

Incidentally, the republic's per capita paper consumption is 42.8 kilograms, as compared to 34 for the country as a whole. For some reason, they do not mention this in the squares and streets of Riga. Nor for that matter, do they refer to the fact that the Sloka mill has been producing pulp since 1898, that is for more than 90 years, and only now for some reason has it been declared "Public Enemy No. 1".

It is true that even earlier, in the seventies, some disturbing criticisms had been printed with respect to Sloka, which were not without substance. At that time, there were still no purification works here, and they did not use the new pulp cooking technology, while the mill boiler-houses were operating on smoky, fuming fuel oil, instead of on gas, as they do today.

I wish that the people protesting the existence of the Sloka pulp and paper mill would understand me correctly. The author of these lines is also opposed to the idea that factory smokestacks should loom near the wonderful sandy beaches and pine forests; that in the water, instead of fish there swim so-called "suspended and biologically active organic substances", so that bathing in the sea has to be forbidden. I agree that a pulp and paper mill does not belong in the neighborhood of one of the finest resorts in the country, any more than a pulp and paper combine belongs on Lake Baikal or the "Hammer and Sickle" metallurgical plant belongs in the center of Moscow, ten minutes walk from Red Square.

However, we must take a sensible approach, having regard to national and economic interests. For example, in order to close down Sloka and transfer production to another site, hundreds of