

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

wilderness acres. The stakes are high, the rules absurd, and "the squares seem to be moving as well as the checkers."

**THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF
THE TELEPHONE**

edited by Ithiel de Sola Pool
M.I.T., 1977
502 pp. \$15.95
L of C 77-4110
ISBN 0-262-16066-8

"We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas, but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate," wrote Henry David Thoreau (*Walden*, 1854). That the comment remains relevant is clear from one of the bits of information provided in this collection of 21 essays from a series of seminars at M.I.T. marking the centennial of the telephone: Even though the telephone now links not just Maine and Texas but every part of the world, about half of all office calls are made to phones within two miles of the originating station. The same is true of home phones. And about one-fifth of all calls from residences are to just one other number; half to only five different numbers. The subject matter in Pool's volume ranges broadly. It includes the telephone in history, literature, urban development, and its relation to women, geography, use of time and language. The stated goal of describing "how much difference . . . a device invented 100 years ago . . . made in our lives" is not achieved, but these essays may stimulate further research on an intriguing topic.

**THE GIANTS: Russia and
America**

by Richard J. Barnet
Simon & Schuster, 1977
191 pp. \$8.95
L of C 77-9004
ISBN 0-671-22741-6

The "threat of unintended war is growing," Richard Barnet fears. The leftist revisionist scholar, whose previous works have sharply criticized American Cold War strategy, now questions the benefits of Soviet-American détente. Russia, he argues, has gained more than the United States, and American misgivings toward foreign intervention since Vietnam and Watergate may encourage Soviet adventurism abroad. SALT I has failed to slow dangerous qualitative improvements in nuclear weaponry; the rise in East-West trade may win no more Soviet political concessions than did the U.S.-led boycott of the 1950s; and the economic and cultural "convergence" of Soviet-bloc and Western societies will not necessarily improve the prospects for peace. He suggests no remedies.