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## BRITISH ADVENTURERS AND REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA'S WAR OVER BESSARABIA

*For the first three months of 1918, Soviet Russia and Romania fought a revolutionary war, and yet the two countries were so recently allies in the struggle against the Central Powers. This article explores the question of British support for Romania from Russia as the Bolsheviks took power and efforts to bring this unnecessary – from an Allied perspective – war to an end. Part adventure story, it has a serious subtext.*

As Jon Smele has convincingly argued, in the years after the Bolsheviks seized power there was not one Russian Civil War, but multiple wars fought within the territory of the disintegrating Russian Empire.<sup>1</sup> This article tells the story of British involvement in perhaps the least remembered of those wars, a war which scarcely happened, and a war which would have been totally forgotten if it had not produced one those running sores which festered in eastern Europe during the inter-war years, exploded during the Second World War and which still haunts the political scene today. It was a semi-fought war between Soviet Russia and Romania in early 1918 over the future of Bessarabia, today Moldova, a war which was brought to a rather unsatisfactory conclusion by the free-wheeling diplomacy of British agents. What follows is in part a *Boys Own* story of derring-do, set against the backdrop of that evolving conflict, but there is a broader historical interest.

The three British agents, Raymond de Candolle and Joe Boyle, later joined by George Hill, were sent to Romania in 1917 to help improve the shipment of supplies to that country from Russia. This brought them into contact with senior political figures in both countries, and sucked them into smoothing over the breakdown in relations which occurred once the Bolsheviks had seized power. Ultimately, Boyle and Hill were able to bring the brief Russo-Romanian War to an end, but their Treaty of Odessa did not survive the German occupation of Romania and Ukraine in spring 1918. There are also two secondary issues worthy of note. First, these British adventurers were intervening in the politics of Russia to support the Bolsheviks, not to overthrow them. Second, the Red Army's revolutionary assault on aristocratic ('*boiar*') Romania revealed some of the problems of fighting a revolutionary war; as

would be the case in the war of 1920 against aristocratic ('*pan*') Poland, defence through traditional diplomacy would ultimately win out.

Although there are moments of excitement in this story, it is nevertheless a complex one. First come the three adventurers and their actions to support Romania through Russia, both before and after the Bolsheviks seizure of power. Then comes the Russo-Romanian War of January-March 1918, but for that to be properly understood a digression into the outline of Bessarabian history is essential. Finally, this article addresses the freelance negotiation of the short-lived Treaty of Odessa and its troubled aftermath.

## Supplying Romania

Railways were the key to the supply issues of the Eastern Front, and this story begins with the activities of Raymond de Candolle. The de Candolle family came from Geneva and one of its leading lights became British Consul there; but Raymond studied at Cambridge and felt himself to be thoroughly British, despite his cosmopolitan background. He graduated in 1886 and developed an interest in railways. That took him first to the United States, but then to his first major assignment, the task of modernizing the railway network in Mexico. By 1891, he was back in London and had been promoted as assistant to one of the partners in Livesey, Son and Henderson, a major railway contractor. More spells abroad followed: 1896, the West Galicia Railway in Spain; 1904, a line connecting Beijing to the coalfields; and then 1908, to Argentina and the Buenos Aires Great Southern Railway, which was his main concern until the outbreak of the First World War. In 1911, however, with the encouragement of his brother who worked for the Foreign Office, he was sent to Egirdir in central Turkey to oversee the construction of an extension to the line operated by the British owned Ottoman Railway Company – a deliberate attempt by the Foreign Office to challenge the supremacy of the German-sponsored Berlin-Baghdad Railway.<sup>2</sup>

De Candolle remained in Argentina until summer 1916, having been persuaded that the best way he could serve the war effort was to 'feed the Empire'. However, in November 1916 he was appointed to head a railway mission to Romania. Romania had joined the war effort in August 1916 but had fared disastrously; Bucharest was occupied on 6 December that year.<sup>3</sup> By the end of 1916, much of Romania was under German occupation and the government and royal family had retreated to Iași. This new capital could only be supplied by a narrow-gauge railway line across Bessarabia from Odessa. The line was not in the best of repair and there was a shortage of locomotives and wagons. The railway mission took time to get the go-ahead and it was only on 15 March 1917 that de Candolle's departure was authorized by the War Cabinet, which noted that this would happen 'without waiting for a definite decision by the Romanian Government'. De Candolle arrived in Petrograd on 16 March 1917 and was surprised to have been met at the station by a car which had only recently belonged to the tsar.<sup>4</sup>

De Candolle set off for Iași at the start of April and during the journey from Odessa was immediately struck by the number of blockages caused by freight wagons retreating east as the Germans advanced. In Iași he was met by the British ambassador Sir George Barclay, who happened to be an old friend, and the French commander of

the Romanian Army, General Henri Berthelot. From his base in a railway carriage provided by King Ferdinand of Romania, de Candolle began his work. There were problems with the lines running west and north of Iași towards German-occupied territory, and sixty per cent of the available locomotives were under repair. The logical way forward seemed to be to try to establish new lines, one north from Ungeni (on the border with Bessarabia) towards Vinnitsa, a second northward line from Dăngeni (north of Iași) towards L'viv, and a third eastwards from Barlad (south of Iași) to create a southerly route to Odessa. These, however, while planned in some detail, were essentially castles in the air, although some construction work was underway. It was while working on these schemes at the start of June that Joe Boyle turned up in Iași, in his personal railway carriage, and announced that he wanted to speak to King Ferdinand about the state of the Romanian railway.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Whiteside Boyle was a Canadian, but a Canadian inordinately proud of his Ulster roots; his family was from Buckna, County Antrim, in Northern Ireland, and his parents had emigrated to Canada where Joe was born in Toronto in 1867. The family then lived in Woodstock, Ontario, where his father raised and trained racing horses. Aged 17, Joe ran away to sea, sailing the world for three years before turning up in New York to join his brother. He then lived off his wits, surviving by gambling and organizing boxing matches. With some money under his belt, he moved to Yukon in 1897 and for the next two decades made a fortune in mining, developing a dredging system to speed up the panning for gold; his Klondyke Mining Company became one of the most successful in Canada, and it launched the equally successful Yukon Nuggets ice hockey team. In 1914 Boyle started to encourage volunteers to join the war effort, sponsoring the Yukon Motor Machine Gun Battery.<sup>6</sup>

