‘Os Selve Alene’
A Norwegian Account of the Easter Rising

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Introduction

The events of the 1916 Easter Rising were well covered in the European press. In many cases, though, syndicated copy from British newspapers was presented without additional comment, meaning that the revolt was presented as a minor skirmish. The influential Norwegian newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, however, took the opportunity to present a more nuanced account of the situation in Ireland, written by Carl Marstrander, the Professor of Celtic at the University of Oslo. This article contextualises Marstrander’s interest in Irish history and politics, and presents an annotated translation of his article, ‘Unrest in Ireland’.

Marstrander: Life and Career:

Carl Johan Svedrup Marstrander, later praised as ‘the greatest Norwegian linguist of the twentieth century’ (O’Corráin 2002, 69) was born in Kristiansand in November 1883. Marstrander demonstrated a precocious ability in languages from a relatively early age, and in 1902, he was awarded a place at the University of Oslo, where he pursued comparative linguistics under the guidance of Sophus Bugge and Alf Torp. In 1907 Marstrander made a decision which would have important implications both for himself and for Irish academic life: he won a scholarship to visit Ireland on a research trip and, in accepting this offer, he apparently forewent the opportunity to participate in the 1908 Olympic Games (Ó Luing 1984, 108; Kanigel 2012, 30-4). Rather than pole-vaulting for Norway, Marstrander devoted his considerable energies to the study of the Irish language, and took up residence on Great Blasket Island, Co. Kerry, working under the tutelage of Tomás Ó Criomhthain(Ó Lúing 1984, 109-11; Quigley 2013, 44-5).[1] One legend suggests that Marstrander introduced the pole-vault to the islanders by vaulting over Ó Criomhthain’s house using a currach oar, and he came to be known locally as *Lochlannach*, ‘the Viking’, but it was his language research that brought him to international prominence (Kiberd 2000, 521; Ó Giolláin 2000, 125). He spent five months on Great Blasket learning modern spoken Irish, as well as developing his Old and Middle Irish skills. In 1910, Marstrander returned to Ireland after being appointed to teach at the School of Irish Learning, which had been established in 1903 by the German scholar Kuno Meyer to promote the place of the Irish language in scholarship (Irish

1 Quigley argues that Marstrander’s ‘reification’ of Ó Criomhthain precipitated a steady and longlasting stream of linguistic ‘pilgrims’ seeking ‘authenticity’ on Great Blasket, placing a considerable burden on Ó Criomhthain in the process.

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Studia Celtica Fennica XIII (2016), ISSN 1795–097X,

Independent 2 Apr. 1910; Kanigel 2012, 40-1). In this capacity, Marstrander joined Meyer as co-editor of *Ériu*, and produced articles on Irish philology at a prodigious rate. The blurred lines between culture, politics and academia in Ireland at this time are further demonstrated by Marstrander's friendship with John (Eoin) MacNeill, the UCD professor, Gaelic League stalwart, historian of medieval Ireland and founder of the Irish Volunteers (Ó Lúing, 1984, 121).[2] As will be explored further below, Marstrander also seems to have been acquainted with Terence MacSwiney, although there seem to be few extant clues as to the origins, extent and nature of their friendship.

Despite the admiration and loyalty which Marstrander engendered in some of his students, his editorial policy for the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* apparently caused a great deal of strife within the Irish academic community, and tension with Meyer (Mac Cana 1987, 1; Marstrander 1913-; Ó Lúing 1991, 109, 146; O'Dochartaigh 2004, 72). And so, in 1913 when he returned to Oslo to take up a Chair in Celtic Languages, a position created especially for Marstrander, he was somewhat alienated from Irish academia (Aftenposten 16 Apr. 1913; Ó Lúing 1984, 119). Nevertheless, despite a dearth of students, one of the academic outcomes of his new position was the 'new intellectual rigour' he brought to the study of interactions between Old Norse and Celtic (O'Corrain 2002, 69; Oftedal 1982, 14). In September 1914 he married Audhild Sverdrup, daughter of the polar explorer Otto Sverdrup, and in time the couple had three children (Ó Lúing 1984, 120-1). In 1915 he published *Bidrag til det norsk sprogs historie i Irland*, and subsequently engaged in or oversaw similarly influential research on Marx, Breton and Scots Gaelic (Marstrander 1915; Marstrander 1932; Geipel 1971, 83-4; Le Bris & Widerøe 2010, 169-82).

