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N. G. Bregetova et al.: Opredelitel' obitayushchikh v pochve kleshchey (Mesostigmata). Key to the soil mites (Mesostigmata).

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The second volume of the extensive series entitled "Key to the soil mites", edited by M. S. Gilyarov and N. G. Bregetova, is concerned with the large group Mesostigmata. (The first volume covering the mites Sarcoptiformes was reviewed in Folia parasitologica 24: 91, 1977). Mesostigmatid mites are one of the basic components of the soil cenoses, in which they are active as detritophages, saprophages, coprophages, phytophages and predators as well. Many of them also penetrate into nests of small terrestrial mammals which they parasitize at different stages of parasitism. The reviewed volume is not only a fundamental work for soil zoologists, but for parasitologists as well, to whom it will be useful in the studies on parasites of small terrestrial mammals and their nests and in the parasitocenologic investigations within the frame of the research on natural focality of diseases.

Under the guidance of N. G. Bregetova a team of prominent Soviet acarologists (B. A. Vainstein, B. A. Kadite, E. V. Koroleva, A. D. Petrova, S. I. Tikhomirov, G. I. Shcherbak) while preparing the "Key" solved a number of fundamental problems and overcame several obstacles. The literature on mesostigmatid mites is namely extraordinary extensive and scattered in journals of different disciplines, often hardly available. Literary data in many instances lack sufficient descriptions of numerous new taxa, in which, particularly in older publications, the diagnoses are not clear, and suitable as well as reliable illustrations are frequently missing. This has resulted in a complicated and vague synonymy,

reflecting sometimes personal opinions of individual acarologists or teams instead of an objective assessment. The authors of the "Key" therefore, first revised families and genera and this fact only indicates the importance and originality of the work offered to the readers. Whenever some parts of the "Key" (they are virtually few) are based on literary data, this fact is pointed out directly in the text, but even then the adopted parts are well arranged and complemented to be up to the level of present knowledge.

Great attention was attached to the problem, as to which species should be listed in the "Key". Although intensive and unique collections (as for the number of mites and different places of origin) which had accumulated in the Soviet zoological institutes during the last decades, were available, the authors did not only restrict themselves to the species hitherto found in the USSR, but also included in the volume all species whose occurrence in the Soviet territory might be anticipated. In this way they created a unique treatise, covering practically all Palearctic region. The extent is limited ecologically: not included are strictly parasitic groups of mesostigmatid mites, e.g. Spinturnicidae, Rhinonyssidae and Entonyssidae, not to be encountered by the soil zoologist. Parasitic groups which may be more or less accidentally found in soil samples but which are in no direct relation to soil cenoses, are mentioned only on the level of families or genera (e.g. Haemogamasidae, Dermanyssidae, Macronyssidae).

The authors of the "Key to the soil mites"