

Anti-Revisionism in Ireland

Notes on Neil Goold

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A short biography from the Communist Party of Ireland: <http://www.communistpartyofireland.ie/s-goold.html>

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Hamilton Neil Goold-Verschoye

(1904 –1987)

Hamilton Neil Goold-Verschoye was a member of a prominent Anglo-Irish family * in Co. Donegal. He was educated at a private school in England and at the University of London, graduating in both arts and science.

Neil travelled to the Soviet Union in 1929.

About 1931 he joined the Revolutionary Workers' Group in Dublin (forerunner of the CPI), but in 1932 he emigrated to the Soviet Union, where he married and had a son.



Neil was visited by his brother, Brian Goold-Verschoye also a communist. Brian departed for Spain in the autumn of 1936. Aged 26, he was a radio specialist and he may have sought to offer his skills to the republican cause. Falling foul however of byzantine political intrigue then in Catatonia, he was arrested and extradited to the Soviet Union where he died in a gulag prison camp.

Neil was said to have applied for membership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but it was suggested to him that he should return to Ireland instead and join the CPI. He did so and was active in the party from 1937.

An alternative story from security files on him, suggests it may have caught up with suspicions around his brother's imprisonment: "According to KRIVITSKY, Neil's Russian wife was indirectly responsible for Brian's recruitment by the OGPU: suspected of "Trotskyist sympathies",

" I learned that friend had been brought home as a prisoner to Odessa. I was told of the trick by which he had been taken. The OGPU in Spain had lured him on to a Soviet vessel, pretending that he was needed to repair the ship's radio transmitter. Friend had no suspicion that the OGPU was after him. Once on board, he was seized. On April 12, he was put in the dungeons of the OGPU in Moscow. To this day, his brother in Leningrad and his family in England do not know what happened to him. Nor have I been able to learn whether he was executed as a "spy" or lives now in a remote concentration camp." W G Krivitsky , *I was Stalin's Spy* (1992) Ian Faulkner Publishing Ltd, Cambridge. [first published in 1939]

Neil, back in Ireland was arrested in 1940 for lying down in the street in support of unemployed demonstrations and was then sent to the Curragh internment camp during De Valera's clampdown on republicans and left-wing dissidents during the 'Emergency'. Uinseann Mac Eoin's book, "*The IRA in the Twilight Years*", provides the background to Goold's time there through the reminiscences of republicans who were locked up with him.

He set up a study circle in the camp, where he taught French, German, and Russian, as well as socialism. Within two years the section of the IRA internees who had come to regard themselves as communists or socialists and who called themselves the Connolly Group had grown to more than sixty, some of whom later formed the Connolly Clubs and joined the Communist Party of Great Britain or the Irish Workers' League. Among those who participated was Michael O'Riordan, who had been a member of the 15th International Brigade in Spain and subsequently became general secretary of the CPI.

Though Goold was almost universally liked, the IRA leadership was irritated by his lectures on communism and also by the fact that he (among others) encouraged internees to apply for parole and to join the British forces so as to take part in the war against German fascism. (About half a dozen were believed to have done so.)

In 1942 the officer in charge of one of the two IRA groups in the camp, Pearse Kelly, apparently concerned for the minds of some of those under his charge, called for Goold's removal and wrote to the Bishop of Kildare, Thomas Keogh, with a request that he use his influence with the government. Within three days, Goold was transferred to Mountjoy Prison, Dublin.

On his release from prison at the end of 1943 he was critical of the CPI for having suspended its activities in the South in 1941. He attempted to organise rural workers and farm labourers into a union, and in 1946 he attempted to set up his own People's College on 170 acres he had inherited at Dunkineely, Co. Donegal. According to the

British security service “he was imprisoned again in 1946 for attempting to create a communist republican paramilitary organization”. [File reference KV 2/1801]

Having moved to England, in the early 1950s Goold was active in the Connolly Association in London, where he came into conflict with C. Desmond Greaves. In 1956 he published a pamphlet, *The Twentieth Congress and After: A Vindication of J. V. Stalin and His Policy*, in which he attacked the “de-Stalinisation” speeches at the twentieth congress of the CPSU and the reformism of Khrushchev. He also wrote and published *October Events in Hungary* (1956) and *Trotskyism: Its Roots and Fruits* (1957).

In 1957 he re-established contact with his wife and son, and in 1959 he sold his remaining share in the family estate and returned to the Soviet Union, where he worked as a translator, notably of the plays of Bertolt Brecht. Before finally leaving Ireland he made a donation to the Irish party, which enabled it to buy its original head office building in Dublin. He died in Moscow in July 1987.

Here is Goold’s *The Twentieth Congress and After*
<http://www.marxists.org/history/erol/uk.postww2/gooldxx.htm>

*** The the lives and loves of the five Goold Verschoyle children born into this wealthy freethinking Protestant family was the subject of a historical novel, *The Family on Paradise Pier* by Dermot Bolger.**

It follows their journeys in pre-War Ireland, through the War of Independence, the General Strike in Britain, and to the streets of 1930’s Moscow, the Spanish Civil War and on to Soviet gulags, Irish Internment camps and London during the Blitz.

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