Marstrander also took a political and historical interest in the status of Greenland (Marstrander 1932; Marstrander 1933). He participated in the Norwegian Polar Committee's activities in claiming Eirik Raudes Land in 1941, part of a wider Norwegian attempt to make a historical claim for that part of Eastern Greenland (Barr 2003, 75, 218-22). There are interesting echoes of German propaganda around the Irish constitutional situation in 1916, in Vidkun Quisling's claim that the defeat of Britain and the USA in World War II would return 'Svalbard, Greenland, Iceland, the Faroes, Hjaltland and the Orkneys' to their historical place under Norwegian rule (Barr 2003, 222). Marstrander's personal antipathy for German imperialism seemed undiminished, however, and during the World War II occupation of Norway, Marstrander was one of the first academics to be arrested and interned by the German regime after making thinly-veiled satirical comments in an academic paper (Binchy 1966, 237-8). Described by his obituarist

2 Marstrander and MacNeill were elected to fellowships of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland together in September 1910. (*Kilkenny People*, 1 Oct. 1910.)

in 1966 as a 'fervent Norwegian nationalist', he was arrested several times during the occupation, and used Old Irish as a form of code to baffle the Gestapo. It was said after his death that 'to one who knew him only in the post-war years he seemed like a survivor from a finer and better era'. (Binchy 1966, 237-8).

Norway and Ireland

The Irish Question, of course, was not suddenly thrust upon the Norwegian public by the events of 1916. From the 1880s, the Home Rule issue piqued interest throughout the world, as the British Empire struggled with a constitutional crisis so close to its imperial core. Conversely, as one of William Gladstone's suite of 'workable examples' of Home Rule administrations, Norway featured regularly in his political rhetoric, and indeed it is often argued that he embraced the Irish Home Rule cause after a yachting trip to Norway in 1885 (Fjågesund & Symes 2003, 192-5; Walchester 2014, 66-70). Gladstone's belief was that a nation's internal self-government would strengthen imperial loyalty, rather than prompt disintegration. 'The legislature of Norway', he told the House of Commons:

> …has had serious controversies, not with Sweden, but with the King of Sweden, and it has fought out those controversies successfully upon the strictest Constitutional and Parliamentary grounds. And yet, with two countries, so united, what has been the effect? Not discord, not convulsions, not danger to peace, not hatred, not aversion, but a constantly growing sympathy; and every man who knows their condition knows that I speak the truth when I say that, in every year that passes, the Norwegians and the Swedes are more and more feeling themselves to be the children of a common country, united by a tie which is never to be broken.[3]

Unionist opponents attacked this rhetoric on two fronts: denying that the Swedish-Norwegian case was analogous to Britain and Ireland, as well as arguing that Norway's national trajectory was heading inevitably towards full independence (*inter alia*, Scotsman 29 Aug. 1887; 'Pactum Serva' 1907, 17). An editorial comment in *The Scotsman*, for example, anticipated Norway's independence sixteen years before it was actually achieved:

> …the cry of 'Norway for the Norwegians' is already heard. The inference from the experiment so far seems to be a strong presumption that the more nearly independent one of two united countries is the more it will long and strive for complete independence. It is more than probable that Norway and Sweden will be separated completely before Great Britain and Ireland are separated legislatively, so that if Ireland is given a separate Parliament in imitation of the

3 *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., 304 (8 Apr. 1886), cols. 1046-1047. In the Norwegian press see, *inter alia*, *Bergens Adressecontoirs Efterretninger*, 11 Jun. 1886; *Aftenposten*, 8 Jun. 1898.

> Scandinavian analogy, it will then be easy to use the same analogy in favour of Mr Parnell's 'last link' policy. (The Scotsman 3 Aug. 1889).

