

STATE PAPERS

Shadowy figure behind German talks revealed

THE identity of the shadowy figure who convened secret talks between the Northern Ireland parties at Duisburg in West Germany in October 1988 is revealed.

He was Dr Eberhard Spiecker, a Lutheran pastor with contacts in the Irish Presbyterian Church.

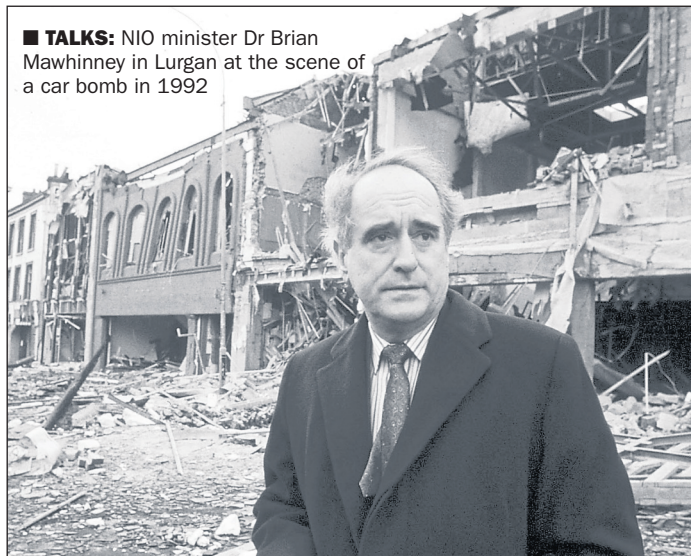
In a memo for Dr Brian Mawhinney, the minister of state at the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), an official wrote: "Dr Spiecker, a Lutheran clergyman, appears to have been the progenitor of the Duisburg talks last October between political representatives and to have chaired the discussions."

While well-meaning, there were some doubts "as to how much he really knew about the NI political scene".

The previously confidential papers reveal the representatives of the main parties in the north were joined at Duisburg by "a fifth person" representing the views of the republican movement.

At their meeting in February 1989 Dr Mawhinney thanked

■ **TALKS:** NIO minister Dr Brian Mawhinney in Lurgan at the scene of a car bomb in 1992



Dr Spiecker for the role he had played in the talks.

In response, the pastor informed him that the "Duisburg proposal" was that a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference should not be held for an agreed period to facilitate contact between the parties in Northern

Ireland.

Asked by Mawhinney what he thought was needed to allow the SDLP to consider devolution, Dr Spiecker replied that "on the nationalist side there must be a chance of an all-Ireland dimension".

The minister then told the

German pastor that the British government knew of "a fifth person" attending the talks and asked about his contribution.

According to the minutes, "Dr Spiecker said this fifth person – he did not mention his name – had a most difficult role to play".

"In choosing someone to come to Duisburg to represent the republican movement they needed someone 'acceptable' to the unionists, who knew the views of Sinn Féin – though not a member – and who would be able to report back to them."

The pastor said that it had not been easy for this "fifth person" to confirm the decision of the talks but he had agreed to do so.

The attendance of a proxy as a representative for the republican movement at the talks attended by the DUP's Peter Robinson in the late 1980s has not been generally known until the release of these files.

While he is not named in the files the 'fifth person' was the late Redemptorist priest Fr Alex Reid.

Ardoyne 'ideas factory' support

A NORTH Belfast priest's "ideas factory" project for job creation received support from New York governor Hugh Carey. Fr Miles Kavanagh's Novatech Project was outlined by Stormont official David Fell in a 1989 memo to head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Sir Ken Bloomfield.

"The concept is one of an 'ideas factory' ... aimed at generating viable, high-quality businesses with significant export-led growth potential," he said.

The "raw material", Fell explained, "would be groups of bright young people", preferably graduates who would form venture teams. Fell said he was impressed with the project by the Passionist priest from Ardoyne. He said Stormont "should be willing to take some risks" with public funds as in Ardoyne "we need to back committed people



■ **INTEREST:** Former New York governor Hugh Carey

who have credibility and imaginative business ideas for breaking the cycle of violence". The project received high-level support in September 1989 from Hugh Carey, former governor of New York.

In a reply to Governor Carey in October 1989, industry minister Richard Needham thanked him for his interest and said that discussions with Fr Kavanagh were ongoing.



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