

"Mankind's interest in the Sixth Continent has not slackened. The opposite seems to be the case. How do you explain this?"

"Well, this is a unique natural laboratory, a region with enormous biological, mineral and water resources. Thanks to joint efforts over the past three decades by the international antarctic community, we have determined the basic patterns of nature in the southern polar region and established the role of both the Antarctic and the Antarctic Ocean in global physical, chemical and biological processes. The Antarctic region, with its extremely low thermal balance, fulfills the role of the Earth's largest "refrigerator". Any change here has an immediate impact on the atmosphere and on the waters of the world's oceans. And as the results from drilling have shown, the continent's ice cap and deposits in the Antarctic Ocean are a special kind of archive of information on nature for a period of several hundred thousand years (climatic phenomena, the chemical composition of the atmosphere, cosmic matter)."

"Can climatic changes be more easily seen in polar regions?"

"Since it is the region most distant from industrial centres, the Antarctic contains, for example, unique conditions for studying the status of the ozone layer in the atmosphere. It is critically important to know the relationship of natural and man-made factors in the so-called "ozone hole" observed over the Antarctic in the 80's. On this point, scientists are ever mindful that the Antarctic ice shield contains enough water to raise the level of the world's oceans by 60 meters. Even small manifestations of the greenhouse effect have a measurable impact on ocean levels: we know that these have been rising constantly for centuries."