Like Hungary, Finland, and other 'small nations', Norway provided a model for cultural and political nationalists in Ireland (Gibson 2013, 28-9; Newby 2012, 71-92). The parallel was noted across the political spectrum in Ireland (Griffiths 1983, 150). The unionist *Irish Times* warned that 'what might happen in Ireland is already happening in Norway and in Hungary' (Irish Times, 1 Jun. 1905), whereas the moderate nationalist *Freeman's Journal* argued that 'the relations between [Norway and Sweden] are very interesting to Ireland, because they so closely resemble those between Ireland and England in the time of Grattan's parliament'. (Freeman's Journal, 25 Apr. 1905) As Norway celebrated its independence, Arthur Griffith was presenting 'the Sinn Féin Policy', based on his *Resurrection of Hungary* pamphlet of 1904. The dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian Union was monitored carefully, and Griffith's *United Irishman* condemned the British and Unionist wailing over the matter.[4] He focussed on the inspirational effect that Norway's example could have on Ireland:

> Norway has filled the stage of the world this week, and even in Ireland its greatness has been the topic of discussion. And this nation, great in literature, great in commerce, great in science, whose flag is to be seen flying in every ocean, has a population equal only to that of Leinster and Munster combined. This is a fact for Irishmen to meditate upon until the last poison of the insidious teaching that Ireland is a 'little country', helpless of itself, is expelled from their minds. Ireland, with double Norway's population, and four times her fertility, is miserable, impoverished and forgotten. The day of the 'little nations' has returned, and the world is measuring greatness, not by the number of heads in a country, but by the spirit of its people. The spirit of Norway has made Norway great and free. If Ireland learns the lesson she preaches loudly to her, she will learn that national spirit is the shield and sabre of a country, and that the *seoinin* is its mortal enemy. (United Irishman 17 Jun. 1905).

Michael O'Hanrahan, one of the Sinn Féiners executed after the Easter Rising, acted as secretary for a meeting at Dublin's Rotunda in November 1905, sympathising with Norwegian national aspirations (Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement of Harry C. Phibbs, Chicago (WS 848), p. 11). In addition to the constitutional question, it was also noted by some contemporaries that 'practical lessons' for Ireland 'might be learned from the study of Norwegian history'. For example, it was argued that emigration in both Ireland and Norway was so high as a result of 'the decline of their manufacturies', that Ivar Aasen was 'the

4 Tony Griffiths' claim that 'Griffith was myopic and concentrated exclusively on the Austro-Hungarian Empire' is, at very least, a contentious observation. Griffiths 1983, 156.

Douglas Hyde of his country', and that 'as the Norsk Samlag, or Norwegian Gaelic League, made a living language for the Norwegian, so… the Gaelic League of Ireland would make Irish spoken by Irishmen throughout the length and breadth of Ireland'. (Cork Examiner, 7 Apr. 1906).

Marstrander and Contemporary Irish Politics, 1913-15

After returning to Norway and taking up his Chair in Celtic Philology, Marstrander still made occasional public interventions in relation to contemporary Irish politics. It is clear from these interventions that he was frustrated by simplistic analyses of the situation, and also the general acceptance in Europe of British narratives. On the other hand, he took an increasingly jaundiced view of German attempts to influence the internal affairs of other countries, particularly Ireland. In this respect, Marstrander diverged ever further from his erstwhile friend and mentor Kuno Meyer, who had left his post in Liverpool for Berlin in 1911 (Ó Lúing 1991, 98-100). Meyer had been so vociferous in his advocacy of German interests that he became a notorious figure in the British press, and symbolic of Germany's policy of undermining British interests by unsettling Ireland (Belchem 2007, 257; The Times 6 Apr. 1918; Liverpool Echo 9 Jan. 1915, 7 Aug. 1918).

