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Title: Letter from Garret FitzGerald, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to Liam Cosgrave, Taoiseach, concerning arrangements for discussions with Protestant leaders of the Sandy Row area in Belfast, the paratroop situation in Northern Ireland, and security arrangements for visits.

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4th May, 1973

An Taoiseach
Mr. Liam Cosgrave, T.D.

*Act noted
RL 10/5*

Dear Taoiseach,

I enclose an extract from a letter I received yesterday from my contact who arranged discussions with the Protestant leaders of the Sandy Row area. I had feared that the publicity given to the Ardoyne part of my visit might have put them off meeting me again, but as you will see from this extract this is not the case.

I also enclose a report on the visit by the officer of my Department who accompanied me, which you may like to see.

It appears to me that it would be useful to continue these discussions. After the first couple of visits the Press will pay less attention to them. I think over time they could help to reduce the tension and to create a more favourable climate for the discussion of solutions.

The British Ambassador visited me last Saturday ^{week} to talk about the paratroop situation. I didn't detect much "give" in his position. He also asked that I should give more notice of visits in future so that they could make more extensive security arrangements. I told him that for reasons of my domestic programme this visit was decided on at short notice and that I hoped to be able to give longer notice in future, but that I was very happy with the security provisions made on my behalf at short notice. I have a feeling that this talk of security may not be entirely disinterested. In fact, the RUC Inspector I spoke

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to on arrival in Belfast himself suggested that I would be better off moving round the city without an escort - and I very much agreed with him!

Yours,