

More on the Paper Shortage

The teacher Elena Fedorovna Sapunkova from Vorkuta is demanding to know why the supplement to "Sovetskaya Rossiya" has not appeared? In November of last year it was reported in "Pravda" that the supplement would be issued in 1990. And still there is no sign of it. The explanation is brief: there is no paper. The regrettable fact is that Russia - the land of forests - cannot find the paper for its own newspaper.

The printing industry is suffocating for lack of paper. It is already safe to say that the schoolchildren will begin the next school year without sufficient text books. Here and there, printing plants are being forced to shut down their presses due to the lack of raw material.

The crisis is the result of prolonged neglect of the pulp-and-paper industry. Its situation today is lamentable. Only 25 of the 157 enterprises (mills) were built after 1960, and of the 380 papermaking machines only 5.6 per cent have been in service for less than 15 years. As much as 65 per cent of the plant is completely worn out.

According to data supplied by the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of the USSR Ministry of the Timber Industry, the requirement of the Soviet economy for paper and paperboard is at best only being satisfied to the extent of 60 per cent. The shortage of packing paper is resulting in a 10 per cent shortfall in the nation's shipments of mineral fertilizers and cement, and in undershipments of 100,000 tonnes of fish, vegetables and other foodstuffs.