

The subscribers, on ceasing to receive their beloved editions, unleashed a storm of protest directed at the publishing houses. "Argumenty i Fakty" fell behind by several editions, amounting to an entire one time run of the weekly. It is becoming more and more difficult to buy newspapers at the stands. The shelves of the kiosks maintained by "Soyuzpechat" are cleared in a matter of minutes. Even with the major newspapers a question as to whether they will be issued the next day is frequently left unanswered.

The fact that the demand for newspapers is not being fully met has come to be regarded by irate readers as an encroachment on the intellectual life of society, a strike against glasnost and democracy, and ultimately - against perestroika itself. Under the pressure of mass displeasure, publishers and journalists have been swamped with telephone calls.

On January 25 "Pravda" published an appeal addressed to the sector's workers and engineering and technical personnel, asking them to display "political understanding" of the situation and do everything necessary to ensure the uninterrupted supply of the printing houses with paper, pursuant to existing contracts.

Such understanding was indeed manifested, for the labour collectives of the integrated paper mills piled on the pressure. In January and February the overall plan for production of newsprint was overfulfilled. However, the situation with respect to shipments of finished product deteriorated: the railway workers let them down, which led to anxious moments at the publishing houses.