The Larne Gun-running operation of April 1914, and particularly the use by the Ulster Volunteers of a Norwegian boat, SS Fanny, to carry out the smuggling, had returned Irish Home Rule, and the possibility of the partition of Ulster, to prominence in the Norwegian newspapers (Aftenposten, 27 Apr., 7 Jul. 1914). In a response to an article on Irish Home Rule by the British labour activist and journalist, Rowland Kenney, Marstrander took the opportunity to pen a long account of the 'The English Crisis'. (Aftenposten, 5 May, 20 May 1914). He raised the 'spectre' of civil war in Britain, and argued that the crisis was the gravest that the British had faced for many generations. The 'Larne Affair' he dismissed as 'blatant criminality', and he bemoaned the concessions that the Liberals had offered to the Ulster Unionists.[5] While conceding that Rowland Kenney's recent article had made some interesting points, Marstrander picked up on the Englishman's belief that Home Rule should be granted to Ireland out of a 'sense of English honour'. Kenney's subsequent claim that 'the great mass of Irish people' were indifferent to the question of whether they were ruled from London or Dublin further irked Marstrander: 'the statement', he retorted, 'is unfortunate and—*sit venia verbo*—typically English'. Such a mindset ignored eight centuries of the Irish people retaining their own identity

5 It would be reading too much into limited evidence to claim that Marstrander's own beliefs here reflected those of his friend Eoin MacNeill. Nevertheless, there are certain similarities with MacNeill's approach to the deployment of the Irish Volunteers. Whereas Patrick Pearse and his allies proposed an armed insurrection, MacNeill believed they should be ready simply to prevent the Ulster Volunteers thwarting Home Rule by force.

despite the pillaging of 'the Norse, despite Cromwell and all the others', and also glossed over 'differences in race and temperament, too strong to merge together' between the Irish and the British. Marstrander sensed that the Norwegians were sympathetic towards the Ulster Unionist position, but proposed that this was based on an instinctive Norwegian impulse to support the 'underdog'. In highlighting the increased sense of national cohesion on the island of Ireland, he seemed aghast that a boundary between Ulster and Leinster would become the boundary between 'England and Ireland', stressed that Irish Nationalists could never countenance the division of the island, and that 'the permanent exclusion of Ulster would be a national disaster for Ireland of fateful significance'.[6]

If he was sceptical or worried about the political consequences of persistent British lack of comprehension and empathy over Ireland, Marstrander was nevertheless utterly repulsed by Germany's attempts to use Ireland as a part of its war effort. Having edited a festschrift to Meyer (Bergin & Marstrander, 1912), only three years previously, Marstrander now expressed public ridicule for Meyer's attempts to court Irish public opinion on Germany's behalf. In December 1914, Meyer had addressed a *Clan na Gael* meeting in Brooklyn, New York, assuring the audience of the inevitability of a German victory, including an invasion of Britain and Ireland, and the likelihood that in a peace settlement, the German government would look favourably on Ireland if the Irish had given some assistance in the struggle.[7] Presenting himself as 'an adopted son of Ireland', and noting his friendship with Roger Casement, Meyer suggested that an Irish Brigade was being formed in Germany to take up arms against the British, and signed off his speech by saying: 'If there are any among you who remember the ancient language of Ireland rise to your feet and say with me: *A Dia saor Éirinn agus Almáin*'. (Meyer 1915).

Marstrander's reaction to Meyer's argument was part of a more general missive against German propaganda being fed to newspapers in neutral countries such as Norway, which he claimed were intended 'to weaken the impression of German barbarism in Belgium'. Moving on specifically to Meyer, he claimed that the Brooklyn speech 'sought to prove that Ireland had only one thing to do—stab

6 Sinn Féin's conference a few weeks earlier, heard that it was 'unthinkable that Ulster should be cut off from Ireland', in response to the proposal for a temporary exclusion of the six north-eastern counties. Arthur Griffith claimed that the 'proposal seemed to him to form North East Ulster into a permanent separate entity'. *Freeman's Journal*, 30 April 1914; *Irish Independent*, 1 May 1914.

7 Meyer's speech saw him divested of the freedom of both Cork and Dublin, and from his honorary position as Professor of Celtic at Liverpool. He also resigned as Director of the School of Irish Learning and as editor of *Ériu*. His name was reinstated on rolls of honour in both Cork and Dublin after 1920. Ó Luing, 1991, 173.

