

Woman in the post-communist society:

business lady, victim of perestroika or a toy for men?

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Introduction

The nature of the press is multifunctional. For millions of readers the press is primarily the most significant source of information about current events. As days, weeks, months, years pass by newspapers and magazines turn yellow and lose their strong smell of printer's ink. They also turn into no less important archive sources on the basis of which inquisitive descendants will study the life of previous generations and judge who those men and women that inhabited the Earth were, what they did, what they were interested in, how they treated each other and what they thought about the world which surrounded them. As a matter of fact the press does not have to mature to become a source of such information. Researchers from different fields – economists, political scientists, historians, ethnographers, anthropologists and simply curious people able to read in a foreign language and willing to liberalize use newspapers and magazines published in other countries as a source of factual material.

Besides this, press is a powerful means of influencing public consciousness, the tool of shaping public opinion and distribution of social, including gender, roles. We accepted this reference point when analyzing the press of Moldova – a small country in the South East of Europe usually presenting interest to geo-politicians mostly due to its geographic location (“sanitary zone” between West and East).

The focus of our research was the investigation of the ways in which Moldovan mass media cover women-related materials, both visual and textual. While gender related research has been popular in the Western countries, the area remained unexplored in Moldova. The reasons of such inattention should be the focus of another research, meanwhile we concentrated on the mere

analysis of what and how Moldovan journalists write about/for women. We believe this research to be an important initiative to be developed and continued in the future.

Cherchez la femme

Women make up 52.1% of the 4 281 500 million population of Moldova. Considering this fact it would be reasonable to assume that such a significant numerically part of the population and its interests would be widely covered in mass media of the country. Yet already the first, mostly superficial acquaintance with the leading mainstream Moldovan periodicals rings a bell. Some of these publications such as “Nezavisimaia Moldova”¹, “Ekonomicheskoe Obozrenie”², “Moldavskie Vedomosti”, “Moldova Suverana”³ can ignore any record of women being it textual or graphic for several editions. Other newspapers such as “Flux”, “Saptamana”⁴, “Timpul”⁵, and “Jurnal de Chisinau”⁶ publish garish female images occupying oftentimes the biggest part of a page (format A2 and A3) almost on every out of 16 (24) pages. At the same time textual materials are published on a much rarer rate and significantly smaller in size. Finally, some publications (“Luceafarul”⁷, “Capitala”⁸, “Stolitza”⁹, “Kishinevskie Novosti”¹⁰) include low-key images and textual materials about women almost in every edition.

In the attempt to put our impressions into shape we calculated the correlation of the total newspaper space to the size of the materials related to women which appeared in the period of August 2001-August 2002. Alas, emotions translated into the language of figures did not become brighter. Thus, in the year 2001 “Nezavisimaia Moldova”, “Moldova Suverana”, “Capitala”

¹ “Independent Moldova”

² “Economy Review”

³ “Independent Moldova” (Romanian). Although the title of the newspaper translated into English sounds identical to the title of “Nezavisimaia Moldova”, these are two different publications with different content and editorial staff.

⁴ “The Week”

⁵ “The Time”

⁶ “Chisinau Journal”

⁷ “The Star”

⁸ “The Capital City”

⁹ “The Capital City” (Russian edition)

¹⁰ “Chisinau News”

(newspapers appearing 3 times a week) dedicated 0-2 % of newspaper space to women-related materials; “Moldavskie Vedomosti” (biweekly) - 0-1%. The Russian language weeklies “Delovaia Gazeta”¹¹ and “Ekonomicheskoe Obozrenie” are in a similar situation. At the same time Romanian weeklies “Saptamana” and “Luceafarul” allocated 4-6 % of the space to such materials.

