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**THE RIVER CONGO: The discovery, exploration and exploitation of the world's most dramatic river**

by Peter Forbath  
Harper, 1977, 404 pp. \$15  
L of C 77-3749  
ISBN 0-06-122490-1

"Congo: the two sudden syllables beat on the imagination like a jungle drum . . ." Peter Forbath's prologue sounds like the start of a penny dreadful. But the story of the Congo often justifies florid prose. Long after the 15th century, when a Portuguese captain discovered the river's mouth, the Congo basin was the scene of extraordinary adventuring on the part of European explorers driven by ego and religious obsession to search for the true sources of the Nile in East Africa. (Some, like David Livingstone, died without knowing that the real achievement had been to discover the Congo's headwaters.) The story has its heroes and martyrs, including the imposing black reformer, Affonso, who ruled the Kingdom of Kongo in the early 16th century, and Beatriz, the black Jeanne d'Arc, burned at the stake in 1706. But the Congo is also synonymous with almost unrelieved savagery—at least 4 million slaves taken from the region by the Portuguese, at least 5 million people slain during the personal rule of the so-called Free State by Belgium's Leopold II (1895-1908).

**KRAAL AND CASTLE: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa**

by Richard Elphick  
Yale, 1977, 266 pp. \$17.50  
L of C 76-49723  
ISBN 0-300-02012-0

When Dutch sea captain Jan van Riebeeck established the first trading post at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, he found there a friendly, brown-skinned, pastoral people. One hundred years later, with white settlement a fact, the Khoikhoi, known to the Dutch as Hottentots, were gone—the first victims of racial conflict in South African history. Yet there had been no genocide and no enslavement. The Khoikhoi, who had only recently changed from a hunting to a pastoral economy, succumbed to a combination of subtle economic and social forces that are carefully traced in this study by a young historian at Wesleyan University. The Dutch takeover of grazing land, recruitment of adult males into menial wage labor, venereal and other ailments to which the Khoikhoi were not immune—all fundamentally undermined their traditional society. Once they were gone, the stage was set for the continuing conflict between white South Africans and the Bantu tribes, unre-

lated to the Khoikhoi—and much better equipped to resist.

*Contemporary Affairs*

**THE LATIN AMERICANS:  
Their Love-Hate Relation-  
ship with the United States**

by Carlos Rangel  
Harcourt, 1977  
302 pp. \$11.95  
L of C 77-73121  
ISBN 0-15-148795-2

Venezuelan journalist and TV commentator Carlos Rangel sets out to demolish a series of myths that Latin Americans have long cherished about themselves and the United States. He slashes away at the “noble savage” image of pre-Hispanic society, the “black legend” of the enormous destruction wrought by colonial Spain, the alleged spiritual superiority of the Latin Americans over their materialistic Yankee neighbors. In his view, Latin American society’s shortcomings have bred a profound love-hate relationship vis à vis the obvious success of the United States. Without much detailed analysis of the facts of Latin American society, Rangel goes on to make his own claims—about the prevalence of personal selfishness, the absence of a work ethic, the tacit Church-Marxist alliance—while shooting down those of his leftist critics. The result: his provocative, stimulating, and unabashedly pro-American book (originally titled in Spanish “From the Good Savage to the Good Revolutionary”) is often stronger on assertion than evidence.

**COMING INTO THE  
COUNTRY**

by John McPhee  
Farrar, 1977  
438 pp. \$10.95  
L of C 77-12249  
ISBN 0-374-12645-3

John McPhee can take the most unpromising subject—atoms, oranges, lawns—and weave a work of reportage that is rich, complex, and, to the reader, effortless. *Coming into the Country* is his most ambitious—and successful—attempt to date. Its subject: Alaska today. McPhee moves from Arctic wilderness to urban sprawl to the regions between, always with an eye for history, an ear for conversation, and a sure sense of the telling vignette. Essentially, he says, Alaska is a foreign country “significantly populated with Americans.” Twice the size of Texas but with half the population of Dallas, it has yet to recover from statehood. Meanwhile, Eskimos, Indians, governments, and corporations are dividing and subdividing some 300 million