

PULP AND PAPER

Is What Paper We Manufacture Being Put to Good Use?

Who has failed to notice the thousands of books and leaflets that lie undisturbed for ages on the shelves of our book shops? There are thick ones and thin ones, some bound in artificial leather and others in glossy dust-covers. They are a dead weight both for the market and for society at large. They represent the bottomless pit of incompetent management.

Official statistics indicate that of the books printed in 1982-84, more than 34 million were not sold. Over the past three to four years (the publishing industry usually does not have current statistics at hand), approximately 60% of the printed brochures and more than 30% of the books on highly-specialized topics, were not sold. Some of these items are written off if possible, but the majority of them become an "albatross" hanging around the book industry's neck. The state has to pay huge amounts just to store them.

Let's not even consider the losses stemming directly from printing operations (although it is quite obvious that a great deal of electricity was wasted for no good reason, that all the equipment was operating in vain, and that the staff still had to be paid), and let's not even determine the amount of printer's ink used that was manufactured by our own chemical industry and then scattered to the wind. We will simply confine ourselves to the figures that are closer to us. In the course of a year, the country's printers receive 1,060,000 tonnes of paper for their presses. In the same period 300,000 tonnes of waste paper from books and periodicals alone winds up as secondary raw material. How much of the same type of paper is simply burned? No-one knows exactly.