

PETER HITCHENS - White tie and terror: proof that we gave in to the IRA

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So this is what it is like to live in a defeated country. Your Head of State has to consort with one of the leaders of the most successful terror gang in the world, and pretend she likes it.

This grisly person sits at dinner in Windsor Castle, nodding and smiling at the great and the good.

How witty it was of somebody to seat him next to Shami Chakrabarti of Liberty, so opposed to the death penalty when it is carried out by lawful states.



Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland Martin McGuinness attends a State Banquet during the Irish president's state visit in Windsor

And hardly anyone says anything, except two dignified figures, standing outside the castle, one robbed of a

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son and the other of a sister, who will be unable to forget the IRA's views on the 'Right to Life' until they die – just as many others will never be able to forget their views on torture, habeas corpus and free speech.

Bitter, wasn't it, that the day (stolen by McGuinness from the peaceable Irish President Michael D. Higgins) also featured military bandsmen, like those blown to pieces by the IRA in Regent's Park, and Household Cavalry, like those blown to pieces, with their horses, in Hyde Park (a crime for which nobody has been punished, or ever will be now)?

Nobody ever imagined that President Higgins, or the huge majority of good and honourable Irish men and women, ever supported or endorsed the IRA murder of the Queen's cousin, Lord Mountbatten.

Of course they didn't. It was Martin McGuinness who should have been laying a wreath on the Mountbatten tomb. That will be the day.

By the way, since this misery was so typical of the IRA's ruthless disregard for life, we should never forget the other victims of that crime, casually erased from the earth by people who believed their cause was so noble that other people's sons and mothers should die horribly in the pursuit of it – Paul Maxwell, a 15-year-old boy from Fermanagh, Nicholas Knatchbull, the Earl's 14-year-old grandson, and the 83-year-old Dowager Lady Brabourne.

Three others were terribly injured.

At the time Gerry Adams (McGuinness's close ally and now a frequent guest at the White House) called the outrage an 'execution' (Shami Chakrabarti please note) in a creepy statement, while the IRA itself willingly took responsibility for it.

There is a silly myth that we somehow 'defeated' the IRA. Oh, really. Do the victors withdraw their troops?

Do the victors dismantle their surveillance systems and haul down their flags?

Do the victors release from just imprisonment scores of the enemy's worst and most cunning killers and bombers?

Do the defeated keep their arms and bombs, and receive what amounts to immunity from future prosecution?

Do the victors install the vanquished in well-paid ministerial jobs?

Do the victors entertain the defeated enemy at dinner in Windsor Castle? Don't be silly.

The whole event gives a strange new meaning to the phrase 'Her Majesty's Pleasure'.

Once the whole country would have been enraged by this immoral, humiliating spectacle.

It is a measure of what has happened to us that almost all of us just sat and took it.

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And we still dare to sneer at the French for the way they behaved when they were beaten by a much bigger foe.