



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Police band refused to play Irish Republic's national anthem



Some members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland's pipe band refused to consider playing the Republic's national anthem before this year's Ireland-Scotland rugby international in Dublin, according to sources within the PSNI.

The dispute over possible participation in the playing of Amhran na bhFiann (The Soldier's Song) before the March international at Lansdowne Road led to the cancellation of a proposed joint musical medley, involving the PSNI pipe band and the Garda, the Republic's police force, brass band on match day.

Sources within the PSNI say the suggestion that the band might play Amhran na bhFiann was made directly to band members during a meeting with Assistant Chief Constable Duncan McCausland the week before the game.

PSNI sources say that senior officers thought the initiative could be "ground-breaking" and would help foster nationalist confidence in the force. But it's understood that a number of members of the PSNI's Pipe Band felt that the move could cause offence to the widows and orphans of former colleagues who were killed by the IRA.

"It got to the point where one member of the band said that if the band was compelled to play the Soldier's Song at the international he would resign from the PSNI rather than travel to Dublin, and some others indicated they might consider similar action," the source said.

But PSNI sources said ACC McCausland had just passed on the proposal that the band could contribute to the pre-match programme which might have involved playing the Soldier's Song and said there is no truth in the suggestion that pressure was applied on band members to play the Republic's anthem.

"As it transpired, the proposal was amended to the pipe band playing Sweet Flower of Scotland and not participating in playing the Soldier's Song because of difficulties in blending the tempo of the pipes with the tempo of the gardai's brass instruments" said a police source.

Lack of Harmony

In a statement, the PSNI said: "There were some preliminary discussions about the possible attendance of the Police Service pipe band at the Ireland-Scotland game. However . . . arrangements could not be finalised in time, in particular, the Police Service band and the Garda band (which is a brass band) would not have had time to practise together in advance."

No doubt !! Have you heard the one about Goldilocks and the three bears??!!