We could observe not only “seasonal fluctuation” in the frequency of appearance of women-related materials, but also the uneven distribution of such materials by editions. The biggest number of publications about women is traditionally recorder in the first week of March on the eve of one of the most popular holidays in the post-communist space – the International Women’s Day. (It is worth mentioning that the original name of this holiday – the International Day of a Working Woman – passed to non-existence long time ago, and the holiday itself turned from one of the ideological symbols into a day when everybody, including state authorities, all of a sudden recall that the population of the country differs not only by age and social status, but also by gender. It is the day when girls and women enjoy exaggerated attention, unrestrained praising, and never-going-to-be-kept promises of a better life.) From 65 to 75 % of space of the majority of the analyzed publications which appeared on the eve of the 8th of March were allocated to women-related materials. Weekly fluctuations of the frequency depend on the closeness of the weekend. As a rule, women-related materials appear in the last, weekend edition of the week. Other “deviations” from the traditionally passive coverage of women’s life and issues of interest to women are usually caused by certain socio-mobilizing or educative events (e.g. campaign “You are not for sale”, which we will discuss later in this paper) or significant women-targeted events (e.g. Forum for Business Women in June 2002).

The majority of the analyzed print media do not have a special column for women, unless we speak about such traditionally believed to be women’s subjects as fashion, cuisine, or education of children. Thus, “Nezavisimaia Moldova” has a regular fashion column on the last page of each Friday’s edition. “Timpul” and “Jurnal de Chisinau” cover fashion in specialized columns “Catalin

¹¹ “Business Weekly”

si Catalina” and “Il Paradiso”. The weekly “Saptamana” has 2 thematic columns “Alcov feminin” and “Si frumoasa, si desteapta, si norocoasa?”¹², which are sometimes concurrent, sometimes alternating. Household/fashion/cuisine-related materials appear in the column “De toate pentru toti”¹³ in the weekly “Luceafarul”. Besides this column “Luceafarul” covers real life stories, principal characters of which are mostly women, in the column “Povesti adevarate”¹⁴.

Hence, having analyzed the quantity and frequency of women-related or women-targeted materials we can conclude that female audience is not receiving particular attention from the press. For the sake of fairness we have to mention that the Moldovan press in general is rather distant from the problems of an average citizen being it female or male person. The majority of publications are extremely politicized. In the ecstasy of electoral races journalists tend to forget that their potential readers are interested not only in the differences of electoral camps and programs, or relationship with the rebelling Transnistria, or the proper term to be used to denote the state language, but also a number of other, less “elevated” problems. As Natalia Angeli, a journalist from Moldova, puts it in the introductory chapter to the collection of the articles “Journalism for an average person” edited by the Independent Center of Journalism in 2000, journalists of Moldova mostly focus on the problems of a fair concern to average citizens paying more attention to words and actions of politicians. The journalist stresses that “if Moldova strives for becoming a country of stable democracy, it should take care of its citizens and pay more attention to their opinion and problems. Consequently, the press should reflect a much wider spectrum of issues of concern to common citizens.”¹⁵

¹² “Beautiful, smart and lucky?”

¹³ “A Bit of Everything for Everybody”

¹⁴ “Real Stories”

¹⁵ Jurnalismul pentru omul de rand. Chisinau: CIJ, 2000, p.3.

Kirche, Küche, Kinder

The results of the content analysis of women-related publications are of an equal interest to us. As it was already mentioned above, we have selected materials with direct reference to women as well as publications which appeared under different thematic columns traditionally targeted at women.

Direct dependence of the choice of the principal character of an article and its theme on the general orientation of a publication is the first distinguishing feature we recorded. Thus, official or business (political or economic) newspapers such as “Moldova Suverana”, “Ekonomicheskoe Obozrenie” and “Moldavskie Vedomosti” focus on women who are successful in their career in politics, business, women of a higher social status. Since the number of such women in the country is rather small (for instance out of 101 members of parliaments only 13 are women; out of all ministers only one is a woman; 3 women are managing large industrial enterprises), rare appearance of a female face in these publications and the fact that principal characters of articles are moving from one newspaper to another is easy explainable.