During the war, Boyle had got to know the leaders of the American Committee of Engineers, and once the United States entered the First World War in April 1917 that organization asked Boyle to visit Russia to see if he could help organize the railways of the south.<sup>7</sup> On arrival in Russia early in the summer he was soon immersed in railway matters, as his papers held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast testify; page after page of documents relating to Russia's railways can be found there.<sup>8</sup> Not long after his arrival, his mission proper began and he set off to investigate the situation in the south of Russia and Romania, travelling first to Odessa and then on to Iași. There he met de Candolle at the British Embassy. De Candolle recalled 'a tall, well-built officer in a resplendent uniform' – Boyle had had his uniform specially tailored and his buttons were of gold from his Yukon gold field. Boyle was pacing up and down, and on meeting de Candolle explained that he had been sent by the American Committee of Engineers on behalf of Herbert Hoover. His task was to improve Russia's railways and he had already had some success, so now he was turning his attention to Romania. De Candolle met Boyle again the next day 'in his very ornate railway carriage', located only a few yards from his own, and despite the fact that the British ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, knew nothing of Boyle, and the fact that the United States ambassador, David Francis, had warned that he was 'full of hot air', de Candolle was impressed.<sup>9</sup> Joe Boyle probably did use authority he did not really have, but he understood logistics. The two men sat down with Boyle's map between them and talked railways. Soon they had come up with an interim solution to Romania's supply crisis.<sup>10</sup>

From the Iași-Odessa line, a branch line ran south, passing the northern end of Lake Yalpuh, which offered a waterway connection to the Danube and thence to the Black Sea and Odessa. Together they planned new temporary lines to create port facilities at the northern end of Lake Yalpuh and thus a direct route to the Black Sea.<sup>11</sup> Boyle later recalled that, on arrival in Iași, he 'arranged with the South Western Group at Odessa to get some light draft boats for Lake Yalpuh and made out a system which was subsequently carried out and which for several months, in fact as late as they could operate, delivered about 500 tons per day to Romania'.<sup>12</sup> The railway mission, and Boyle himself, soon had the avid interest of Queen Marie of Romania, the English-speaking granddaughter of Queen Victoria. She had wanted to join Boyle and de Candolle in some of their travels, but King Ferdinand thought it too dangerous.<sup>13</sup> This hard work on the supply situation coincided with a stabilization of the military situation. Under the supervision of General Berthelot, the Romanian Army had been reorganized in the first half of 1917. Then, in line with Russia's June Offensive, hostilities had been resumed in the summer. Things went better than in Russia itself and in August the Romanians were able to survive a sustained German assault. Although there was desperate fighting in mid-August, the German advance petered out and the front fell back just a few miles. By and large, the Romanians had held their line.<sup>14</sup>

In August 1917, de Candolle was recalled to Petrograd, arriving just as General Kornilov tried to stage his abortive coup. De Candolle was told that his new task would be to try to sort out transportation along the Trans-Siberian Railway, but there were several delays and before any progress could be made with this mission, the Bolsheviks seized power. In these new circumstances, the Siberian mission seemed pointless and de Candolle was at a loose end. Not long after de Candolle's departure from Romania, Boyle too was recalled to Russia; he was at Russian Military Headquarters, Stavka, when the Bolsheviks seized power.

At Stavka, Boyle met George Hill, the third protagonist in this story. Hill's father was a merchant with extensive trading interests in Russia and Persia. George spent much of his childhood in Riga, being brought up by a Russian nanny. At the outbreak of the First World War, he had been working in British Columbia, but his language skills attracted military intelligence. Soon he was based in Salonika, flying agents in and out of Bulgaria, a language his spy masters had assumed, correctly, that he could quickly acquire. In July 1917, while on leave in London, he was suddenly ordered to embark for Russia as the advance party of a planned Royal Flying Corps deployment. Hill's time in Canada prior to the war meant that he and Boyle hit it off at once.<sup>15</sup>

Both Boyle and Hill – and as will become clear, de Candolle as well – shared an uncharacteristic response to Lenin's seizure of power. They believed that 'co-operation with the Bolsheviks was the best means of serving the Allied cause'.<sup>16</sup> As the historian Brock Millman has shown, during the First World War free-wheeling agents like de Candolle, Boyle, and Hill were largely left to their own devices when it came to implementing broad strategy directives; direct contact with London was fraught with difficulties. In Millman's view, 'the driving force behind the movement of British troops into conflict with the Bolsheviks was almost always a British general on the ground'.<sup>17</sup> With these three, it was the very opposite. From their perspective, the support of the Bolsheviks was essential to continue supplying Romania.

With this in mind, they travelled from Stavka to Petrograd on 27 October, where they held talks with Adolf Ioffe, who chaired the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee. Although their ultimate focus remained Romania and the South West, the key to all Russia's supply problems at that moment was the Moscow 'knot', the orbital railway around the city. Ioffe could see that clearing the 'knot' would also help supplies to Petrograd; Lenin was consulted and the two men were issued with plenipotentiary powers to sort out Moscow's railways. In Moscow, they met Nikolai Muralov, military commander of the city, who gave them 'complete liberty of action within the area of hundreds of junction lines, loading platforms and shunting sidings which formed the Moscow railway knot'. Resorting to drastic action like pitching whole trains over embankments, Hill recalled how 'we cleared the congested knot in two days'.<sup>18</sup> Documents make clear that Boyle and Hill were still in Moscow on 17 November. They then returned to Petrograd and Ioffe suggested they work with Vladimir Nevskii, the Minister of Communications, and the newly-formed Collegium of the Commissariat of Military Affairs.

## Romania and the Czechoslovak Legion

Just before leaving for Moscow, Boyle had made contact with de Candolle. Returning to his hotel, de Candolle found a note pushed under his hotel door which was signed '1K8'. This was the code name of George Hill and the two men met the next day. Hill told him that 'Col. Joe Boyle sends his warmest regards and asked me to take you to the station and introduce you to one of his railway friends'.<sup>19</sup> The plan was that he should set off at once for Rostov-on-Don, on a train specially routed to avoid the problems caused by the Moscow knot. As part of its initial response to the Bolshevik seizure of power, the British Government, on the basis of intelligence provided by Somerset Maugham, thought it worth making contact with those generals, who, after the failure of Kornilov's adventure, had sought refuge among General Aleksei Kaledin's Don Cossacks. Would the Cossacks be able to depose the Bolsheviks, or at the very least form a military force prepared to continue the war? Thus on 9 (22) November, the Foreign Office wrote to Sir George Barclay in Iași saying it was 'of the utmost importance' to find out about the intentions of Kaledin and 'whether he would co-operate willingly with the Romanian Army'.<sup>20</sup>

The logic here was clear. If at least part of the Russian Army were to keep fighting, Romania too might stay in the war. The message to Barclay went on: 'it is of the utmost importance that we should obtain full information on these points and it might be desirable that an agent should be dispatched to make the necessary enquiries. Time being of essential importance, we cannot send someone from here'.<sup>21</sup> Barclay must have thought of his friend de Candolle and so decided to contact him, making use of Joe Boyle. So de Candolle travelled south, to Rostov-on-Don, and from there went on an ultimately rather futile inspection of the Caucasus railways, visiting Baku, Tbilisi and Batumi, before returning to Rostov-on-Don in December.<sup>22</sup> That Barclay continued to monitor events in Rostov is clear from a telegram he sent to London on 9 December forwarding a telegram received from Major F [Fitzwilliams], who had left for Kiev on 8 December: 'Cossacks absolutely useless and disorganised'.<sup>23</sup> And de Candolle had quickly gained a similar impression once his railway tour was over.

