

4 CORNERS

WHERE ON EARTH IS MOLDOVA?



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That question perhaps sums up the fairly widespread ignorance that surrounds this small republic, squeezed between Romania and Ukraine, and about the same size as Wales. Following the collapse of the Soviet system, its economy went into freefall and people began to leave the country, desperately seeking work. This developed into a great haemorrhage of emigrants leaving over the last 15 years, resulting in serious depopulation – some villages are all but deserted and many children have been left ►



to be cared for by grandparents or older siblings. Human trafficking is a significant problem and the mafia are very influential – sometimes brazenly so. There is a strong ‘black’ economy. Some are very rich but most struggle to eke out a living – it is the poorest country in Europe and still officially Communist.

Under Soviet Communism, Christians in Moldova suffered severe persecution. Access to Bibles was very restricted and church activities subject to numerous constraints. Pastors were imprisoned and some killed. Following the revolution and the religious freedoms which ensued, evangelistic opportunities have been grasped and there has been a great surge of people professing conversion and being baptised – sometimes over 100 people baptised on a single occasion in one church.

In 1998 I was asked to visit Moldova for the first time by an ex-social work student I had taught at the Bible Institute in Oradea, Romania. We made our first visit to Hincesti – a closed institution for women and girls with disabilities situated on a hillside above the town. The first visit was memorable. We discovered there were 120 living there in atrocious conditions. Unsure what we could do, we determined that we had to do something with God’s help. We began regular visits there with food and activities and friendship and the Gospel...and we prayed. They were literally “living in darkness and the shadow of death”.

We were a tiny group of women with few resources and no influence. The context was impossibly hard and there were obstacles and opposition at every step. My Moldovan friends are women of great faith and love and prayer and it has been such a privilege to work alongside them.

An awareness dawned on us that God was beginning to work in the lives of a number of women at Hincesti bringing them to himself – clearly and unmistakably and that they were beginning to tell others there about him. We bought them some radios so they could listen to Christian radio (broadcast 24 hours in Moldova with some wonderful preaching and Christian songs). I remember visiting a group at Hincesti and arriving in the middle of somebody preaching on the radio, and being told very clearly that they would be very happy to talk to me *after* the preaching had ended! We started a Christian ‘camp’ in a field next door each summer.

A desire to do more grew and we wondered about starting a house in a village for some of them – a number were longing to be able to go to church and to have an ordinary life. We witnessed the miraculous provision of all the funds needed to buy a house in an incredibly short space of time. We obtained all the top-level Government permissions we needed and set up the required registered charity in Moldova – *Casa Mea*. On 3 November 2006, Aliona, Nastea, Diana, Serafima, Anisoara and Vera moved into Casa Bucuriei (the House of Joy) – our hallelujah day! Three of these women had been converted in Hincesti and the remaining three were converted in April this year. They were baptised in August 2007 to very great rejoicing.

No human hand could have achieved these things. I often feel as though I have been a passive observer of God’s most amazing grace in Jesus Christ. It is so clear to us that, before eternity, he had planned to save women whose lives were held of very little account by this world and who lived in a place that was forgotten and shut off. What power and love is to be found in our great Redeemer!

Whilst there is a dull drudgery to everyday life on an ordinary level, there is remarkable refreshment in a context where “the people who know their God shall be strong and do exploits” (Daniel 11:32). It is enormously encouraging to see the Lord working so powerfully in the lives of many and it makes me very

hopeful in his ability to visit even our poor land today. I feel myself to be very blessed to have seen such things. Pray for our ongoing work at Hincesti (the *physical* conditions there have improved tremendously) and at another large institution, Badiceni. We believe the Lord has great things in store still. I also teach at the Bible College in Chisinau. Do pray for the Lord’s protection and powerful blessing on the work of our hands and for great glory to be brought to the Saviour.

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Maureen Wise



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