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McGurk's apology

North Belfast News

Security Minister Paul Goggins has apologised in the House of Commons to families of the McGurk's Bar victims for false claims made by the British in the wake of the 1971 atrocity. It is tempting to speculate on whether or when this development would have occurred were it not for the intervention of a Scottish MP whose great-uncle died in the blast. No matter – the families have welcomed the apology while at the same time repeating their calls for hidden files on the bombing to be made public, and we share their view that the apology is a significant development

The murder of 15 innocents in December 1971 was an appalling massacre, even by the brutal standards of early-70s Belfast. But what made it all the more remarkable was the callous disregard that the British government showed to the injured and to the families of the dead. The absence of sympathy or support was utterly chilling – the only thing that mattered to the British government was that the incident be used as a propaganda tool to blacken the name of republicans. The carefully considered decision to dub the bomb an IRA 'own goal' – when British officials knew full well that it was their proxy agents within the UVF who planted the device – was effectively the starting gun for an all-out campaign of black propaganda and cynical spin that was to continue for decades to come.

Were it just the case that the British government was coldly calculating and utterly lacking in humanity, then that would be bad enough – but those are features that have been typical of many governments all over the globe down through the years. What made the behaviour of the British in the McGurk's case all the more reprehensible was that it was in effect a rejection of the very concept of law and order. Effectively, no investigation was carried out. That set the tone for a sad and sorry litany of loyalist murders which were all carried out by men who operated in the knowledge that, at worst, they would not be pursued with any energy or vigour, or, at best, in the knowledge that they were acting with the active backing of the British state. Today we are only starting to deal with the agonising legacy of the British government's abrogation of the rule of law.

It's now well over 30 years since that awful night, so there's no technical reason for the British to continue to withhold the files of the government of the day, the British army and the Stormont Joint Security Committee relating to McGurk's. No technical reason, but clearly there are other compelling reasons why faceless bureaucrats don't want the files to see the light of day and we have our own thoughts on what those reasons are.

There are many holes in the dyke of secrecy that the British have built

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BelfastPix.com reaches 100,000 milestone

WEBSITE MILESTONE: The 100,000th picture has just been uploaded onto Belfastpix.com. Belfast Media Group's online photosales website, which is one year old this week, has images from present day right back until 1979. Since going live last year the site has went from strength to strength. Each month the photographic archive has more than 500,000 page impressions. Log on to www.belfastpix.com to for more.



between us and the truth. The McGurk families will not rest until the files are opened, that much is clear. So get the finger out, Mr Goggins.

Property News

What housing slump?

Thousands of local buyers defied reports of a property market slump last week as they queued for a dream home in Northern Ireland's first eco-village. Lisburn's Brokerstown Village, a development of more than 1,000 energy efficient homes, was buzzing with interest from buyers at its two open days earlier this month. In fact, selling agent Ulster Property Sales estimated that more than 2,000 visitors have already flocked to the eco-friendly and ever so chic 'future-proof' properties, which offer 60 per

