

Robert Kilroy-Silk writes...on Shaking Hands with Terrorists

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The Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, explained his craven shaking of the hand of the vile dictator Robert Mugabe at the United Nations in New York last week by saying he did not realise it was the tyrant because it was dark.

That is not true. The room was well lit. He knew who it was alright. The truth is that the Foreign Secretary was momentarily taken by surprise but then did not have either the quickness of mind nor the courage, once he had recognised Mugabe, to wave a dismissive hand in his face and disdainfully stalk away. Or, better still, he could have publicly roasted the President of Zimbabwe for the violations of human rights in that country.

Instead, the man representing Great Britain, smiled, inclined his head - as if to royalty - and shook the blood-stained hand, much to the bemused delight of the man who only moments before that had been publicly vilifying Britain and Tony Blair at the General Assembly.

Jack Straw's cowardice sent a terrible message to the people being terrified by Mugabe's regime - and to the rest of the world. It said that you can be a vile tyrant, destroy democratic government, dismantle the rule of law, confiscate private property for yourself and your family, and maim, torture and kill thousands of your own people but, no matter, the British Foreign Secretary will publicly greet you as an old friend.

But then I suppose we shouldn't expect anything else. Straw was merely following in his master's footsteps. Tony Blair, after all, has sucked up to and glad-handed virtually every terrorist leader or supporter in the world - Gaddafi, Arafat, the Iranians, the Syrians and, of course, Adams and McGuinness.