England in the back and take from Germany's gentle hands the freedom for which it has fought for eight hundred years'. (Aftenposten, 6 Jan. 1915).

Given the circumstances prevailing in Europe, it is not surprising that Irish affairs were given little coverage in *Aftenposten* in the weeks prior to the rebellion, although Roger Casement's arrest gave readers a reminder of potential for unrest, particularly as he was described as a 'fanatical Irish nationalist' who was 'leading an anti-English agitation in Germany' (Aftenposten, 25 Apr. 1916). *Aftenposten*'s first reports of the Rising (Aftenposten, 26 Apr. 1916) proclaimed 'Serious Disturbances in Ireland', describing the Fenian occupation of Dublin's GPO, the 'bloody street battle' and details of casualties. The following day, readers were presented with a front-page digest of news from *Aftonposten*'s London correspondent, Nils Kittelsen, under the dramatic headline: 'Dublin in a State of Emergency'. (Aftenposten, 27 Apr. 1916). Kittelsen's summary was simply drawn from *The Times* and the *Daily News*, and supplemented by information from Reuters, but on page three the newspaper had commissioned a report from Oslo's resident Irish expert. It ran as follows:

Unrest in Ireland

Sinn Féin's Revolutionary Propaganda. By Professor C. Marstrander.

'Aftenposten' has requested Professor Marstrander to comment on the situation in Ireland. As is well known, Mr. Marstrander worked for many years as a Professor in Dublin, and has an intimate knowledge of the Irish situation. The Professor says the following:

The last messages from Ireland do not come as a surprise to anyone who has even roughly followed political developments in Britain in the last few years. It is no secret, that while the Home Rule Act of 1914 has found a fairly chilly reception within Redmond's own party, it has been opposed by the O'Brien's independent nationalists, and frankly insulted the ultranationalist party Sinn Féin.

It is the last group, which is suspected of having organised the uprising in Dublin on Easter Monday. The party has in recent years grown ever stronger. The name Sinn Féin itself (Ourselves Alone) is the key to its politics. Ireland has only one enemy—England—and Ireland's salvation depends on this fact being recognised by the Irish people. England must be boycotted. Ireland's future policy against England must resemble Deák's policies against Austria.[8] The party's constitutional

8 Arthur Griffith's use of Hungary as a model for Irish nationalist aspirations was very familiar to contemporaries. It was claimed that his pamphlet, The *Resurrection of Hungary* (1904) sold 25,000 copies in the day after it went on sale, and 300,000 copies before the Easter Rising. Under Ferenc Deák's leadership, Hungary secured its own parliament in 1867, in part through a policy of abstentionism from Austria's Imperial Parliament in Vienna. The first edition of *Sinn Féin* referred to espousing 'the

basis for this policy is the Renunciation Act of 1783 that Ireland would be ruled by the English king and a parliament in Dublin.[9] *It contests the legality of the later Act of Union. An illegal act does not become lawful, although it eventually becomes sanctioned and legitimised through forgetfulness and ignorance. In Sinn Féin's opinion, therefore, the Act of 1783 remains in force.*

The party follows through completely on this—apparently—outrageous programme. It refuses to send representatives to Westminster. What point is there, they say, in contesting the parliament's right to make laws for Ireland, while Ireland itself is being represented in this parliament? No Irishmen should therefore take a seat in the English parliament. No Irishmen must hold a post, which is paid by English money, or any office that demands allegiance to the English king.

What the party hopes to achieve through this passive resistance, is not completely clear. Meanwhile, [however] there is also a positive side to the party's programme, which deserves our full sympathy: the Sinnféiners have, perhaps, been working like no other party for a spiritually and materially independent Ireland. Most of them are members of the Gaelic League,[10] *whose objective is the revival of the old Irish language; they buy only Irish goods and put all their money into Irish banks.*[11] *The party has, however, quite a distance to row, before it reaches its destination. The nationalists are the overwhelming majority, at least in the countryside where priests, pawnbrokers, landowners and career politicians have joined forces to block the road.*

Sinn Féin's basic principles are as much anti-clerical as they are anti-English, and as it has also adopted temperance in its programme, it is frowned upon by rural shopkeepers, whose influence in the impoverished districts of the west and south of Ireland is immense. The party is strongest in the towns. At the municipal elections in Dublin 1907,[12] *three of its seven candidates were elected, and they*

policy with which Deak rebuilt Hungary in the teeth of Austrian opposition, and whose triumphs the nineteenth century is witnessing in Greece and Roumina (sic), Bohemia, and Poland, Finland and Norway'. (quoted in *Southern Star*, 5 May 1906.)

