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THURSDAY
15/02/2007
15:42:32

No plans to mark Croke's Bloody Sunday

There are no plans by the Irish or British governments for a ceremonial gesture to mark Bloody Sunday before the Six Nations rugby international between Ireland and England on February 24, it has been confirmed.

By: Press Association

Speculation had mounted that Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Hain might take part in an event to mark the incident in 1920 when British troops killed 14 civilians when they opened fire on the crowd at the stadium.

But a Government spokesman said today: "There is no ceremonial gesture being considered by the Irish and British Governments in the context of the forthcoming Six Nations international between Ireland and England at Croke Park." Last weekend, Ireland hosted France in the first-ever rugby match at the 80,000-seater venue.

A ban on so-called foreign sports such as soccer and rugby being played at the headquarters of the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) was lifted in 2005.

The Bloody Sunday atrocity followed the shooting dead of a number of British agents in Dublin on the orders of the IRA leader, Michael Collins.

Speaking earlier, Democratic Unionist Party MP Sammy Wilson said it would be foolish for Mr Hain to apologise for the Croke Park attacks without demanding a quid pro quo from the Irish Government over the killings which preceded it.

"Has he demanded any apology for the murder of the British soldiers immediately before the Croke Park incident?" he asked.

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"A lot of people who were behind and supported those murders of the soldiers later became members of the Irish government.

"So if he is going to apologise, it is going to have to be even-handed, with the Irish Government apologising to the families of those soldiers - some of whom were hauled out of their beds to be gunned down."

The redevelopment of the ageing Lansdowne Road stadium means that the Republic of Ireland will play Euro 2008 football qualifiers at Croke Park in coming weeks.

Republican Sinn Fein (RSF), which broke away from the Sinn Fein party in 1986, has already said it will stage a demonstration outside the stadium when the English play Ireland.


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No

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