On 31 December 1917, in Novocherkassk, de Candolle met the US diplomat De Witt Poole and the two men shared their scepticism about the Cossacks. Poole told his superiors early in January that the so-called Don Government was 'lamentably weak'. Poole and de Candolle seem to have got on well: Poole was intrigued by de Candolle's time in Argentina and impressed that he had 'a staff of two or three' attached to him.<sup>24</sup> For the next month, de Candolle sent reports dismissing the notion of working with the Cossacks and, like Boyle and Hill, pointing to the strengths of the Bolsheviks. His telegram of 6 January made clear: there was 'no hope at present of joining up Cossack territory with Siberia ... The Bolshevik movement is the only active political movement; it is not likely that the Bolsheviks or their successors will lose their hold on most of Russia'. He added: 'My visit to Novocherkassk caused me considerable disappointment ... Nothing can be expected on this front at the best beyond passive resistance to the Central Powers'. The so-called South Eastern Federation, he noted, was 'the merest embryo of a political authority'.<sup>25</sup> Just before Rostov-on-Don fell to the Bolsheviks and de Candolle escaped to Moscow, he informed the British Army Board in Rostov that the Bolsheviks remained the dominant party in Russia, and so 'it seems unwise for the Allies to risk driving them yet more into the lap of Germany by embittering them and openly fostering opposition to them'.<sup>26</sup>

De Candolle was clear that the Cossacks were never going to be able to offer support to Romania. However, that did not mean he had abandoned Romania to its fate. On the contrary, his thoughts were repeatedly turning towards Romania and what could be done to support the country. During the first week of January, he had been joined in Rostov-on-Don by a French officer who had been sent from Romania.<sup>27</sup> It seems that this visit may have encouraged de Candolle to take an interest in the Czechoslovak Legion. When discussions began on the future of the Czechoslovak Legion, de Candolle rejected the British notion of sending them to the Volga or Siberia. Instead, on 27 January he proposed to the Foreign Office that they should be sent to Iași: 'would it not be more beneficial to move it [the Czechoslovak Corps] into Bessarabia?' In the same way, the Polish Corps 'would be heartily welcomed by Romania'.<sup>28</sup> This was a proposal that the French had first put to the Ukrainian Rada and the Czechoslovak Legion before the Rada opted to seek a peace accord with the Central Powers. De Candolle was unaware, however, that when the French had formally proposed this to the Czechoslovak leader Masaryk on 29 December, he had refused to cooperate.<sup>29</sup>

Despite this refusal, the idea was still being floated, since Masaryk's refusal seemed far from definitive. In fact, on 3 January 1918 the Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the War Cabinet that the Romanian Army still had fifteen operational divisions, which could fight alongside the Czechoslovak Legion and Polish Corps so long as Ukraine agreed to keep them supplied.<sup>30</sup> The minutes of a Foreign Office discussion on South East Russia on 4 January 1918 noted that it was still hoped that some sort of financial support to the Ukrainian Rada might persuade its members to offer support to the Romanian Army, but the prospects for this were getting daily more gloomy. 'The chance of forming a solid Russian unit for action in Romania is practically negligible' was the conclusion.<sup>31</sup> The Rada's decision to opt for talks with the Central Power would end all such speculation, yet, as de Candolle made clear in his last communication from Rostov, 'Allied action is required so as to guarantee supplies for Romania'.<sup>32</sup>

When the Bolsheviks took control of Rostov-on-Don, de Candolle returned to Moscow. With his passionate belief that the Allies should work with the Bolsheviks rather than against them, he joined the diplomats working closely with Bruce Lockhart to secure some sort of understanding with Trotsky. For whatever reason, in June 1918 de Candolle was appointed Director General of Mesopotamian Transportation and sent to Basra in what is today Iraq.<sup>33</sup> The issue of Allied action to help Romania, however, had not gone away.

## Recovering the Romanian crown jewels

Boyle, now regularly supported by Hill, took up the issue of supplying Romania. Once the armistice between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers had been signed on 5 December, and the order to demobilize the Russian Army issued on 7 December, Boyle and Hill decided they no longer had a clear role in Russia and that it would be best to relocate to Romania. Yet, at that precise moment, they were approached by the Romanian ambassador to Russia, Constantin Diamandi.<sup>34</sup> He was concerned at the dramatic downturn in diplomatic relations between Romania and Soviet Russia, prompted by developments both on the Romanian Front and within Romania itself. The Bolshevik seizure of power had not been recognized on the Romanian Front. The Provisional Government's commissar there was a Socialist Revolutionary (SR) who resisted Bolshevik calls to establish military revolutionary committees within the army, and instead oversaw the establishment of committees which included the Bolsheviks but were led by SRs. In agreement with General Dmitrii Shcherbachev, the Romanian Front Commander, moves were taken to establish 'reserve revolutionary divisions' which would resist the perceived Bolsheviks threat. Shcherbachev decided to ignore Lenin's authority and accept instead an offer from the Ukrainian Rada to become the independent commander of the Romanian Front, a move supported by the French. The Romanian decision not to take part in the talks at Brest Litovsk but to sign a separate armistice at Focșani on 9 December was also effectively a move to distance Romania from the Bolsheviks' future.<sup>35</sup>

As early as spring 1917, the Romanian Government had acted to prevent revolutionary unrest penetrating their country. After arrests in April to suppress anti-war agitation by the Social Democrats, a number of radical activists, including Christian Rakovsky, took refuge in Odessa. Rakovsky had been successfully freed from prison by May Day demonstrators. In Odessa, Romanian revolutionary exiles formed an Action Committee to try and further their cause, aided by Romanian workers who had come to Odessa to operate equipment evacuated from Romanian naval ports.<sup>36</sup> As the Russian Revolution deepened, so its impact was increasingly felt in Romania. Relations between Romania and Russia were governed by the Russia-Romania Protocol, which covered mutual support during war time. Even before the Bolsheviks had seized power, the Romanians were convinced that the Russians were not fulfilling their side of the bargain. A British report on the situation, sent by George Hill but from the Americanists used clearly summarizing his earlier contacts with Boyle and de Candolle, spoke of the failure by the Russians to keep Romania supplied, which had reduced the country to the brink of starvation.<sup>37</sup>

