
conomic theory has always been flawed. It has taken the nation rather than the city as the basic economic unit. Certain types of cities—what she terms “import-replacing” cities—are, along with their surrounding regions, the true engines of prosperity and growth. Jacobs’s explanation of what makes an import-replacing city—including a base of industrial and entrepreneurial “skills,” a network of ties with the surrounding region—draws on the experiences of specific cities, ranging from 14th-century Venice to 20th-century Tokyo. She distinguishes these wealth-generating centers from cities that enjoy a false prosperity: The last 30 years saw Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, go from boom to bust, as the world market for leather collapsed—a pattern typical of cities dependent on a single source of wealth. Cities that depend on transplanted industries, such as the U.S. Sun Belt cities, are equally fragile. Jacobs’s theory has wide ramifications: It helps explain why the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) failed to produce long-term economic prosperity (the region never developed an import-replacing city), and why capital cities, such as London, often prosper during periods of national economic decline.

**THE CROWDED EARTH:
People and the Politics
of Population**
by Pranay Gupte
Norton, 1984
349 pp. \$17.95

The grim statistics of overpopulation have been recorded in countless studies and reports, but Gupte, a former *New York Times* reporter, does what no mere chart or table can do: He brings his readers face to face with the problem. He also shows, in the course of his five-continent tour, how the pressure of too many people affects health care, migration, education, urbanization, and the environment. Everywhere the focus is on people. A Nigerian, oblivious to the fact that Africa has—and can ill afford—the world’s highest birthrate, describes his 15 children as a “matter of his manhood.” A cab driver in Mexico City complains: “We are choking to death here. It is not just the pollution but also the sheer boredom of being in traffic jams all the time.” (The three million autos in this metropolis of 17 million people combine with

35,000 factories to spew forth three million tons of nitrous oxide into the air each year.) In Cairo's Khan al Khalili—the "city of the living dead," Gupte calls it—there are about 1.4 people to every square foot. Gupte notes some hopeful trends: In such countries as Bali, Sri Lanka, and South Korea, where women have attended school and found jobs outside the home, birthrates have declined. Still, the war on population growth is far from won. By the end of this century, at least 11 countries' populations will exceed the 100 million mark. Gupte sees the need for more birth-control programs such as the one Mexico employed to bring down its population growth rate, during one five-year period, from 3.5 percent to 2.5 percent, the fastest decline registered by any nation in recent history.

**MEASURING MILITARY
POWER: The Soviet Air
Threat to Europe**
by Joshua M. Epstein
Princeton, 1984
288 pp. \$22.50

Why, in assessing the Soviet military threat, do U.S. analysts tend to assume that the Russian military is free from the inefficiencies that plague the rest of Soviet society? Epstein, a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow, looks specifically at the USSR's tactical air wings committed to the European theater, but his methods and conclusions have broader application. New jet aircraft and increasingly sophisticated weapons systems have posed even more problems for the Soviets than they have for the U.S. Air Force, contends Epstein. The reason: the absence of any Soviet intermediate maintenance capability between the forward Air Regiments and the rear depot. As a result, fighter aircraft with anything more than simple mechanical failures are "deadlined" for lengthy periods. Furthermore, writes Epstein, Soviet pilot training is woefully inadequate to the complex demands of modern combat. Epstein applies a mathematical "threat assessment" formula to various hypothetical Soviet assaults on NATO forces. And while he finds that the Soviet threat is overestimated, his conclusion is not comforting: Uncertain of their ability to sustain operations, Soviet military leaders are likely to favor a "short war" doctrine, involving mass, surprise, and pre-emption.