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Book Reviews

Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova: Pages From the Past and Archival Inventories. By Miriam Weiner. 624 pp., 1999. Co-published by The Miriam Weiner Routes to Roots Foundation, Inc. and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, in cooperation with the Ukrainian State Archives and the Moldovan National Archives. \$60.00 plus \$8.00 shipping (NJ residents add sales tax). Order from The Miriam Weiner Routes to Roots Foundation, P.O. Box 2879, Clifton, NJ 07015-2879; 800-742-5403; www.rtrfoundation.org.

When *Jewish Roots in Poland*, the first book of Miriam Weiner's planned trilogy, was published (the third volume will be on Lithuania and Belarus), the *Dorot* review (Winter 1997-98 issue) called it a magnum opus, and Dr. Michael Berenbaum suggested in his Foreword to the book that "it must surely rank as her finest" contribution to memory. What then can one say about this new book? It would have seemed impossible that the first book could have been surpassed in quality and content, yet that is the inescapable conclusion easily drawn after examining this encyclopedic survey of Jewish life, Jewish history and archival holdings in Ukraine and Moldova.

Numbers alone do not convey the scope and beauty of this book, let alone the obvious dedication and expertise by both the author and her supporting cast. But some numbers are worth citing nonetheless. There are more than 1200 illustrations or photographs in the book, including an astonishing 970 color photographs of 190 towns. There are over twice as many pages of individual town descriptions, covering three times as many towns as the first book on Poland. The book itself is 8½ x 11" (as was the first), but 160 pages larger, and weighs a hefty six pounds. The archival inventory contains over 5000 record entries for nearly 1400 towns.

The skillful layout and graphics, the outstanding quality of the photographic reproductions, the copiously illustrated articles on research, the numerous and various references and bibliography (including a comprehensive list of Yizkor books) and the extensive cooperation and contributions from archivists that were all hallmarks of the book on Poland are again found in this new book. What makes the involvement of the archivists from Ukraine and Moldova all the more remarkable is that until recently, as part of the Soviet Union, they were both more inscrutable and more disorganized than their counterparts in Poland. Miriam seems to have a special genius for eliciting this cooperation, for cajoling numerous persons at all levels of the archives "to reveal the concealed, to make known their treasures, to share what they have," as Dr. Berenbaum noted in the Foreword to both books. Her success in this endeavor is evident in the letter of acknowledgment from Dr. Ruslan Y. Pirig, Director of the Main Archival Administration in Kyiv, found in the opening pages of the book. Dr. Prig states that "We are very grateful to Miriam Weiner for the huge amount of work performed in cooperation with more than 100 Ukrainian archivists..." and that "...the enthusiastic efforts of Ms. Weiner deserve our full support."

The most notable difference between the two books is the expansion and change of focus in the illustrated descriptions of the towns. What was 100 pages on 28 towns in the book on Poland has been expanded to over 200 pages on 56 towns in Ukraine plus 27 pages on 7 towns in Moldova; and added to that is a separate chapter called "Town Clips" with photographs from another 26 towns - a total of over 260 pages on 89 towns. The focus of these sections has also changed. In *Jewish Roots in Poland* each town had a half or full page historical description, text describing synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, Holocaust memorials and other sites of Jewish interest as well as a list of selected readings. All this has disappeared in the new book, although some of the information appears in the descriptions of the photographs. Thus the pages on these towns are devoted exclusively to reproductions of photographs and postcards, although at a loss of some useful types of information.

A new section called "The People and Places" comprises 22 pages in the center of the book which contain a poignant photographic essay of contemporary Ukraine and Moldova, illustrating transportation, shopping, daily life, education, scenery, Judaica, and new found relatives. This section is preceded by an informative eight page chapter on the current status and outlook of the Jewish community of Ukraine. The chapter's author, Josef Zissel, who in his politically active life was twice imprisoned for a total of six years, is now both the president of the Vaad in Ukraine and vice-president of the Jewish Congress in Ukraine (both organizations which he was instrumental in founding). "The People and Places" is followed by a 20 page chapter on the Holocaust (primarily in Ukraine), with text, maps and photographs. This chapter includes an unusual article by the vice-director of the State Archive of Vinnitsa Oblast, who is a specialist on the history of the Jews of Podolia.

As with her previous book, many *Dorot* readers will be tempted to turn first to the 100 page list of archival inventories. This list is organized in the same fashion as the book on Poland, with one significant change: there is only one section with holdings sorted alphabetically by town. Unlike the previous book, there is no separate section with holdings sorted by repository. The page headings highlight the phrase "by town," implying an original intent to include the alternative sort; obviously something had to give in order to keep the book from becoming unwieldy in size or weight. The listing by repository did have some utility both for identifying towns that a researcher might not think to look for, and for planning trips or correspondence to an archive, but its omission in favor of expanding the photographic content of the book was probably a sound editorial decision. The inventories are formatted similarly, showing the years for each type of record held in the archive and the shelf list numbers (i.e. Fond/Opis/Delo numbers). The wide variety of documents includes vital records, census records, voter and tax lists, land and school records, notary and hospital records, Kahal records, Holocaust and Occupation lists, police and draft registration files, and more.

The bibliography is also formatted differently. *Jewish Roots in Poland* had extensive bibliographical sections organized first by time period, then on cemeteries and synagogues, and concluding with short sections on genealogy, periodicals, biographies, films and

gazetteers. The bibliography for *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova* has minimal information on cemeteries and synagogues (perhaps because there is little published on these topics for these countries), but includes 13 pages of town histories and Yizkor books, two pages of articles from *Avotaynu* and an extensive bibliography of archival inventories in these two countries. In addition, the typeface in the bibliography is smaller than in the first book, so there is in fact much more information packed into these 32 pages - substituting in part for the lack of bibliographical references in the chapters on the individual towns. The use of photographs along the full page margins for every page of the bibliography (instituted in the first book) is continued here, with numerous photographs from cemeteries in various towns.

Taking the place of Jeffrey Cymbler's excellent chapter on Polish-Jewish genealogical research in the previous book are a variety of contributions from scholars and archivists. In the Introduction, a ten page article by Professor ChaeRan Y. Freeze of Brandeis University, revised and adapted from her article in *Avotaynu* (Spring 1997) discusses genealogical research in the Ukrainian and Moldovan archives. The first chapter contains three short articles, all adapted from material previously published elsewhere: one by Professor Zvi Gittelman of the University of Michigan on past and present Jewish culture in these countries, and two by Hal Bookbinder. Chapter 4 contains a ten page article on the Ukrainian archives by the Deputy Director, adapted from a 1994 *Avotaynu* article, followed by five short articles by the directors of five different archives in Ukraine. Accompanying all of this material are a wonderful variety of illustrations of all sorts of documents; Chapter 4 alone is followed by 16 pages with illustrations of some 36 documents from the Ukrainian archives.

This kaleidoscopic encyclopedia of images and information on Jewish life, Jewish history and genealogical research in Ukraine and Moldova is priced far below its intrinsic value, thanks to a number of contributions listed opposite the title page as well as to the support from the author's Foundation and YIVO. It is a handsome and fascinating addition to the library of almost anyone interested in Judaic culture or history, and is indispensable for any genealogist or historian researching the Ukraine or Moldova.

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