



## Travel Journal: Moldova

I have had ten very good days here in Moldova and I have learned a lot about this country. It is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, this country has struggled economically. Thirty-two percent of the work force is in other countries and the money they make is sent back to their families. There has been a mass exodus to other countries in the western world. The level of unemployment is high and there seems to be little progress in changing this. The government is communist at present and they are doing little to improve the situation. Many people in the villages are simply living off their crops.

Cross Links International sponsored me to go on this trip. It is a relief and material aid organization that assists organizations financially. While here, I visited projects where they have been involved. I visited few orphanages where they have assisted in remodeling buildings by giving money for this. I visited schools where they have done the same thing. I also visited pastors at churches where they are providing financial support for them. They have also given money to help build churches and provided seed money to the starting of new businesses. I was impressed with their work. They invited me to sing at a variety of churches in the country. It was a joy to meet so many new people and to take my music to them. It was very well received and I hope to return sometime for a more extensive tour in the region.

I spent two days in the Ukraine and stayed with a host family. They were farmers and lived in a small village. For supper and breakfast, they served me fresh milk from their cow. My drinking it was a big mistake. I was sick for two days. I am much better now. I will learn to say, "No, thank you," the next time I am in such a situation.

I have been captivated by the Moldovan people. Though life has been extremely difficult for them, they live in hope. Those who remain are trying to make it a better place to be. I think however that it will take a few generations to end their current woes.

I leave in the morning for Moscow, where I will be for three days. I will sing a concert there and will visit some of the work that Cross Links is doing there. They are committed to assisting people in Eastern Europe.

I was encouraged when Janice Wenger (Director of Cross Links) told me that she is interested in my upcoming trip to Uganda. Perhaps I can encourage them to get involved there.

After Moscow, I will spend four days in Siberia and will perform a concert there as well. I will then fly to Amsterdam where I will do a fundraiser for Uganda and will leave for a two-week stay in Uganda on June 12. This is a long trip but it has been meaningful educational and life-changing.