

Some Further Thoughts on the Paper Shortage

IN THE QUAGMIRE OF STAGNATION

The truth is that even though the USSR leads the world in stocks of standing timber it currently occupies 49th place in the per capita consumption of paper and paperboard. And who knows what tomorrow will bring... Even to satisfy the country's minimal requirements a portion of the paper must be purchased through imports, using convertible currency. The scarcity of paper, like a heavy weight, is dragging down our entire culture. Until very recently the Soviet Union was regarded as the most literate country in the world. Now however, there is talk of the imminent danger of the intellectual pauperization of our people.

According to our information the USSR produces 5.8 times less pulp than the USA does, 7 times less paper and paperboard, 13 times less writing and printing paper and 48 times less sanitary and toilet paper. While we consume 34 kg of paper per capita, with them it is almost 300.

Although Finland logs approximately a tenth of the volume of timber extracted in the USSR they produce almost the same amount of paper that we do, which is about 6 million tonnes a year.

Overall, about 0.7 per cent of the gross national product is accounted for by the pulp and paper industry, which is one of the most capital intensive but also highly profitable sectors of the economy.