While the Romanian Army and the population overall ‘maintained excellent discipline’, the report stated, the Russians ‘were causing every kind of trouble’. On the eve of the October seizure of power, Russian soldiers were demobilizing themselves and ‘in so doing they disorganised the railroads, used up reserve supply rations, and finally, when retreating by road, pillaged and plundered, to say nothing of destroying the villages they passed through on their way east’. When the Romanian Government took measures to defend ‘their people from Russian marauders’, they looked for support from the commander of Russian forces in Romania, Shcherbachev. This, inevitably, led to friction ‘between the Romanian officials and Russians with Bolshevik leanings and on a number of occasions fighting took place’. Trouble often flared up at railway depots, for there ‘the Bolsheviks had agents on all stations deliberately spending their efforts on sabotage’. However, by visiting all places where disputes had occurred, and by ‘replacing the deserters from the Russian railroad battalions with Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war’ the situation gradually improved. Solutions could be drastic.<sup>38</sup> Asked by Shcherbachev to visit the Fourth Russian Army, where there was a desperate shortage of food and fodder, Boyle ordered that half the transport horses should be shot and their meat frozen for human consumption, while the surviving horses could live off the fodder which remained.<sup>39</sup> Unrest continued nonetheless. After the Romanian Government signed its armistice with the Central Powers, the Fourth Russian Army, based in Iași, went Bolshevik and demanded on 15 December that all Russian troops in Romania submit to Soviet authority; it went on to elect a new front committee. Shcherbachev responded by arresting those leading the agitation, making use of Ukrainian units provided by the Rada. A few days later, revolutionary soldiers attempted, unsuccessfully, to arrest Shcherbachev, and shortly after that one of the leading Bolshevik agitators was found dead in an alleyway. For the Bolsheviks, as the Red Army Commander Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko recalled, this meant that the Romanian Government and its generals were shooting hundreds of revolutionaries and putting hundreds of Russian soldiers in prison.<sup>40</sup>

This, then, was the background of worsening relations that Constantin Diamandi was referring to when he met with Boyle and Hill. As the brother of Gheorghe Diamandi, a former Romanian Social Democrat, then a Liberal and ultimately a founder in April 1917 of the Labour Party which sought close contacts with the Russian SRs, Constantin Diamandi had seemed a good person to act as Romania’s ambassador to revolutionary Russia, but his SR contacts were of little use once the Bolsheviks were in power.<sup>41</sup> In a Romanian press interview in April 1918, Boyle recalled that Diamandi asked him at this meeting to take some dispatches of ‘cloth’ back to Romania.<sup>42</sup> This was merely a cover. Diamandi’s request was far more momentous than that. At the end of 1916, the Romanian National Treasury had been removed to the Kremlin in Moscow for safe-keeping, and in July 1917 it was the turn of the Romanian National Bank to move its reserves to Moscow. Thus Moscow held the jewels of the royal family, some 120 tons of gold and the printing presses for the Romanian currency, along with the country’s archives.<sup>43</sup> As Diamandi told Boyle and Hill, the Romanian Government could not even get out of its difficulties by printing more money. Diamandi was in despair. He feared that there would be war between Romania and Soviet Russia. Was there any way, he tentatively asked, if even part of the Romanian treasure could be repatriated to Romania and taken to Iași?

Boyle and Hill agreed to try. They had, after all, worked well with Muralov when recently in Moscow. So they returned to Moscow and met up with Muralov once more. He consulted higher authority and 'with a twinkle in his eye' gave written permission to take everything asked for 'with the exception of certain treasures stored in the Kremlin vaults'.<sup>44</sup> The crown jewels were retrieved from the Kremlin, the royal jewels and currency from the state bank, along with Romania's state archives; the archives were packed into two railway wagons. On top of all this were Red Cross stores which were packed into two further wagons. The 100 million lei in cash and jewels were placed in baskets and stored in some of the sleeping compartments of Boyle's railway carriage. This was a large state carriage acquired by the two men when they were first *en route* from Stavka to Petrograd in late October; it had once belonged to Empress Maria Fedorovna. The train set off without incident, but after only a few hours of the journey, it stopped in the middle of the night and a man attempted to decouple the carriage and four wagons carrying Boyle and the treasure. As Hill recalled it, Boyle's 'fist crashed out and the man went down like a log'.<sup>45</sup>

More adventures were to follow. At the start of December, Lenin had issued an ultimatum to the Ukrainian Rada, calling on it to cease allowing counter-revolutionary generals to travel to the Don; as the Soviet Executive noted on 8 December 'self-determination for the Ukrainian people is not, of course, self determination for counter-revolution'. While the Bolsheviks pressed for war, their Left SR partners in the recently formed coalition government were less enthusiastic and preferred to talk.<sup>46</sup> Thus, although talks were taking place, military action was also underway, even though war had not been declared. On 15 December, the Ukrainian General Secretary for Military Affairs reported to the Rada that the Bolsheviks had established a field headquarters after the Rada's rejection of Lenin's ultimatum, but it was unclear 'whether we are fighting a war or not'.<sup>47</sup> Bolshevik military operations were underway near Ekaterinoslav: Lozovaia station was captured on 13 December and Pavlograd on 18 December.<sup>48</sup> Further north-west, on 17 December, Ukrainian forces in Bakhmach intercepted a Soviet unit which was redeploying across Ukrainian territory from Minsk to the Don; the Soviets fought back and took control of the town. By 22 December they had left the town and the Ukrainians were back in control.<sup>49</sup> Boyle and Hill would have to travel via Bakhmach and *en route*, as they approached Briansk station, they found Soviet forces trying to capture it.

All of a sudden, they were in the thick of a battle and 'for the first time our train moved like an express and we shot past the station', Hill recalled. 'Two of our windows had been smashed and the side of our car was marked by bullets'. Later the train was searched by Soviet officials, but Boyle persuaded the inquisitive local commissar, with the help of brandy and cigarettes, that his carriages were covered by the treaty concerning diplomatic extraterritoriality.<sup>50</sup> The train then passed without further incident into Ukrainian territory. In Kiev they had planned to rest for a few days, but picking up rumours that it was known that there was treasure on board, they decided to press on, and attached the carriage and wagons to a train heading south. Soon they were back in Soviet territory, heading for Bessarabia. At Vapniarka, on the approach to Bessarabia, Soviet officials stopped the train and told Boyle and Hill that no rail traffic was being allowed to cross into Bessarabia, and their carriage and wagons were moved into a siding. A Red Army officer informed them that 'we know you are stealing something

from Russia to give to Romania', and so the carriage and wagons were to be placed under armed guard until further instructions were received.<sup>51</sup>

Boyle and Hill did not give up hope. They discovered that although all the locomotives at Vapniarka goods yard had been depowered and were standing cold and idle, there was a small shunter which was still under steam. After more recourse to food and cigarettes, and the threat of a little force, the shunter crew were persuaded to help. In the middle of the night, in howling wind and snow, the shunter backed onto the carriage and wagons and pulled them out of the station; the Red Army guards were so astonished they did not even open fire. But an attempt was made to stop them. When the train approached a level crossing a few miles further on, they realized that the gate had been closed in their path. Without hesitation, they decided to force their way through: 'gaining speed with every second we charged straight at the gates and smashed into them with a crash'. Not long after that, they reached a Romanian outpost and safety. Arriving in Iași on Christmas Eve, they were met by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Railways and taken to meet Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu.<sup>52</sup>

### High level diplomacy fails to prevent war

Scarcely a week later Brătianu arranged another interview with Boyle and Hill. He asked them to return to Petrograd and 'to try to prevent the Bolsheviks from carrying out their threat of declaring war on Romania'.<sup>53</sup> During their nine-day journey to Romania from 15 to 24 December, relations between Soviet Russia and Romania had deteriorated still further. On the night of 21–22 December, the Romanian cabinet debated disarming Bolshevik controlled forces and, after much agonizing, decided to press ahead despite the obvious risks; to the great relief of Brătianu, the operation went smoothly.<sup>54</sup> This action, however, was not mentioned by Brătianu in his conversation with Boyle and Hill. He referred to the fact that 'Romania was going to pay very dearly' for refusing to take part in the negotiations at Brest Litovsk. The Bolsheviks 'were doing everything to pick a quarrel'.<sup>55</sup> Most significant of all was the worsening situation in Bessarabia, where things had become so tense that, as Boyle and Hill had found, the border of the territory had effectively been closed. What, then, had been happening in Bessarabia?

