

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES

An Unsolicited Ordeal

The facts reported to the editor's office by employees at the infectious disease unit of the Muezerskii Central Rayon Hospital were scandalous: "Our situation is critical. The rooms are stuffy and they stink. The toilets do not work; in the entire department there is only one solitary washbasin. It is crowded. Meanwhile, the new brick wing has been standing empty practically since the day it was completed, since remaining there for more than an hour is dangerous for a healthy individual, let alone for a patient--it is cold and damp and the air is stiffling..."

The hot water was finally turned on "in honor" of the journalists' arrival at the hospital (the first and only time before this occasion had been on the day that the wing was completed). On the other hand, everything else remained exactly as it had been described in the letter. The [old] wooden wing did not look like a medical facility, on the contrary, it looked like a breeding ground for infection. It was freezing cold in the new, deserted building and, in fact, it produced a feeling that it was much colder in the rooms than it was outside in the street.

The agony of the Muezerskii Hospital began in 1970, when one of the two wooden wings was attacked by fungus. It was decided to pull down the old wing and to build a new one in its place--a brick wing.