

To be truthful, I am tired of writing about the transportation muddle at the Kondopoga Pulp and Paper Combine. In the course of the last eighteen months, "Pravda" has already published five "rockets" along with some alarming press coverage from Kondopoga and has personally criticised the Minister of Railways and the directors of the Ministry of the Timber Industry and the Oktyabrskaya Railroad for the disruption of planned shipments of newsprint.

The Ministry of Railways located some reserves of freight cars and the situation was smoothed out, at least for the present. But in recent days another distress signal has been received from Kondopoga: "We are overstocked with paper and there are no freight cars to remove it." Meanwhile, the printing presses where "Pravda", "Izvestiya", "Trud", "Sovetskii Sport" and other editions are run off are on the brink of shutting down on account of the paper famine.

It is unfortunate that no press photographer was present when I visited Kondopoga, for words are inadequate to describe what I saw. In many towns, the last stocks of paper have been used up and a number of rotary presses are being shut down. But at the Kondopoga Combine it is impossible to get near the largest of the papermaking machines. The vast machine rooms of the paper mills, the aisles between the machines, the passages and the corridors have become glutted with multi-tonne rolls of newsprint. Highly skilled machinists, machine tenders, controllers and engineering and technical employees along with auxiliary personnel, were forced to abandon their work stations at high-speed units turning out 25 to 30 tonnes of newsprint an hour, and by the sweat of their brow move the huge rolls of paper across the territory of the combine, so as to create some free space. Only a tiny spark would be needed and disaster would be inevitable. Two months ago there was a major fire at the Combine. The investigation agencies are still trying to determine the causes.