Newspapers occupying the niche of informational-entertaining mass media (“Saptamana”, “Timpul”, “Flux”, “Nezavisimaia Moldova”) besides Moldovan female VIPs notice women of other occupations and origin. Actresses, local and foreign models, successful businesswomen, famous artists, rarely writers, doctors and teachers appear in these publications on a rather regular basis. Few newspapers (“Luceafarul”, “Jurnal de Chisinau”, “Novoe Vremea”, “Kishinevskie Novosti”) oftentimes publish materials about unfortunate women, who faced a challenge and were unable to cope with it.

Hence, journalists tend to pay attention to two polar categories of women – successful and ill-fated. Where are those women who do not sing or dance, do not star in movies or decorate fashion shows, do not participate in parliamentary discussions or lead business meetings? Where are those who do not sell themselves in the street, do not drink, do not kill or steal? Where are those

who have a routine job in hospitals, stores, schools, post office, kinder gardens? We cannot help agreeing with a famous Russian journalist Eduard Polianskii who wrote that “the holders of existence working for our quasi stylish periodicals are not particularly excited by average people. An average person is not beneficial from the point of view of accessibility: he tends to sleep at night ignoring night clubs, does not attend free presentations and bohemian closed parties - the places where a contemporary reporter of high society life likes to play around with a glass of Martini...”¹⁶

We obviously could explain this situation by saying that the press should report on the events and people beyond average. Yet, isn't this attention to “beyond averageness” the reason why the number of high school students willing to get the degree of a nurse or a teacher has been decreasing for a number of years, that graduates of departments of foreign languages can think of their future career anywhere but at school, that high school girls are dreaming of becoming models, actresses or even hard currency prostitutes?

It is worth mentioning that the situation differs significantly when it comes to men. One can come across articles about politicians, ministers, CEOs, as well as about doctors, representatives of small businesses, winemakers, or farmers. Moreover, nothing extraordinary has to happen to these people to make them eligible for becoming principal characters of articles. They live a normal routine life, and are interesting exactly because of this reason.

The same dependence can be observed between the type of a publication and the subject of materials targeted at women (or the very fact of their presence). Some of the analyzed publications (“Moldova Suverana”, “Delovaia gazeta”, “Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie”, “Kishinevskii obozrevateli”, “Moldavskie vedomosti”) do not have any columns targeted at women and do not publish articles which could be characterized as something of interest to women primarily (e.g. materials about unemployment among women, women's NGOs, social protection of women). Obviously these newspapers do not publish (or at least did not publish until August 2002) materials of educational-entertaining character which are traditionally believed to interest women (fashion,

¹⁶ Tuzovka: Fel'eton. *Journalist*, 2002. № 8, p. 37.

education of children, cuisine, etc.) although some entertainment is present (for instance, anecdotes).¹⁷

Yet the majority of the analyzed newspapers have specialized columns where the readers' interest is clearly indicated in the title: "Alcov feminin" and "Si frumoasa, si desteapta, si norocoasa?" in "Saptamina", "De toate pentru toti" and "Povesti adeverate" in "Luceafarul", "Catalin si Catalina" in "Timpul", "Il Paradiso" in "Jurnal de Chisinau", "Uiut Campania" in "Kishinevskie vedomosti", etc. What materials are published in these columns? As a rule these are show business gossips, medical advice, personal relationship advice, cuisine and make up tips. Sometimes this "salad" is seasoned with a horoscope, sometimes with a juridical consultation. (It is difficult to keep from recalling the famous three "k" by which interests of decent German women were defined according to Nietzsche - Kirche, Küche, Kinder).