At this point, a digression into Bessarabian history is required. In the Middle Ages, Bessarabia reached its height under Prince Stefan the Great (1497–1504): with the Ottoman Turks to the south, the Hungarians to the west, the Tartars to the east, and the Poles to the north, he managed to establish a viable state between the Prut and Dneestr rivers. Then, in 1538, the principality was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire. As Ottoman rule gradually weakened, Bessarabia was given a degree of autonomy in 1711, when its 'vassal status' was ended, and then, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1812, it was annexed by Russia, notionally in order to protect the well-being of its Orthodox Christian population. Initially the Russian authorities gave Bessarabia a special statute guaranteeing some independence for the local administration, but this ended in 1829 when a new legal code was introduced. After the Crimean War of 1856, Russia lost control of southern Bessarabia, but regained it in 1878, despite the emergence of the new Romanian state in the interim. Bessarabia was subjected

to the Russification policies experienced throughout the Russian Empire, but despite or because of this, by the beginning of the twentieth century, a nationalist movement had begun to emerge. This movement flourished during and after the 1905 revolution, with the formation of the Society for Moldovan National Culture in October that year, and the emergence of a Romanian language press in 1906. Although that press did not survive beyond 1908, one of the founders of the Society, Pantelimon Halippa, was able to establish a new cultural journal in 1913, *Cuvântul moldovenc* (The Moldovan Word). However, it is important to note, as the 1897 census revealed, that Bessarabia was by no means the homeland of just one nationality: Moldovans made up 46% of the population, but city life was dominated by the Jewish and Russian minorities; Jews made up half the population of Chişinău.<sup>56</sup> It was, though, the Moldovans who set the nationalist pace.

The overthrow of the Romanovs resulted in the Society transforming itself in March 1917 into the Moldovan National Party, committed to the cause of liberal freedoms and a Bessarabian assembly.<sup>57</sup> This call was echoed at a conference of co-operative leaders held on 19–20 April, and again by a gathering of officers held in Odessa on 1 May. On 29 July the Central Army Committee, established back in April, called a Military Congress and this congress eventually assembled on 5–9 November, just as the Bolsheviks seized power. The nine hundred delegates present voted for autonomy and summoned an assembly, the Sfatul Ţării. The membership of the Sfatul Ţării was chosen, rather like the case with the Russian pre-parliament of October 1917, through indirect elections via workers' and peasants' committees and professional organizations: its democratic credentials, therefore, were open to question. This, however, did not prevent it acting with determination when it assembled on 21 November. Comprised of 138 members, its vice-chair was Halippa and it declared Bessarabia to be autonomous within Russia on 2 December; it also gave itself the power to introduce a land reform and establish self-defence units.<sup>58</sup> The Moldovan Democratic Federative Republic was formally declared on 15 December.<sup>59</sup> One reason for the haste in declaring autonomy was the announcement by the Ukrainian Rada in August that Bessarabia was part of its proposed state.<sup>60</sup>

A week after it was formed, on 21 December, the newly-formed autonomous government of Bessarabia sent a delegation to Iaşi to request help 'restoring order', but the Romanian Government initially refused. However, the national autonomists were not the only group calling for Romanian troops to be deployed in Bessarabia. The Romanian Government also found itself under pressure from Shcherbachev, who wanted to secure supply lines which he felt to be at risk. Ultimately it was the growing threat of military disorder which persuaded Brătianu to agree to deploy some Romanian troops to Bessarabia.<sup>61</sup> Bolshevik activists had responded to these moves with direct action. Although a fairly influential soviet existed in Chişinău, it was too weak to take decisive action against the nationalists. So, the Bolsheviks turned instead to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of the Romanian Front (*Rum*), Black Sea Fleet (*Cher*) and Odessa District (*Od*), or *Rumcherod*, an organization they had controlled since elections held earlier in December. On 28 December, the Action Committee of Romanian revolutionary exiles established a Romanian Military Revolutionary Committee, which *Rumcherod* then allocated three battalions of troops recruited from Romanian PoWs and Romanian Army units stationed in the south.<sup>62</sup> These were the forces preparing for revolutionary war against Romania, and this was the crisis Brătianu hoped Boyle and Hill could help resolve.

In this second interview with Boyle and Hill, Brătianu stressed that the Romanian troops moving in to occupy strategic points in Bessarabia along the Dniester river were not acting 'with the purpose of occupying the country, but solely to protect Romanian war supplies and grain'. Therefore, Brătianu requested Boyle 'in the name of the Romanian Government' to visit Petrograd and explain the Romanian position to Trotsky. Brătianu wanted to avoid friction and misunderstanding, but insisted on four points: (1) they [the Romanian Government] could not and would not allow the Russian troops to leave their positions on the front, march through Romania armed and pillage as they had done. All Russian troops would be allowed to leave Romania as soon as transport was available for systematic evacuation. They would leave their arms behind, which would be returned as soon as transport could be arranged; (2) the Romanian Government had not arrested any of the Soviet delegations or committees, and any arrests of Russian subjects had been carried out on the order of Shcherbachev; (3) they could not in future, however, allow any agitation against themselves to pass without taking steps to check it; and (4) it was imperative for Romania to negotiate with Ukraine as, geographically, the former depended for supplies upon the latter.<sup>63</sup>

On 1 January 1918, Boyle and Hill left for Petrograd via Kiev. According to Hill, 'on arrival in Petrograd, Col. Boyle saw the Diplomatic Corps, who informed him that their colleague M. Diamandi, the Romanian ambassador, had that day been arrested and thrown into the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul with all his staff'. After a protest from the Diplomatic Corps, Diamandi was released the next day. This enabled Boyle to deliver his message from Brătianu, but he was told that it was too late, that war was inevitable and Romania would be starved into revolution. Diplomatic relations between Soviet Russia and Romania were broken at the same time that Diamandi was released from prison.<sup>64</sup> The Soviet mood was expressed in an appeal issued at the time and recalled later by Antonov-Ovseenko in his memoirs: 'the Romanian workers and labouring peasantry, crushed by the yoke of boyars and capital, were awaiting our help, their militias were acting jointly with our revolutionary forces in the interest of justice and freedom and world-wide brotherhood'. On 3 January 1918, *Rumcherod* declared itself the supreme authority both in Bessarabia and on the Romanian Front and took measures to stop any advance by the Romanian Army.<sup>65</sup> A revolutionary war had begun.

