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Armed Forces on a Northern Frontier

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problem of deploying and using such weapons by both sides.

Carl Bildt provides a summary of changes in the security environment in Northern Europe from a Swedish point of view. He indicates that while everyone agrees that things have changed in Northern Europe, there is some dispute about the extent of these changes and their implications. Bildt focuses his attention on the buildup of the Soviet SSBN/SLBM force in the Arctic waters, and the submarine incursions in Sweden's and Norway's territorial waters. But he also analyzes the problems concerning the energy and legal issues in the Arctic, prospects and problems of arms control, and finally on national defense efforts of various countries in the European north.

Bildt concludes that the strategic importance of Northern Europe will continue to increase in the years ahead for both opposing superpowers. Probably rightly, he thinks that Moscow's ultimate objective is to see the entire area neutralized. This reviewer speculates that despite *glasnost* and the *new thinking* the Soviet notion of neutrality still means neutrality on the Finnish rather than on the Swedish model. But only the future can bear out, or refute, that thought.

MILAN VEGO
Alexandria, Va.

Nielson, J.M. *Armed Forces on a Northern Frontier: The Military in*

Alaska's History, 1867-1987. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988. 298pp.

For many Americans of the "lower 48," Alaska is an intriguing combination of familiar stereotype and unknown reality. A contribution such as *Armed Forces on a Northern Frontier*, which focuses on a locale often taken for granted, yet (unfairly) not often thought about in connection with anything other than dogsled races and oil spills, is a timely and welcome event.

Armed Forces is the product of considerable labor, that appears to be a labor of love—the author's enthusiasm for Alaska is evident throughout. In fact, it is a massive book; the nominal page length of 298 pages, plus acknowledgements and foreword, is inflated by the fact that the book is printed in a tiny 600 words-per-page typeface only slightly larger than that of a telephone directory. *Armed Forces* is packed with detail. For this reason, it is bound to be a valuable tool for anyone researching the subject of Alaska.

Unfortunately, the book does not achieve the author's aim of providing "a usable understanding of Alaska's past as a process of interrelated or connected events, people, and ideas." It delivers a tremendous quantity of facts, but a major cause of its lack of focus is that portions of the book were apparently developed and presented as separate papers. The rationale for the chapter structure is not evident; while chronological ordering is suggested by the title,

the chapters are not strictly faithful to this. The general lack of convergence of the chapters gives the impression that they may have been produced as separate papers, which later were glued together to produce a book. While this can be a legitimate way to create a book, the chapters should form an integrated whole; else, the resulting product is a compendium, not a book.

There would appear to be enough raw information in *Armed Forces* to lead to several, very good books on Alaska. If this information had been sifted and interpreted, a valuable contribution might have been made to a better understanding of our 49th state. But I found *Armed Forces* to be much like a cluttered attic: likely to have valuable and interesting objects, but hard to decipher as a pattern. A reader with a general curiosity about this subject would be advised to consult other sources first.

PATRICK G. SULLIVAN, JR.
Herndon, Virginia

Weems, John Edward. *Peary: The Explorer and the Man*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. 362pp. \$11.95

Originally published in 1967, Weems' biography of Robert E. Peary and his search for the North Pole has been reissued just in time for the latest round of the controversy over his polar exploration. While the Cook portion of the affair seems to have gone away, new calculations based on Peary's apparent sextant

observations indicate that he might have been as much as 110 miles away from the pole on April 6th of 1909.

Regardless of the merits of this newest turn of the controversy, Peary remains an important and impressive figure in naval and polar exploration. Shortly after his graduation from Bowdoin College in 1877, Peary was appointed as a civil engineer in the Navy and began a career of major exploration, that was broken only by the tedium of late 19th Century naval staff service. He seems to have been a good civil engineer, but his heart lay with polar exploration as it had from his undergraduate days. The Navy—whether from lack of interest or remarkable foresight—granted him an unusual number of leaves of absence and eventually the support to pursue his passion.

Peary appears to have been thinking about the Pole when he was surveying a Nicaraguan canal route in 1885. Taking leave from the Navy in 1886, he set out to explore the west coast of Greenland and to test his ideas for polar travel. With additional leaves from the Navy and support from the American Geographical Society, he returned to Greenland in the winters of 1891/92 and 1893/94 and again in the summers of 1896 and 1897.

In 1898, despite the general opposition of the Navy but with the intervention of President McKinley, Peary was directed to "continue his great work in the North." He was given a five year leave at half pay. When the Spanish-American War