Taking the risk of going down to the level of primitive feminists we would still ask: why is it that such a "pearl" as "A good hostess should know that one has to wash hands not only before cooking, but also during it"¹⁸ is only address to a hostess, and not to a host? Are women so stupid and illiterate that they need such advice? Or men's hands are cleaner? Or it is assumed that men do not know (and should not know) where the kitchen is and what people are supposed to do there? Why the recommendations entitled "Special gymnastics for problem zones" are illustrated by a picture of a nice young lady who rather has to gain a bit weight than to lose it?¹⁹ Are men the lucky ones without "problem zones" such as watermelon-like belly and saggy buttocks? Or in the case of men it is a merit rather than a problem?

Recently a group of Russian sociologists supervised by Olga Zdravomyslova conducted a research on the attitude of Russian journalists to women's issues in press. One hundred journalists representing central mass media including mainstream newspapers and magazines and women's print and broadcast media were questioned. Answering the question which problems of a

¹⁷ Exception : "Moldova Suverana" and "Ekonomicheskoe Obozrenie"

¹⁸ "Luceafarul", 20 Sept. 2002.

¹⁹ Ibid.

contemporary woman are rarely covered by mass media participants of the poll named 28 subjects, many of which are compound. (See: www.owl.ru/win/research/womentop.htm). Many of these subjects were not covered by Moldovan mass media not only in the examined period, but during the last 10 years.

- Women's work pressure and unemployment, professional discrimination, competition with men when applying for positions requiring high skills and ability to take responsibility, women's leadership;
- Formal equity of women and men;
- Quality of life, women's poverty;
- Provincial women;
- Raising awareness of self-sufficiency, self-esteem;
- Problems of education and spirituality.

This fact is even more upsetting in the conditions when there is a number of successfully working women's NGOs, whose experience needs and is worth of advocating and highlighting.

The narrow choice of subjects addressed to women and a small circle of women who get media's attention is not a mere mistake or imperfection of journalists. This fact reflects the attitude to women in the society: women can be ignored until they commit something unusual (positive or negative). It is the reflection of the position of women in the society: washing-cooking-reproducing machine, which should only be interested in the issues necessary for undisturbed functioning. ("You are a woman. That is why: one – lay down; two – do it quiet." Mihail Jvanetskii). It is a stereotype producing other stereotypes.

Distorted Mirror of the Press

What are the images of those few in number women depicted by Moldovan journalists? We should notice the so called portrait stories – materials simply describing one or another woman – were not published in the investigated period of time. Women are present in materials of various genres – interviews on different occasions, articles about industrial enterprises where women happened to work, or feature stories. The analysis of these materials demonstrates that although they were written about different people on various occasions one can easily predict the succession of questions and possible answer of the interviewee, which points to the existence of stereotypical approach to creation of women's images. We could divide these images into two groups: better off and unfortunate women.

Thus, the better off women in the Moldovan press are the following:

Woman-politician (CEO).

An imperative component of such image is plain origin of the character. (“I am a plain village girl”, “My parents were living at a train station”, “I finished a boarding school”). Later a woman of this type had to climb the career staircase from a clerk (accountant, salesperson, teacher, or engineer) to the very top; she is energetic, organized, and ambitious; she considers her success in career as something self explanatory as she pays a lot of attention to her professional growth; as a rule she is a member of one or another party. At the same time her private life is either particularly successful (love from the high school times, successful children) or rather lonely, but still she is surrounded by wonderful kids. Only journalists of “*Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie*” do not ask family-related questions like “Who is doing the dishes in your house?” Representatives of other newspapers can not keep from asking about household routine, even when they are interviewing a female minister on the occasion of a new national budget.

Business woman.

