

ARCTIC

Thaw in the Arctic

A threat hangs over the Arctic, the world's "weather kitchen." Another sign of the danger are recent data that show that the ozone layer above the Arctic has deteriorated 6 percent in the last 15 years--years of intense development by man in the high latitudes. The alarm is being sounded not just by scientists and the public, but also by political activists in various countries.

What is the arctic? This is not an idle question since there are no universally accepted geographic boundaries, and interest in the north's riches is also constantly growing in such countries as the FRG, England and Japan--countries which no one could call "arctic." The first question gives rise to others. Who should enjoy preferential rights in the arctic? Which countries are responsible for protecting its fragile ecological balance and natural resources.

There is still no universal agreement as to whether the arctic begins at the tree line or at the arctic circle. The fact that five countries, the USSR, USA, Canada, Norway and Denmark, are "arctic" is beyond question. Countries that are considered to be within the arctic region include Sweden, Finland and Iceland, which have territories situated above the arctic circle and conduct economic and scientific activities at high latitudes.

Northern countries have always been more "ecologically aware". It is no accident that the head of the International Commission on the