by a nauseating subservience to strongman leadership and hierarchical, authoritarian values. I don't like what their attempted coup would have birthed one bit, but I sure as hell admire them for having the convictions and balls to so directly oppose institutionalized power at least on some level. ~~_____~~

And now I admire Tom Crooks the same way. Assuming I've guessed his motives and ideals more or less correctly, the guy deserves respect for what he must've sincerely

believed was a valiant attempt to single-handedly right the course of history. And, given everything that is known about him so far, it really does seem like those motives were as pure as anyone's ever are. He sounds like a decent guy, a caring, compassionate person, if not non-political then at least relatively politically even-keeled, and for all those who still struggle to understand why he did this or what "extremist group" he must've belonged to, I say look no further than your own most noble instincts to help others. Martin Luther King, Jr. was proud to be labelled an "extremist", noting that Jesus Christ himself was deemed such... and he was! The person who really did try to kill Hitler, he was an extremist too, as were the leaders of various rebellions in American history from abolitionist violence to workers' uprisings against exploitive employers, to our own founding fathers' rebellion which culminated in a revolutionary war. In every case, these "extremists" are people who themselves were reacting to what they perceived as another extremism that threatened their lives or the lives of others.

Thomas Matthew Crooks thought he would be remembered as a hero by millions, and I have nothing but regret that his actions will almost certainly have the exact opposite effect from everything he could have possibly hoped: Donald Trump is even MORE likely to become president now and usher in boundless authoritarian horrors, while Mr Crooks goes down as nothing but a historical "bad guy", the bloodied and vilified poster boy for everything that's wrong with America and with people in general, when he surely felt he was just reacting to the same. It all strikes me as tragically sad, and as usual, the tragedy is firmly rooted in Statist politics.