Almost all characteristics of the previous type apply to this image with the only exception of an “unusual” occupation (journalists can not help being amazed by this fact even when the woman

managed a store for a long time before privatizing it and becoming its owner). An obligatory set of features includes primary capital accumulation by the means of street retail trade, going to fitness club, organization of public holidays for employees, and patronage of something. Kitchen, clothes washing, cleaning, children, and grandchildren – all these elements are present, making a businesswoman look “human”, and what is more – this is what she enjoys doing most of all. “I tried to hire a housekeeper, but gave up the idea soon. I do everything myself – cook, wash windows, clean,” – says a forehanded businesswoman (as characterized by the interviewing journalist) Anna Litr, general director of Audit-Concret company. But for all that neither the journalist nor her interviewee noticed that several minutes ago when answering the question about free time Anna said “When I have such a possibility, I cook something for my son”.²⁰

Woman-actress (singer)

In contrast to the previous types this woman can originate from the family of professional actors, musicians, in the worst case – simple, but adoring music family. She works her way hard to the stage (another option – she gets there by a lucky chance). As a rule she is not particularly adapted to life, although we came across several exceptions able to hammer in a nail. The ability to sew and knit is always stressed when applicable. (If to take several articles by granted, the majority of Moldovan singers create their stage costumes out of nothing all by themselves.) The family life is in most cases happy (although in actual fact this image oftentimes turns to be a myth). Children are a requirement. None of the materials escaped household-related questions and expected “I can do everything around the house” replies. (All this applies to the articles about local actresses and musicians. For obvious reasons materials about foreign stars do not touch any household issues.)

It looks like by this “domestication” of their business characters journalists are attempting to move them near those readers who are not successful in career in order to demonstrate that there is nothing specific about business and everyone can reach the top. In reality, however, the narrow circle of successful women’s characters covered in the press as well as a standard set of techniques

²⁰ “Nezavisimaia Moldova” 7 March 2002.

of depiction has a certain negative influence. First of all, dozens of women are convinced that if they did not manage to open a business of their own, or become a politician, their life is a failure and they are not worth being respected. Secondly, the traditional opinion saying that no matter what a woman is doing in her life, she should not forget her household responsibilities (and this is particularly true for those women who did not manage to succeed in career) is strongly projected.

Here is one of the demonstrative examples of the traditional attitude to women in a happy (according to the article) family. Journalist Vasilii Buchkovskii narrates about a family of a herder Alexandr Repeshko, who already has 4 sons aged from 2 to 13. “The mother of the kids is in the maternity hospital. Any day this family is expecting the fifth child. Now it should be a girl. They wish it happened sooner...” Let us think for a moment about the reasons of such impatience. Maybe the happy family misses their mother or it is too difficult for the father to deal with 4 kids? Or perhaps they family wants to see the newborn baby? Not at all. The explanation is quite simple. “This year’s harvest of apples is ready to be garnered. There is a need in working hands. Valentina is about to come back from the hospital soon. When she is back to the field, we will have one problem solved.”²¹

Ill-fated women are:

Woman-victim.

This is one of the most favorite characters of feature stories published in various newspapers, but most often in “Luceafarul”. Her professional occupation is of no importance; in most cases it is not even mentioned. The character can be a victim of unhappy love, despots-parents or tyrant-husband. One of the most popular versions of the latest time is a victim of economic crisis forced to sell herself. The required features are attractive appearance, lamblike all forgetting nature, super naivety edging with imbecility. If such a woman is not beaten to death by her tyrant, she might kill him.

²¹ “Novoe Vremea” 23 August 2002.

Woman-prostitute.

The interest to this type was especially high in late 80s – mid 90s. As a rule victims from other categories would sooner or later join this circle. Perhaps, after the transition the life of these women was considered to become more interesting as journalists described with pleasure if not envy new interior of the apartments, clothes, parties, paying particular attention to the income part incomparable with salaries of teachers or nurses. Recently another tendency came up, namely description of the “dark” side of such life – dirty clients, group sex, or slaughtering. However, these aspects get significantly less attention than going out to restaurants and driving expensive cars.

Publications about women of both types are in most cases descriptive rather than analytical. The “victim”-type articles demonstrate 2 options of finding a way out of a difficult situation: becoming a streetwalker or a murderer. As journalists admit it, sometimes such publications become sort of guidelines for those poor in spirit.