In the initial fighting, Bolshevik forces occupied Chişinău and dispersed the Sfatul Ţării on 4 January 1918. Its leaders escaped arrest and appealed to Iaşi for support. As a result, the Romanian Army sent a division of troops into the region and drove the Bolsheviks out of the Bessarabian capital a week later, restoring the Sfatul Ţării to power. The Moldavan Democratic Republic of Bessarabia was declared an independent state on 24 January and looked forward to union with Romania.<sup>66</sup> The intervention of the Romanian government was not welcomed by all of the Sfatul Ţării. Those committed to the promised land reform were alarmed that some Romanian officers took it upon themselves to return land to landowners and a special order had to be issued to prevent this. Some assembly members issued an appeal to clarify that this was not occupation but merely the securing of the railway network.<sup>67</sup> The events in Bessarabia prompted serious unrest amongst those Russian troops that had still not evacuated Romania. The evacuation of Russian forces from Romania mostly took place between 14 December and 17 January, and had proceeded largely without incident. However, at the end of the process, in the new climate of military confrontation and armed clashes developed on

20–21 January between the Romanian Army, the Fourth Siberian Corps; this unit refused to accept Shcherbachev's guidelines for the evacuation, which included the demand that they disarm. Over one hundred pieces of artillery were involved in this bloody clash which took place near Galați.<sup>68</sup>

The Romanians were clearly getting the better of the situation and, according to the memoirs of Antonov-Ovseenko, it was on approximately 29 January that *Rumcherod* approached him to ask for help. He recommended appointing Mikhail Murav'ev to lead the Soviet forces in this new Romanian revolutionary war. Murav'ev was fresh from his triumphs in Ukraine, having led those Soviet forces which destroyed the Ukrainian Army in the course of January 1918 and established a Soviet Government in Ukraine at the start of February. *Rumcherod* leaders in Odessa expressed some concern at Murav'ev's transfer, but Lenin insisted: this decision was taken in principle on 14 February and confirmed on 17 February, by which time Murav'ev was already on his way to Odessa.<sup>69</sup> Throughout February, serious fighting was under way. On 5 February, a major confrontation took place between three revolutionary battalions, supported by other Soviet units, and the Romanian Army. The revolutionaries successfully defended the town of Bender, on the Iași-Odessa railway, to the south east of occupied Kishinev.<sup>70</sup> The Romanians attacked again on 23 February near Rybintsa and drove Soviet forces across the Dniester, with the result that the Romania had more or less completed the occupation of Bessarabia. However, Murav'ev's appointment led to a counter-attack. This began on 24 February and was followed by serious clashes near Slobodka on 26 February. The Romanians had more than a division, attacking from both the south and the north east, but Murav'ev 'smashed' them, seizing fifteen artillery pieces, and the Romanians retreated back across the Dniester.<sup>71</sup>

## Grass roots diplomacy ends the Russo-Romanian war

How had Boyle and Hill responded to the outbreak of a revolutionary war between Soviet Russia and Romania? Hoping that something could still be done for Romania, but realizing that high diplomacy had failed, the two men decided to try and influence events on the ground by 'heading south'. The Soviet Government faced transport problems aplenty, and Nevskii, the Minister of Communications, took advantage of Boyle's presence in Petrograd to ask him to help in trying to break the log-jam of trains loaded with crude oil supposedly destined for Petrograd, but stranded in sidings in southern Russia. Exactly when Boyle 'headed south' is not clear. Among the papers held in Belfast is a *laissez-passez* dated 3 January 1918 instructing that Boyle be allowed to join the staff of Antonov-Ovseenko; there is also a letter from Commissar of War, Nikolai Podvoiskii, issued some days later, instructing that he be given all support.<sup>72</sup> Boyle and Hill travelled first via Khar'kov to Antonov-Ovseenko's headquarters at Kupiansk, situated to the east and south of Khar'kov. Boyle and Hill began with railway matters and persuaded the local Bolshevik administration to re-instate some of the recently dismissed railway experts; as a result, food distribution began to improve. However, they then raised the issue of the war with Romania. As Hill recalled, Antonov 'agreed with us' that the war against Romania was pointless, but he was powerless to stop it.<sup>73</sup>

Antonov suggested that Boyle and Hill head to Sevastopol, where recruitment for the war was underway. There they met Villiam Spiro, the Left SR Commander of the Black Sea Fleet. He did not take much persuading to abandon the revolutionary war, since recruitment to this endeavour was not going well. He also thought that the revolutionary war had been overtaken by events. It is impossible to pinpoint the precise date of the talks between Spiro, Boyle, and Hill, but on 18 February the Central Powers had renewed military action against Soviet Russia in response to its initial refusal to agree to the peace terms offered at Brest Litovsk. Spiro feared there was every likelihood that the Central Powers might turn Romania into an ally and march on Sevastopol and Odessa.<sup>74</sup> Boyle and Hill next moved swiftly to Odessa, where *Rumcherod* was based and Murav'ev had his headquarters. Murav'ev was also interested in the future of Romania. Immediately after capturing Kiev for the Ukrainian Soviet Government on 7 February, Murav'ev had gathered together Allied representatives and proposed that the Czechoslovak Legion and the Polish Corps should be concentrated on the northern flank of the Romanian Front. This was just what de Candolle had been proposing in December and January, and one of those who attended that meeting on 10 February was Major Fitzwilliams, who had been in Rostov-on-Don while de Candolle was there. However, as noted above, Masaryk had refused to go along with Murav'ev's suggestion.<sup>75</sup>

The key figure in Odessa was not Murav'ev, however, but Rakovsky, the head of *Rumcherod*, and Boyle and Hill soon had permission to talk to him. Ahead of these talks, Boyle brought together all the Allied representatives still in Odessa and won their support for his approach to Rakovsky and the Odessa Soviet. Their message to Rakovsky was twofold: the revolutionary war was unpopular, as the difficulties in obtaining recruits showed, and it was pointless given the growing German penetration of the Ukraine. The decision of the Ukrainian Rada to sign a peace treaty with the Central Powers on 28 January, and the collapse of the armistice between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers a week later on 18 February were transforming the situation, opening up Ukraine to occupation by the Central Powers.<sup>76</sup>

In these talks, Bessarabia was the sticking point: 'Rakovsky wished the Romanians to evacuate the country immediately, and we on our side urged that they could not be expected to do so until they had been able to evacuate their stores', Hill recalled.<sup>77</sup> The talks lasted five days and were still going on at 5 am on the final day when, at 6 am, an exhausted Rakovsky finally signed the peace proposal on 23 February. An armistice of three days was then agreed, and a car and then a plane took Boyle to Iași.<sup>78</sup> Hill stayed behind believing he could help the *Rumcherod* resist the imminent German advance. The Romanians were at first unwilling to sign and 'it was days before they finally did so'.<sup>79</sup> In the end, except for a few alterations, the Romanian Government agreed and Boyle was flown back to Odessa. Hill was no longer there to greet him; he had decided to travel to Moscow to hear the Fourth Congress of Soviets debate the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, which had been agreed to while Boyle was in discussion with the Romanians. There were no last-minute hiccoughs. The Treaty of Odessa was signed by Rakovsky on 9 March and the agreement made clear that the Romanian Army would withdraw from Bessarabia within two months.<sup>80</sup> Boyle then returned to Iași once more, on 10 March, to make final preparations for implementing the treaty, in particular finalizing the exchange of prisoners which accompanied it. On his return journey to Iași, he took with him

