

A Hero

(July 2024)

If the modern popular and journalistic psyche is to be correctly assessed, a man is a Hero, who is not an abject coward.

There was a time when a man who jumped in the river to save a drowning child was not a Hero, but just a *Mensch*, a human being with a conscience, while the men who did not jump in the river to save a drowning child were considered abject cowards.

However, according to the modern popular and journalistic psyche, the regular *Mensch* is now a Hero, while the coward is the standard representative of the *vulgum pecus*.

On another level, although perhaps not unrelated, most people, upon being physically hit, and hurt, even accidentally, react instinctively and reflexively by hitting back, which not only is seldom proposed as denoting Heroism, but also sends them from time to time before a Court of Law ¹.

A man, understandably full of adrenaline after having been hit and hurt deliberately, who pumps his fist above his head and seems to utter vindictive words, is reacting in quite the normal human fashion of the *vulgum pecus*.

A man who reacts in quite the normal fashion of the *vulgum pecus* is not exceptional, by definition, unlike the man who keeps a calm composure in all tragic circumstances.

An exceptional man would have reacted quite differently, as will be suggested below.

To wit:

There have been 46 presidents in American history;

There have been 24 assassination attempts on presidents, current or past, in American history;

Therefore, a little over one half of presidents have been subjected to assassination attempts, which makes running for the position quite a hazardous undertaking;

¹ The reflex also targets sometimes inanimate objects: for more than half a century, the author of these lines, who is 6 ft 4 in height, has regularly and quite unintelligently hit back, with a loud expletive, a low overhead beam which is in the habit, again, and again, and again, to hit his head for not crouching enough. As much as he'd like to vaunt heroism, he can only acknowledge his own foolishness.

Of those, **4 succumbed** (*Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley, Kennedy*), **2 may have been slain** (*Taylor, Harding*), and **3 were wounded** (*Theodore Roosevelt, Reagan, and Trump*); note that, except for the last, none of the gunmen was executed on the scene;

Of the wounded, two were seriously injured and spent relatively long times in hospitals, while one was wounded superficially when a bullet grazed his ear. On his feet, pumping his fists and uttering vindictive words, he was rushed immediately to a local hospital, out of which he walked a short while later with a small white bandage patch over his ear. Unlike the other six perpetrators, the gunman had been shot down on the spot.

In contrast, one may be interested to read a relation ² of the assassination attempt on a presidential candidate who should be classified as a *Mensch* and a Gentleman, a man who was exceptional without much of a doubt:

On October 14, 1912, a man attempted to assassinate former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt while he was campaigning for the presidency ³ in Milwaukee. A bullet lodged in Roosevelt's chest after penetrating his steel eyeglass case and passing through a 50 page thick, single-folded copy of his speech, which he was carrying in his jacket pocket. The assassin was immediately disarmed and captured and might have been lynched had Roosevelt not shouted for the man to remain unharmed. Roosevelt assured the crowd he was all right, then asked the police to take charge of the culprit and to make sure no violence was done to him.

Roosevelt had the man brought to him, and, putting his hands on his assassin's head so he could look at him and determine if he had seen him before, asked: "What did you do it for?"

As an experienced hunter and anatomist, Roosevelt concluded correctly that, since he was not coughing blood, the bullet had not reached his lung; he declined suggestions to go to the hospital immediately. Instead, he delivered his scheduled speech. His opening comments to the gathered crowd were, "Friends, I shall ask you to be as quiet as possible. I don't know whether you fully understand that I have just been shot—but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose."

He was hospitalized for two weeks. X-ray showed that the bullet had lodged in his chest muscle, but did not penetrate the pleura. The surgeons concluded that it would be less dangerous to leave it in place than to attempt to remove it.

Roosevelt carried the bullet in him for the rest of his life. He died from a pulmonary blood clot in 1919, at age 60.

He was a man who averted natural vindictive gestures (or other [outbursts](#) of relief).

² Mostly from older Wikipedia articles.

³ In 1912 the president was Taft. Theodore Roosevelt had been president between 1901 and 1909. He was not reelected in 1912. Woodrow Wilson became the 28th president..