“You are not for sale”

Probably this is exactly the case with the articles which appeared in the press in the framework of an anti-trafficking campaign conducted under the motto “You are not for sale”.

Migration of the capable of working population from post-communist countries including Moldova, which is considered to be the poorest East European country, has acquired organized mass scale character long time ago. However, if migrating men earn their living and the living of their families left in Moldova by hard, yet work, then women are believed to join the rows of prostitutes and sex slaves. In order to stop or at least diminish the scale of this occurrence a number of international agencies such as the International Migration Organization launched an anti-trafficking campaign. One of the components of the project was organization of the raising awareness mass media events, i.e. publication of materials revealing the true nature of trafficking in human beings, broadcasting of PSAs. Organizers of the campaign conducted a huge preliminary work with journalists which included a series of workshops, round table discussions, contest for the best publication, etc. All this resulted in... absolutely identical articles narrating how innocent

Moldovan girls are captured by cruel and sly swindlers and finally end up in brothels of different countries, mostly Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania and Italy. Undoubtedly these articles were aimed at warning inexperienced fellow countrywomen against dangerous attempts to earn living in another country without having any professional skills and knowing foreign languages. However, the effect was quite the opposite. The articles providing detailed description of the way from the girls' homes to the place of "employment" have not so far, according to the data of involved NGOs, scared anyone or made someone to come back from the slavery. This is rather natural since the abundance of negative information causes the loss of ability to perceive it. At the same time the articles provided precise information where and whom to address to receive the permission to leave the country.

The author of the article "Poor Lisa" Mihail Prijbyliskii ("Nezavisimaia Moldova", 24 May 2002) writes: "Young girls confused by the publications on the assigned subject, girls who have never thought before of moving abroad, began to show their interest, ask their acquaintances who were abroad whether the devil is so terrible as he is painted. Stories which are most likely to be told in response are far from being of any help to traffic fighters. Those who came back after several years of working in other countries would be able to buy flats and cars, fashionable clothes and jewelry. All these facts increased the number of people willing to leave the country for good. The majority of girls do not even care where to leave for; they just want to move away. Those, who end up being beaten or raped, consider that it was merely a bad luck. All they learn from a negative experience is that they should make another attempt to run away and find another shelter, or in the worst case – to change the location, considering that in Europe it is much easier than even in NIS region." "Victims" actions seem to prove the opinion of the journalist. Thus, when the police arrested 2 souteneurs in the airport of the Moldovan capital who attempted to transport 5 girls to Italy, 4 out of 5 girls were sorry that they lost the opportunity and the money spent on the legalization of papers. In an interview given to a reporter of the newspaper "Kishinevskie novosti" on September 23, 2002 the girls confessed they would do all possible to leave the country for good.

The character of another article was sold three times – by a relative, by a female friend, and finally by her husband. She would return to Moldova three times and then leave again. Having gone through slaughtering, humiliation, work in brothels the girl is going to leave the country again because she is sure no one will ever be able to cheat her again. (“Nezavisimaia Moldova”, 7 July 2002).

Besides making migration attractive, such publications formed a negative image of Moldovan women both internally and externally. It is doubtful that anyone in the country knows how many women and men have migrated from Moldova and how many of them are engaged in prostitution. According to the data of the women-journalists club “Zece Plus” this figure reaches 800 000. If it were so, then the streets of the capital city of the country would resemble a desert.) Yet, as the ex-Soviet president Mihail Gorbachiov used to say, “the process is moving”. Public opinion of Moldovan women was formed, and now any Moldovan girl younger than 100 years old is seen as a potential hooker in all foreign embassies. Needless to say that passport control officers examine the blue Moldovan passport with particular attention when it belongs to a woman of fertile age. And the press, trying on the one hand to warn naïve girls and women against the dangers of body trade, on the other hand is doing its best to demonstrate that exactly this body is the most important aspect of any woman.