Romanian prisoners of war and some interned Romanian diplomats, and in Iași he worked for the release of Russians interned in Romania, a process which took some considerable time.<sup>81</sup>

## Aftermath

The delay in obtaining the Russians' release came about because of the political turmoil in which Romania found itself as the Treaty of Odessa was being signed. Romania's peace talks with the Central Powers had been stalled for months. After the cease-fire agreed before Christmas, no other progress had been made and a German ultimatum issued in early February was successfully ignored, although this issue led to the resignation of Brătianu on 9 February. Part of the problem was that the Ukrainian Rada wanted to be represented at any peace talks with Romania in order to press its claim for Bessarabia and this had prompted the Moldavian Sfatul Țării to insist that it too should be represented. Boyle and Hill's activities in Odessa pushed the Germans to end this deadlock. On 27 February, serious talks finally began, initially near the front line, but later near Bucharest. The new Prime Minister, General Alexandru Averescu, had been associated with Brătianu's Liberal Party, but equally had the sort of authoritarian reputation that might appeal to the Central Powers because he was the man responsible for putting down peasant unrest in 1907. A preliminary peace was ready on 5 March, but Averescu could not bring himself to sign it. The rival claims of the actual Treaty of Odessa and the proposed peace treaty with the Central Powers prompted a further cabinet crisis. Averescu's cabinet collapsed and, after a four-day interregnum, a pro-German administration was formed on 18 March. Ten days later, on 27 March, the Sfatul Țării voted for union with Romania, while insisting on the right to retain its own regional assembly and protect the position of its national minorities; it also asserted the right to complete its land reform. The Treaty of Bucharest was then finally signed between Romania and the Central Powers on 7 May, Romania surrendered territory to Austria-Hungary, it surrendered its economic resources, oil in particular, to Germany, but it retained sovereignty over Bessarabia.<sup>82</sup>

Boyle was irritated that the Romanian Government did not immediately respect the terms of the peace which he had negotiated. Instead of making preparations to withdraw from Bessarabia, he complained to Queen Marie, it procrastinated and then, once the pro-German government was formed, it saw no reason to make such a move, believing correctly that the Central Powers would not insist. Boyle was only able to stay on in Romania as the Central Powers established their occupation because he had the protection of Queen Marie. In June, he suffered a minor stroke and was cared for by Queen Marie in the royal chalet at Bicay.<sup>83</sup> It seems quite possible that the two of them had a love affair. Earlier in the year, she had written in her diary that 'he wakes me from numbness and prepares me for new efforts', which suggests an emotional attachment at the very least. Later, Queen Marie had a Romanian cross placed on his grave in London and until her death in 1938, a 'woman in black' supposedly visited the grave every year.<sup>84</sup>

Despite his ill-health, Boyle continued to work for the Allied cause. Back on 5 December 1917, the British ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, had asked London that all financial transactions with opponents of the Bolshevik Government

should be transmitted ‘through His Majesty’s Legation in Romania’ so as to protect the embassy in Russia.<sup>85</sup> It would seem that Boyle made use of Bessarabia’s autonomy within Romania to continue work for British intelligence. His stroke occurred while flying to Chişinău and from July onwards his papers contain correspondence with agents in Sevastopol and Odessa.<sup>86</sup> Among these is a receipt dated Chişinău, October 1918, for 10,000 lei to be transmitted to George Hill; Hill was then working in the Moscow underground and organizing Latvians to help smooth the path of General Poole’s expeditionary force from Arkhangel’sk to the Volga. In mid-September, Hill had requested additional funds for his work among Latvians on the Volga front who were sympathetic to the Allied cause.<sup>87</sup>

When the First World War ended, Bessarabia’s autonomy was quickly terminated. On 26 November an inquorate meeting of the Sfatul Ţării – only a third of its members attended – voted for ‘unconditional’ merger with Romania and the assembly dissolved itself; those with doubts about the decision could salve their consciences with the knowledge that a month earlier the assembly had passed its long-promised land reform.<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

What can be concluded from a discussion of this little-remembered war and the efforts of British diplomats to keep Romania supplied from Russia and active in the First World War? The three adventurers involved acted with astonishing independence and initiative, but unlike British generals on other fronts later in 1918, they saw the key to the Eastern Front lying in support for the Bolsheviks rather than opposition to them. Of course, at the start of 1918 the international situation was rather different to that of the spring and summer. As Boyle was flying from Odessa to Iaşi on 23 February, the Treaty of Brest Litovsk had been proposed but it had still not been signed, and it was only ratified at the Fourth Congress of Soviets on 14–16 March as the Romanian Government collapsed in crisis. Supporting the Bolsheviks to fight a revolutionary war against the Central Powers made a certain sense. A second lesson is how quickly the first attempt to export revolution through revolutionary war was abandoned by the Bolsheviks. There was unrest in Romania, but little commitment to revolution, other than on the part of those activists based outside the country. For all the rhetoric of revolution, the revolutionary war seems to have been unpopular even among supporters of *Rumcherod*, with even less support from within Romania itself. The ease with which Boyle and Hill could divert *Rumcherod* from its path seems quite extraordinary.

However, the main conclusion concerns Bessarabia, and the consequences of the immediate abandonment of the Treaty of Odessa in favour of the Treaty of Bucharest. The issues raised by the Treaty of Odessa did not go away. When the Genoa Conference took place in April–May 1922, both Rakovsky and Hill were among the delegates. Rakovsky sought out Hill behind the scenes and said to him: ‘I still have the Peace Treaty with Romania in my pocket, but the Romanians have still got Bessarabia. You persuaded me against my will, and so it is your duty to put the matter right’. Hill took this as good-hearted banter on Rakovsky’s part but added in his memoirs written at the start of the 1930s: ‘I have a feeling that one day that Peace Treaty

signed in Odessa will play a part in an international court. Sooner or later Russia will lay a serious claim for the return of Bessarabia and Romania will find it hard to defend her title'.<sup>89</sup> So it turned out.

After Genoa, Romania, and the Soviet Union tried to normalize relations, but when talks were held in Vienna in 1924, they quickly broke down when the Soviet side insisted that a plebiscite be held in Bessarabia as a precondition of further progress.<sup>90</sup> Later that year, the Soviet Union established the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on the border with Bessarabia around Tiraspol and used it to further their irredentist claim that the rest of Bessarabia was under illegal Romanian occupation.<sup>91</sup> When the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact made clear that Nazi Germany had no interest in Bessarabia's future, the Soviet Union prepared to occupy the territory and did so on 28 June 1940; as they established the new Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, they were careful to arrest the surviving members of the Sfatul Țării.<sup>92</sup> The Paris Peace Treaty of February 1947 gave international recognition to Soviet Moldova until 1991, when it achieved its independence. The election of Maia Sandu as Moldova's president in December 2020 on a 'pro-EU' ticket, and her concern at President Putin's undue influence over the country, suggest that the Bessarabia Question, which so concerned diplomats in the nineteenth century, is still open.