9 The original Sinn Féin constitution claimed that 'we will not make any voluntary agreement with Great Britain until Great Britain keeps her own compact which she made by the Renunciation Act of 1783, which enacted "that the right claimed by the people of Ireland to be bound only by the laws enacted by His Majesty and the Parliament of that Kingdom is hereby declared to be established, and ascertained forever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable."'

10 As noted above, Marstrander was a friend of Eoin MacNeill, co-founder with Douglas Hyde of the Gaelic League.

11 Inspired by the ideas of Friedrich List, economic nationalism and protectionism underpinned Griffth's plans for an economically viable independent Ireland.

12 Griffith's 'National Council' put forward seven candidates in at the municipal elections in Dublin on 15 January 1907, (Richard O'Carroll, Mansion House; T.J. Sheehan, Wood Quay; Denis Healy, Usher's Quay; Patrick O'Carroll, New Kilmainham; W.F. Mulligan, North Dock; John Farren, Inns Quay; W.J. Murray, South Dock) 'on the Sinn Féin ticket'. (*Sunday Independent*, 6 Jan. 1907; *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Jan., 17 Jan. 1907).

received over 2,000 votes more than all the other parties combined. Its influence is even increasing in Belfast.

It is only natural that the recent Home Rule-strife has driven thousands of disillusioned nationalists into Sinn Féin's camp. Moreover, dissatisfaction with the nationalist leaders does not come just from today. Stephen Gwynn,[13] *the nationalist MP for Galway, admitted in any case many years ago, that Sinn Féin were succeeding in holding multitudes of young people from the nationalist ranks, generally people who felt aggravated by the occasionally shabby tactics of the nationalists and the fairly mediocre level of their parliamentary representatives.*

These people have now, in hordes, drifted towards the Sinn Féiners, where the air, despite everything, is clearer. The principles on which Sinn Féin policy is built, basically encompass all the national, literary and economic impulses, currently pervading the Irish people. The party has become, as Sydney Brooks said, 'the political spearhead, for which the Gaelic League, the Cooperative Movement, and the national heartbeat have become provided the shaft'.[14] *By its very nature, the party, at its core, includes dreamers and hazy idealists.*

Mulligan clarified on the eve of the election that he was an independent, albeit supported by Sinn Féin. The Dublin Trades Council (of which Farren was leader), and Cumann na nGaedheal also endorsed candidates, and there was a great deal of overlap, but of the seven candidates noted, only Sheehan and Patrick O'Carroll topped their respective polls. Laffan notes that there was come confusion over the specific allegiances of some of the candidates, although he argues that Sinn Féin 'enjoyed a modest success at local level; in 1907 four of its seven candidates were elected to Dublin Corporation, and two years later it won five seats out of the nine which it contested'. (*Sinn Féin*, 12 Jan. 1907, 23 Jan. 1909.) Quoted in Laffan 1999, 23.

13 Stephen Gwynn was Irish Parliamentary Party MP for Galway Borough (1906-18), an Oxford-educated Protestant, moderate Nationalist, who served in the British army in France during World War I. At a UIL meeting in the immediate aftermath of the 1907 Municipal Election, despite the National Council's gains, Gwynn mocked the Sinn Féin challenge: 'He did not know any of the leaders of the Sinn Fein party who go to the length of speaking Irish. He thought it was time for the ordinary Nationalists to bestir themselves in this matter, and to show that, after all, they were doing as much for the study of Irish and whatever else was of interest to Irish Nationality as any of the Sinn Fein people'. (*Freeman's Journal*, 18 Jan. 1907.) He was the author of *The Case for Home Rule* (1911), and was entrusted by John Redmond with the task of halting Sinn Féin's political advances. Marstrander was possibly basing this information on E.B. Iwan-Müller, *Ireland: To-day and To-morrow* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1907), p. 62: '[Gwynn] was told off to condemn the Sinn Fein policy at a meeting in Dublin. It was not difficult for so well-informed a man to demolish the historic bases of the "Ourselves Alone" movement, but he had to admit that "the effect of the Sinn Fein party had been, to a certain extent, to weaken the Irish party."'