Pretty woman

If textual materials about women are not of particular interest to Moldovan mass media, then visual images of women can be found in all publications. The majority of these images are pictures of world famous actresses, models, singers, rarely sportswomen. Local women are almost never on the pages of newspapers unless they are winners of numerous beauty contests, actresses or singers. In both cases mass media are mostly interested in the body. The more naked a woman is, the more provocative she looks, the greater chances are that this picture will be published in “Flux”, “jurnal de Chisinau”, “Saptamana”, “Timpul”. Even pretending to belong to official circles “Nezavisimaia Moldova” can not keep from publishing at least once a week a photo of an unknown fatal beauty on

the last part of the edition. (It is worth mentioning that images of men are very rare; even when we speak of Hollywood stars their photos usually include a beautiful woman next to the star. Needless to say that photos of naked men are not published at all). For the sake of fairness we have to say that several newspapers publish only images of business ladies in a business environment (“Moldova Suverana”, “Stolitsa”, “Capitala”, “Ekonomicheskoe Obozrenie”, “Delovaia Gazeta”). Unfortunately, these images are so boring and identical that oftentimes it seems that it is one photograph moving from one newspaper to another. Moreover, even if an article narrates of a nice person and obviously requires to be illustrated by a couple of pictures, it is more likely that we will see one formal photo (the character sitting at her desk in a strict business suit with her hair carefully arranged). At the same time scaring articles about trafficking will be illustrated by the pictures of sexy good looking young ladies whose appearance does not correspond to the description of the cruel reality of their life. Yet, the triumph of sexism-based approach to visual images is the article about Easter holidays on the pages of “Nezavisimaia Moldova” published on the eve of this most respected religious day in the country. The article about folk traditions is titled by a phrase from the material itself “In the old times a naked young woman put into a plow had to plow a furrow around the village”. The material is illustrated by a picture of a naked woman slightly covered by lingerie.

The idea that body and appearance is the most important aspect in a woman is promoted by numerous articles about beauty contests. The authors of such articles stress that participation in these contests will let women attract attention and find a job abroad. Is it possible to fight migration of women by publishing articles like “The beauty of our women is in demand abroad”? The same idea is supported by the mandatory questions journalists feel obliged to ask their interviewees about haircuts, makeup, clothes. (It is amazing but none of the 12 interviews with women-managers published in 2001 included questions about the kind of music, books, films the interviewee liked.)

Articles about women where women are nothing but bodies leave even a more depressing impression. Authors of such materials keep discussing and savoring female figures, legs, breasts and emotions men have observing women’s delights. Thus, on July 26, 2002 the weekly “Timpul”

spent the biggest part of its last page on the discussion of the opinion of men about topless sunbathing. The interviewees were selected from political and art elite of the country. The desire of the editor to spice up the newspaper is well understandable, yet should women be considered to be a piece of meat, the freshness and palatability of which has to be discussed in public?

Conclusion

This analysis by no means should be considered exhaustive and comprehensive. However, it allows for making certain conclusions which might be of use to journalists, women's NGOs, educators and politicians.

First of all, we should mention that women-related issues are not of a particular interest to Moldovan mass media. Publications about women, women's problems or materials targeted at women occupy rather insignificant place in the leading republican newspapers.

Moldovan mass media cover women's problems objectively with a strong accent on selected issues, which are treated the same way in almost all publications. At the same time the spectrum of issues which could be highlighted to reflect the role of women in the contemporary Moldovan society and help women to advance in this society is much wider.

Moldovan mass media manipulate several stereotypical images of women (both visual and textual). On the one hand, these images do not let the reading audience to see real women and understand their interests. On the other hand, these stereotypes prevent women from self-identification in the society, significantly lower their self-esteem and become the foundation of a distorted notion of women's possibilities and destiny. All these facts affect the social status of women and shape firm stereotypes of behavior at the younger generation.