## Notes

1. Smele, *The "Russian" Civil Wars*.
2. Bieler, *Great War*, 1–80 (summary).
3. Hitchens, 'The Russian Revolution', 269.
4. Bieler, *Great War*, 106–17.
5. Bieler, *Great War*, 118–23.
6. Bud, 'Negotiating', 120–1.
7. Bud, 'Negotiating', 124.
8. The papers of Joe Boyle are held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI). Some 350 documents are held at D1943/1–3. D1943/1 is largely material on the Russian railways in 1917.
9. Bieler, *Great War*, 123–4.
10. Bud, 'Negotiating', 126.
11. Bieler, *Great War*, 125.
12. Bud, 'Negotiating', 126.
13. Bieler, *Great War*, 129.
14. Hitchens, *Rumania*, 267.
15. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1089. Hill describes his early career in chapters 2–8. In the course of writing this article, it became clear that the notes I had taken some years ago from the original 1932 edition of Hill's memoirs were inadequate. The Covid epidemic made it impossible to reread the original edition so for the sake of consistency all citations are from the Kindle edition using location (l.) rather than page number.
16. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1119.
17. Millman, 'The Problem with Generals', 291. Although Millman's accounts of General Dunsterville's actions in the Caucasus and General Malleson's actions in

- Central Asia are persuasive, his account of intervention in North Russia and Siberia is flawed.
18. Hill, *Go Spy*, I. 1243. PRONI, D1943/1 contains a copy of the order affixing Boyle's carriage to a train from Tsarskoe Selo to Petrograd on 27 October, and his presence in Moscow on 17 November attached to the 'Commander of Armies in the Moscow Region'.
  19. Bieler, *Great War*, 134.
  20. The Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lord Milner papers (hereafter Milner), 366, Df31.
  21. Milner, 366, Df31.
  22. Bieler, *Great War*, 134–5.
  23. Milner, 366, Df50.
  24. Lees & Rodner, *An American Diplomat*, 51–2, 56.
  25. Milner, 366, 73. Partially quoted in Bieler, *Great War*, 139.
  26. Bieler, *Great War*, 142.
  27. Lees & Rodner, *An American Diplomat*, 52.
  28. Milner, 366, 90. Also summarized in Bieler, *Great War*, 142.
  29. Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia*, 231.
  30. Swain, *Origins*, 113–14.
  31. Milner, 364, 2.
  32. Bieler, *Great War*, 143.
  33. Bieler, *Great War*, 148, 158.
  34. Hill, *Go Spy*, II. 1307, 1324.
  35. Torrey, 'The Revolutionary Russian Army', 95–9.
  36. Hitchens, *Rumania*, 270–1.
  37. The National Archives (hereafter TNA), FO371.3350 (report from George Hill).
  38. TNA, FO371.3350.
  39. TNA, FO371.3350.
  40. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, 168.
  41. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Diamandy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Diamandy) [lasted accessed 18 October 2021].
  42. PRONI, D1943/3.
  43. Bud, 'Negotiating', 131.
  44. Hill, *Go Spy*, I. 1383. This journey is described fully in chapters 15–20.
  45. Hill, *Go Spy*, I. 1462.
  46. Swain, *Origins*, 94–5.
  47. Tolochko, *Rada*, 40.
  48. Pinak and Chmyr, *Viisko Ukraïns'koï revoliutsii*, 22.
  49. Tolochko, *Rada*, 59–60. For 17 December, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet-Ukrainian\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet-Ukrainian_War) [last accessed 15 December 2020]. I would like to thank Dr. Nataliya Kibita of the University of Edinburgh for help in sourcing and translating references.
  50. Hill, *Go Spy*, II. 1476, 1491.
  51. Hill, *Go Spy*, I. 1615.
  52. Hill, *Go Spy*, II. 1615, 1656, 1684.
  53. Hill, *Go Spy*, I. 1741.
  54. Torrey, 'The Revolutionary Russian Army', 61–3.
  55. Hill, *Go Spy*, I. 1741.

56. This summary is taken from chapters two and three of King, *The Moldovans*. For ease of reference during Covid restrictions, I have used the Kindle edition. The statistics quoted are from location l. 669.
57. Armstrong, 'The Bessarabian Dispute', 665.
58. King, *Moldovans*, l. 841.
59. Hitchins, *Rumania*, 272.
60. Armstrong, 'The Bessarabian Dispute', 665.
61. Hitchins, *Rumania*, 272; Torrey, 'The Revolutionary Russian Army', 75–6.
62. Hitchins, 'The Russian Revolution', 277.
63. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1756.
64. Hill, *Go Spy*, ll. 1786, 1801.
65. Hitchins, 'The Russian Revolution', 277.
66. Hitchins, *Rumania*, 273.
67. King, *Moldovans*, l. 877.
68. Torrey, 'The Revolutionary Russian Army', 69.
69. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, 159–60.
70. Hitchins, 'The Russian Revolution', 277.
71. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski*, 169.
72. PRONI, D.1943/1, 5. The date on the Podvoiskii document is 19 January, but the context suggests it was a fortnight earlier – possibly a confusion of calendars.
73. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1875.
74. Hill, *Go Spy*, ll. 1846, 1890.
75. Swain, *Origins*, 115–17.
76. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1929. The Gregorian calendar was introduced on 14 February 1918 by the Bolsheviks and involved dropping the dates 1–13 February.
77. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1929.
78. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1944. For the date of 23 February, see Bud 'Negotiating', 133.
79. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1959.
80. *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia Sotsialisticheskaia Revoliutsiia*, 347.
81. Bud, 'Negotiating', 133.
82. Hitchins, *Rumania*, 274–6. For the rights of the Sfatul Țării, see King, *Moldovans*, l. 877.
83. Bud, 'Negotiating', 128, 133.
84. Bud, 'Negotiating', 127. For the Romanian cross, see PRONI, D1943/1 (extract from *The Family Herald and Weekly Star*, Montreal, 17 November 1926). The references to 'the woman in black' can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_W\\_Boyle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_W_Boyle) [last accessed 16 October 2021], which cautions that the source is unreliable.
85. Milner, 366, D47.
86. For Boyle's stroke, see PRONI, D1943/1 (extract from *The Family Herald and Weekly Star*, Montreal, 17 November 1926). The intelligence correspondence is in the same file.
87. Swain, 'An Interesting and Plausible Proposal', 99.
88. King, *Moldovans*, l. 891; Armstrong, 'The Bessarabian Dispute', 666.
89. Hill, *Go Spy*, l. 1959.
90. Armstrong, 'The Bessarabian Dispute', 667.
91. King, *Moldovans*, l. 1360.
92. King, *Moldovans*, l. 2244.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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