14 Sydney Brooks (1872-1937) was a London-based journalist, literary critic and political commentator, interested particularly in imperial matters. In *The New Ireland* (1907, p. 15), he wrote that the Sinn Féin policy 'gathers to itself, and translates to political action all those literary, spiritual, and industrial impulses that are thrilling the Irish people with a new sense of nationality… It is the political spearhead for the Gaelic League, the industrial revival, the co-operative movement, and the faint pulsations of a democratic

The coup in Dublin is certainly not exclusively due to the Sinn Féiners. There is every reason to think, that it has developed with the connivance of extremist elements within the nationalists.[15] *The Sinn Féiners alone can hardly do great damage to England. They can create a lot of chaos and throw a lot of mud, but their influence is too local to awake a popular uprising against England. An uprising of that sort is, in fact, impossible with the collaboration of the ultranationalists*.[16] *The Irish rural populace is utterly materialistic and Wyndham's Land Act*[17] *has certainly dampened its bellicosity. England's friends can therefore regard the entire spectacle calmly, although that does not prevent an admission, that England is only now reaping the bitter fruit of the bad seed, that it sowed itself from the unfortunate day when it first laid its heavy hand on that poor country.*

[*Aftenposten* 27 Apr. 1916.]

Postscript

The events of the 1916 Easter Rising were well covered in the European press. In general, however, syndicated copy from British newspapers was often presented without additional comment. This meant that the revolt was presented as a relatively minor skirmish, enacted by an unrepresentative extremist section of the Irish population, with the connivance of the German government. Within Scandinavia, this impression was given additional force by the writing of Shaw Desmond, the Waterford-born Scandinavian correspondent of the London *Daily Express*. His denunciation of Sinn Féin, published initially in Copenhagen, was syndicated to Norwegian newspapers (Trondhjems Adresseavisen 1 May 1916; Bergens Tidende 4 May 1916; Tromsø Stiftstidende 12 May 1916). Subtitled 'An Irishman on Ireland', Shaw Desmond presented a German-inspired betrayal of John Redmond's hard work, and expressed the hope that Irish people should do everything 'humanly possible' to calm the situation, and avoid endangering the granting of Home Rule, which had finally been won after a struggle of so many

spirit, consciously or not, have provided the shaft. The Sinn Feiners have stolen a march on the official nationalists and have put themselves at the head of all the forces that are making Ireland more Irish…'

15 Marstrander's article arguably overstates the coherence of 'Sinn Féin' (as opposed to distinguishing between Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, Cumann na mBan etc.), but in this respect it is a response to the predominant narrative in the Rising's immediate aftermath.

16 Again, this reflects a general belief at the time of the Rising and does not anticipate the British reprisals and their consequences.

17 The Land Purchase (Ireland) Act of 1903, often named for George Wyndham, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, provided funds to buy out landlords, and is generally regarded as a final blow against the institution of landlordism in Ireland. Marstrander's comment here reflects a belief that the Irish peasantry were generally conservative and content to have their own immediate affairs managed rather than considering broad issues of national or social reform.

years.[18] *Aftenposten*'s post-Rising reports reflected the general narrative, and no additional comments were sought from Marstrander during this time. On May 2nd it presented the *Daily Chronicle*'s opinion that 'this criminal episode in Irish history is now at an end', describing the arrest of hundreds of Fenians. (Aftenposten 1 May, 2 May 1916). A week later, a short note recorded the imprisonment of Eoin MacNeill. (Aftenposten 9 May 1916). MacNeill, despite a public disavowal on the eve of the Rising, had been imprisoned (on a life sentence) in Arbour Hill. Marstrander's concern for his friend was evident in a letter of 31st May 1916:

> Dear Mrs MacNeill, on receiving the news of the Court Martial in Dublin I beg to express to you and your children my heartfelt sympathy in the cruel fate which has befallen your husband. I do not know what has taken place behind the curtains; but I know this: that what John MacNeill has done, he has done for the country he loves beyond anything else in the world. May I ask you to remember me more respectfully to your husband? He is one of the tall trees in the wood and to fell him will be impossible. Tell him our admiration and love of him is unabated.[19] (Ó Lúing, 1984, 121.)

