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account of the interests of the minority; that those arrangements will have to be acceptable to both sides of the community and also to the British Government and that such arrangements are necessary because the alteration of parties in Government is ruled out in Northern Ireland. It also indicates that existing safeguards and remedies against discrimination on religious and political grounds should be at least maintained, and, if possible, improved.

4. The Paper contains no hint whatever of an Irish dimension. I understand that the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office briefed the ~~the~~ representatives in London of the same countries as were briefed on the British statement of 25th October and that in briefing our Ambassador, the FCO representative sought to argue that the process involved an Irish dimension. I am not clear as to what the argument was but it may have related to the fact that we were being informed in advance of the contents of the Paper. At any rate, we will scarcely wish to make an issue of the absence of reference to the Irish dimension as we have recently indicated that our immediate priority is the establishment in Northern Ireland of an administration that both sections of the community there can support and sustain. We have also said that we do not seek, at this time, any particular institutional expression of the undeniable Irish dimension.

5. I would also read between the lines that there is no question of making any move in the direction of total integration with Great Britain. It appears to be assumed throughout that the Northern Ireland departments will be maintained in existence although some options envisage their being split into entities responsible for "central government" functions and "local government" functions. The Paper describes a number of ways in which the position of the minority would be safeguarded. The first method involves a number of different ways in which the minority could participate in executive decision-making. Reference is made to the arrangement that operated in the power sharing Executive where members were appointed by the Secretary of State; there is also reference to other methods of filling posts in the Executive, such as in proportion to party strengths in an elected body or through election either by the Assembly itself or by the electorate as a whole.

6. Among other devices to which reference was made are the following: various ways in which "weighted" votes could be required for various purposes, a variety of forms of appeal to external authorities against alleged abuse of power by the Executive and a range of other, including a statutory safeguard against abuse of power, such as a Bill of Rights, unamendable by the local legislature.

7. My first reaction is that the Paper provides sufficient fodder for consideration and negotiation, so that if the political parties in Northern Ireland have the necessary good will and the British Government shows the necessary interest, determination and negotiating skill, it would be possible to devise a form of administration which both sections of the community could support. There are hints in the Paper itself and in recent, possibly inspired, Press comment in British newspapers that the British Prime Minister is determined to bring proposals before the British Parliament, even if the degree of consensus they command falls far short of universality. However there are obvious limits to the degree to which one could introduce a devolved administration, in the face of ~~the~~ lack of support from major political forces. In/heel of the hunt, the outcome will be determined by the attitude of the Unionist party and by the impact on these attitudes of any pressure brought to bear by the British Government. It will be necessary to see what was said by the spokesmen for the British and Northern Ireland parties in the House of Commons before deciding what should be said on behalf of the Government. I understand that the Rev. Paisley welcomed the Paper in quite constructive terms. In this connection, I have asked Foreign Affairs to obtain, if possible, through our Embassy in London some indication of the discussion recently between the British Prime Minister and the Rev. Paisley. The lack of any institutional form of Irish dimension and the fact that the initiative is conceived totally within the four walls of the Six Counties, may lead to an initial adverse reaction in at least some sections of the SDLP but I would consider it likely that, despite any such initial reactions, that Party will be prepared to go to the negotiation table.

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W. Kiernan

20th November, 1979.