

Pro-EU Sinn Fein 'like pigs of Animal Farm' says ex-provo

Adam Kula

Brexit runs “entirely counter to Irish national interests” and means that the whole island of Ireland “is facing dramatic changes for the worse”.

Those were the words of Sinn Fein’s national chairman Declan Kearney just a fortnight ago, as he prepared to speak at a gathering of European leftists in Germany.

However, the republican movement to which the party belongs was not always such an enthusiastic advocate of European membership – in fact quite the reverse.

The party’s stance of today – which has involved it in [court action to challenge the UK’s exit from the EU](#) – contrasts markedly with the ideology of the IRA, as set out in the Green Book; a document which was basically meant to serve as the Provisionals’ operating manual.

The News Letter has asked a variety of commentators for their views on how today’s Sinn Fein came to have such a different stance to that of the Provisionals.

The Green Book (the contents of which are available online at the University of Ulster’s Conflict Archive on the Internet website) detailed the demands and pressures which would be placed on people who volunteered for the IRA, and set out the rationale for its violent campaign.

A chunk of it was devoted to explaining the IRA’s economic objectives.

It condemned “economic imperialism”, such as the export of raw farming products and “fish [being] caught by foreign trawlers”.

It also condemned the Republic of Ireland for having “abandoned all attempts to secure an independent economy,” and having “brought in foreign multi-national companies”.

“‘Africanisation’ is the word for this process elsewhere,” it stated.

“Control of our affairs in all of Ireland lies more than ever since 1921 outside the hands of the Irish people.

“The logical outcome of all this was the full immersion in the EEC in the 1970s.

“The republican movement opposed this north and south in 1972 and 1975 and continues to do so.”

The EEC – set up in 1958 – essentially morphed into the EU after the Maastricht Treaty of 1993.

Sinn Fein's first-ever member of the European Parliament was Mary-Lou MacDonald in 2004.

Asked about the contrast between Sinn Fein's stance today and the IRA's stance, a spokesman for the party said that the Green Book was "nothing to do with Sinn Fein".

Asked when it had arrived at its current policy, he said: "Sinn Fein constantly formulates policy."

The ex-Provisional:

Anthony McIntyre, former IRA member-turned-critic of Sinn Fein (who is perhaps best known for helping to run the Boston College oral history project), said the change in the party's outlook represents a "metamorphosis from standing four square on four feet to standing on their hind legs, a la the pigs in Animal Farm".

This is a reference to George Orwell's novel about the corrosive effects of political power, centring on animals who seize control of a farm in the name of freedom, but whose leaders – represented by a group of pigs – gradually reverse all the policies and slogans that they once championed.

He said: "The Green Book was a useful bible used to control the believers but never actually adhered to by the creators.

"It was written at a time when rebellion rather than conformity was in the heart of the Provisional movement."

He added: "Like the IRA past of Adams, the Green Book is something they prefer not to be reminded of."

Anti-EU unionist:

From the other end of the political spectrum, TUV leader and strong Eurosceptic Jim Allister said: "The evolution of IRA/Sinn Fein's stance on the EU is not driven by principle, but expediency.

"Patently, their original position was grounded in rejection of the transfer of sovereignty to Brussels, but that has been overtaken by the realisation that when the UK leaves the ties with the Republic will loosen.

"Hence, their current devotion to the EU as a means of keeping all of Ireland in the same place – the prison house of Brussels."

The professor:

Henry Patterson, a University of Ulster professor specialising in modern Northern Irish history, was also asked about his take on the switch from the Provisional IRA's anti-European rhetoric to Sinn Fein's anti-Brexit stance.

He said: "Sinn Fein's position on the EU has changed in line with the republican movement's strategic and political transformations from the late 1980s.

"The position outlined in the Green Book – a broad rejection of it as a capitalist power bloc – was changed to one of 'critical engagement'."

He said this was “partly strategic – they saw the EU as a broader framework for bringing about Irish unity”.

It was also “pragmatic” in the sense that “it gives them another platform to criticise the British and promote their version of the Northern Irish situation”.

He said the contrast with the republican movement’s previous anti-European rhetoric “has been noted by academics interested in Europe”.

However, he added, “it did not arouse much opposition because Europe is not a central issue in comparison to other compromises they have made, for example ending armed struggle with no real movement on constitutional question, recognition of police, etc”.

The victims’ spokesman:

Kenny Donaldson, spokesman for Innocent Victims United – an umbrella group representing those hurt in the Troubles as well as relatives of victims – said: “Sinn Fein/PIRA tore up the Green Book when it has proven to be politically expedient for them to do so.

“They have completed an about turn on their approach to Europe where they have gone from being emphatically Eurosceptic to now being staunchly Europhile.

“When are they ever questioned on this? The reality is that the Green Book was built upon a false premise.

“The Green Book has been proven to have little relevance with the direction taken by the Republican Movement over the last three decades.

“It is a document without mandate or legitimacy and republicans cannot be allowed to hide behind the supposed code which exists therein as a means of evading direct or indirect responsibility for actions committed over the years of the terror campaign.”

[Mr Donaldson had previously said Gerry Adams’ decision to pass some Sinn Fein names to police investigating past paramilitary crimes would breach the rules of the Green Book.](#)