This note underlines Marstrander's acceptance that cultural and academic interest in Ireland's history and language could inspire political actions. Nevertheless, it seems also to suggest that he thought malign forces 'behind the curtains' might have impaired MacNeill's judgement in being too closely associated with the 1916 leaders.

Marstrander had a second intriguing connection with a leading Irish Volunteer, namely Terence MacSwiney. MacSwiney had been a founder of the Celtic Literary Society in 1901, and a prolific writer on Irish history and culture. He helped to establish the Irish Volunteers in Cork in November 1915, and was supposed to act as second in command to Tomás MacCurtain in Cork and Kerry during the Easter Rising. However, he responded to MacNeill's countermand. It was said that MacSwiney was 'greatly influenced' by MacNeill, and that along with his commander Tomás MacCurtain, had lost faith in the Dublin leadership. Moreover, they shared a suspicion that 'the Germans were using the Irish volunteers for their own interests'. (McGarry 2016, 213). MacSwiney's political activity continued after 1916, despite repeated incarcerations. After being elected as a Sinn Féin

18 Marstrander's report received some attention in Poland, and was quoted in an article entitled 'Sinn Féin' in the *Kurier Poznański* (2 May 1916). This piece explained that the 'Kristiania Aftenposten' had asked Marstrander for his views on the basis of his time in Dublin, and praised him for his objectivity. This was juxtaposed with criticism for Shaw Desmond's denunciation of Sinn Féin in the Copenhagen newspapers. The same article is carried in the *Dziennik Poznański* of the same date. I am indebted to Dr. Róisín Healy for this information.

19 Original letter in National Library of Ireland, MS10882. Quoted in Ó Lúing, 1984.

deputy to the first Dáil, he succeeded MacCurtain as Lord Mayor of Cork. A further arrest for sedition followed, which prompted MacSwiney to engage in a hunger strike, provoking worldwide revulsion towards Britain, and leading to his death in Brixton Prison in October 1920.[20] Marstrander's message of sympathy to Terence MacSwiney's widow was read at the funeral in Cork city: 'This is murder in legal form, which is the climax of immorality. Against the liberated spirit of your noble husband all governments will fight in vain'. (Cork Examiner, 1 Nov. 1920). While these observations cannot be used to form strong conclusions about Marstrander, the academic-cultural basis for MacSwiney's nationalism, his caution over Easter Week, and the scepticism over German intervention, at least accord with Marstrander's outlook.

Marstrander returned to Ireland only three times after his departure in 1913: in 1917 (a private visit), 1936 (to receive an honorary degree from TCD), and 1959 (to attend the International Congress of Celtic Studies) (Ó Lúing 1984, 122). He died in December 1965, just as Ireland was preparing to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising. David Green, Professor of Irish at Trinity College Dublin, penned a warm obituary, which nevertheless highlighted Marstrander's qualified enthusiasm for Irish nationalism:

> Himself a convinced nationalist, he sympathised deeply with Ireland's struggle to break away from economic and cultural dependence on England, but he never really believed that the Irish people possessed the necessary determination and stamina to carry things through to a successful conclusion, and he was revulsed by what seemed to him the obscurantism and provincialism of Irish life. (Green, 1966).

In his short account of the Easter Rising, Carl Marstrander demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the political situation in Ireland, although like many others he underestimated the Rising as a catalyst for more widespread unrest. He did not dismiss the affair merely as a German plot, but highlighted the historical context and a lack of British empathy for Ireland's claims to self-determination.

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