

ENVIRONMENT

Critical Situation at Svetogorsk Pulp and Paper Combine Requires Immediate Infusion of Currency to Import Machinery and Combat Pollution

"Seventeen years ago, when the rebuilding of the Svetogorsk Combine began, pines and birches were to be seen on Budenny Street and swallows were singing.... Noone had any inkling that after the commissioning of the new factories, not only would the birches and the swallows disappear, but even the mosquitoes". (Excerpt from a letter to the newspaper "Vyborgskii Kommunist" by the townsfolk of Svetogorsk).

Indeed, the residents of present-day Svetogorsk are not to be envied. The authors of the plan for rebuilding the Combine have made sure of that. The expanding industrial complex has advanced in the direction of the town and having "swallowed up" the health protection zone, is about to encroach upon the residential sections. While it may be that the planners had counted on ideal operating conditions from the ecological point of view (although the likelihood is that they simply had not even given a thought to this aspect), only now are the housing units being literally bathed in the clouds of dust and gas emanating from the pulp and paper mills. Moreover, some of these emissions are exceeding the maximum permissible concentrations by tens and even hundreds of times.

Methylmercaptan, hydrogen sulphide, caustic soda - this is by no means the entire atmospheric "bouquet" that the Svetogorsk residents are breathing. Also, liquid effluents from the enterprise are entering the Vuoksi River and from there, Lake Ladoga.