

Ambitious Pollution Control Programme Hampered by
Equipment Shortage and Scarcity of Foreign Currency

The USSR State Committee for the Environment has in its possession a document analysing observational data on air quality in 534 urban centres. The document reveals that the content of sulphur dioxide in the air was 20 per cent higher in 1988 than in 1987, and that of formaldehyde, 8 per cent higher. This is mainly on account of harmful substances emitted by enterprises of the USSR Ministry of the Chemical Industry and Ministry of the Timber Industry (USSR Minlesprom). Within Minlesprom, the worst offenders are Archangel, Bratsk, Baykal'sk, Kaliningrad and Amursk.

Pollution of such rivers as the Voloshka and Puksa (Archangel Oblast), Pel'shna (Vologda Oblast) and Vikhoreva (Irkutsk Oblast) and of many other bodies of water is on the conscience of workers in the sector.

The Deputy Head of USSR Minlesprom's Directorate of Nature Conservation and Water Use, V. Zvyagin, stated that the atmosphere at Archangel is currently being polluted by two pulp and paper combines: Archangel and Solombala. The maximum permissible concentration of methyl mercaptan is being exceeded in their emissions by at least ten times.

The problem can only be solved by building nature conservation structures. Some work has already begun, as part of a programme agreed with the Oblast Executive Committee and sub-units of the RSFSR Ministry of Water Utilization and Control (Minvodkhoz) and the USSR State Committee for Hydrometeorology (Gosgidromet).