

Sinn Fein's support is a sign that the left is not dead

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To those of a certain age (my age, for example) the idea that Sinn Fein [might top a poll in Ireland is hard to believe](#). But they might. And if they don't, they're very close.

I was brought up with the Troubles. And with a name like mine it was real, even in East Anglia. Irish racism remains a reality that many in my extended family are all too aware of. And The Troubles clearly played a part in that, just as much as they were also about trying to address that very issue in a way that only fuelled the problem for many, and which had violent repercussions few had sympathy with.

It's easy to recall the attempt of the UK government to silence Sinn Fein.

And I all too aware that many still feel revulsion at its old leadership. That's apparent in Ireland now.

But, Sinn Fein has moved on.

And Ireland has moved on.

Those under 40 there have very definitely moved on, and supply much of Sinn Fein's support.

And let's be clear. This is not really about reunification, although it is for some. And it is definitely not about Brexit. This is about getting rid of the soft conservatism that has dominated Ireland for a century and in very many ways done it few favours, including making it a tax haven state now. Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil have both failed Ireland in their own ways. The rise of Sinn Fein is a classic protest vote, but it's also a vote for the left that has never fully developed in Ireland.

I am not providing commentary on Irish politics as such by saying this. What I am saying is something else. And that is that the left is not dead. It is struggling, on occasion. But to dismiss it is wrong. Sinn Fein is riding that despite its own baggage. And that is worth noting, both because of that support, and the fact that baggage can be left behind.