

STATE PAPERS Belfast and Dublin

■ **CRITICISED:** Sir Richard Needham

PICTURE: Brian Little/PA

SDLP chief whip's scathing opinion of minister revealed

Ed Carty

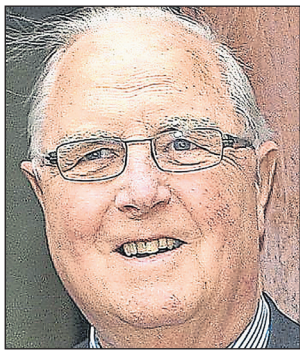
ONE of the longest serving British ministers in Northern Ireland was branded sly, devious and unionist-minded. State papers from 1985 reveal the late Eddie McGrady took the swipe against Sir Richard Needham in a confidential briefing with Irish diplomats.

It was a week out from the signing of the Anglo Irish Agreement at Hillsborough and according to the Department of Foreign Affairs' documents, the SDLP chief whip launched a savage attack after the British minister compared unionist councils with Sinn Féin councils.

"McGrady was appalled by Needham, whom he found sly, devious and unionist-minded," diplomat Daithi O'Ceallaigh reported to ministers.

"In an aside, McGrady was also very critical of [former UK secretary of state for Northern Ireland Tom] King and said he was very much a unionist by comparison with his predecessor [Douglas] Hurd."

Sir Richard served as under-secretary of state for Northern Ireland between 1985 and 1992 but his relations with nationalists got off to a bad start when he ignored a tradition of

■ **'APPALLED':** Eddie McGrady

meeting Mr McGrady on his appointment. He had, however, met 10 of the unionist-controlled councils and "their pleadings were having an effect on him", according to information passed to Mr McGrady from a "Catholic in the NIO". Mr McGrady, who burst into Westminster politics by defeating anti-immigration MP Enoch Powell in South Down in 1987, was regarded as an honest broker during his time in politics. In his letter to then taoiseach Garret FitzGerald and other ministers, Mr O'Ceallaigh said: "This report of McGrady's on the meeting with Needham indicates that Needham is much more aware of unionist sensitivities than he is of nationalist sensitivities."

■ **CLASH:** Ian Paisley, pictured in 1988, had referred to the Bishop Cahal Daly as 'the black Pope of the republican movement'

Paisley was rebuked by Hurd over Daly tirade

DUP leader Ian Paisley was rebuked by the secretary of state Douglas Hurd at a face-to-face meeting in 1984 for a bitter tirade he had made against Bishop – later Cardinal – Cahal Daly.

The clash occurred at a meeting between Dr Paisley, his deputy Peter Robinson and Mr Hurd at Stormont House on November 29.

Referring to British prime minister Margaret Thatcher's recent 'out, out, out' response to the report of the New Ireland Forum, the secretary of state said he was "rather dismayed by the triumphalism of unionist reaction so far". He regretted the tone of Dr Paisley's attack on Bishop Cahal Daly as "the black Pope of the republican movement".

Mr Hurd felt that the "intemperate tone of Dr Paisley's attack sat oddly with his

professed readiness to have constructive discussion with other party leaders".

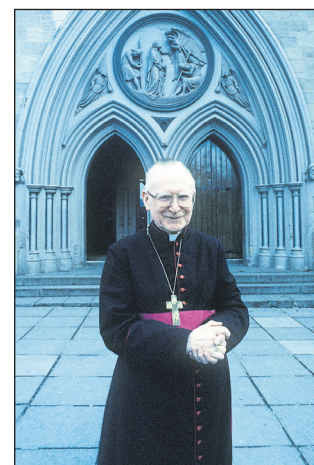
Responding, the DUP leader said that Bishop Daly's recent statements were deeply offensive.

"For example, the Bishop had said that the British handling of the [Anglo-Irish] summit had played into the hands of the IRA and that RCs had no rights or justice in Northern Ireland. The Bishop had also asserted that the British had no more right to a presence in Northern Ireland than the government of the Republic."

This went to the very quick of the issue and Dr Paisley thought it right to reject robustly such views.

As to possible political talks, Dr Paisley said he had urged the SDLP leader John Hume to start talking with other political leaders.

Mr Hume had said he must

■ **ATTACK:** Then Bishop Cahal Daly outside St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast

wait for the results of the recent Anglo-Irish Summit. After the summit, Dr Paisley said he had not made any

triumphalist statements. He had had a long conversation with Mr Hume on November 23 and had told him that he was ready to discuss with Mr Hume outside the assembly how a way forward might be found. The SDLP leader had agreed to this but said he must first discuss matters with the Irish government.

For his part, Mr Robinson said that these were "difficult days for the SDLP". There were rumours that they might resign their assembly seats [which they had never taken] en bloc.

Responding, Mr Hurd warned that it was inconceivable that the Stormont assembly should go on indefinitely if its activity was restricted to a scrutinising role only but Dr Paisley warned that they would take their politics to the streets if the assembly was not available.

Battle of the sexes

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