

## Arab Summit

may not support the contention that there was actual disinvestment in 1961-62, the year of the survey. If so little of the borrowing has gone into capital formation, where has the balance gone?

The estimates of the assets of cultivators are, however, much more revealing to the extent that they indicate marked regional variations. The assets of cultivators in Punjab are almost three times as large as those in West Bengal, Assam and Orissa — the three depressed Eastern States. If this is true of averages, the disparity between a small cultivator in West Bengal or Assam and the big cultivator in Punjab and Gujarat can well be imagined. One can very well see even from the few data that are published that unless much more radical steps are taken, the disparity between the depressed and advanced States would tend to increase rather than remain constant.

By combining the estimates of the survey with the available statistics of cooperative credit, it appears that cooperatives met about 20 to 22 per cent of the total credit needs of the cultivators in 1961-62 compared to only 3 per cent a decade earlier. The figures are particularly impressive in Maharashtra and Gujarat where the proportion has increased from less than 16 per cent to more than 40 per cent in some areas. The performance of cooperatives in the Eastern States, however, still remained stagnant. The inference may not be quite warranted but it is strongly suggested that it may be the easier availability of co-operative credit in Gujarat which accounts for the State having largest volume of (average) capital formation for 'reporting households' in the whole of India. If that be so, then cooperative credit may have been responsible for widening instead of narrowing the disparity between the more and the less fortunate.

This is about all that can be said without being accused of making unwarranted deductions from the limited data that have been presented. The full report, it is to be hoped, will meet the expectation of supplying a reliable study of the changes over what is perhaps the most significant decade in India's rural history in recent times,

THE Arab States may be riven by deep differences which not uncommonly lead to bloodshed and war. But opposition to Israel never fails to bring them together. Last week, the Israeli magic was again at work. President Nasser's call to an Arab Summit in Cairo to take steps against the diversion of the waters of Jordan River by Israel brought thirteen heads of State, including such open enemies as President Sallal of Republican Yemen and King Saud of Saudi Arabia, Ben Bella of Algeria and King Hassan of Morocco and Amin Al-Hafez of Syria who made no secret of his hostility to Nasser even at the Summit.

Jordan River flows through Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel. Though three-fourths of its head waters are in Arab territory, the two big natural reservoirs, Lake Huleh and Lake Tiberias are in Israel. The Israeli plan to siphon off water from Lake Tiberias near the Syrian border has been known for long and now the installations are ready and the diversion of waters is expected to begin in March. The waters, tapped at Israel's northern extremity, will flow through pipelines down the length of the country into the Negev desert in the South. Burning hot in summer, windswept in winter and almost entirely without water, the Negev, which covers about half the total area of Israel, is now hardly inhabited. But as long as the UAR denies Israel free use of the Suez Canal, it is Israel's corridor for trade with Asia and East Africa. More important, on developing Negev depend Israel's ability to take in more immigrants. It is hoped that when the region is fully developed it can be populated with some two million people which is only slightly less than Israel's present population.

The waters of Jordan now run waste and, even after diversion by Israel, the Arab States in the lower reaches of the river will not be starved of water. What really worries the Arabs is the prospect of the development of Negev which will enable Israel to double her population as well as her effective land area.

The Arabs can try to meet the Israeli move by diverting the three tributaries of the river which ate in Arab territory and the Summit in Cairo has agreed upon a joint project for this purpose to be financed by all the Arab States. This is not a new idea; it was considered when Israel first announced her intention to divert waters from Lake Tiberias, but no action has been taken on it all these years. The reason, apart from the fact that the Arabs seldom get down to doing anything together, is that it will not really stop the Israeli scheme, since initially at any rate Israel's requirements can be met from the tributaries in her own territory.

The only way the Arabs can prevent the Israeli scheme from coming into operation, therefore, is to physically destroy the water-works installed across the Syrian border. This is what they are now threatening to do. It was unanimously agreed at Cairo to create a unified Arab military command under an Egyptian general to support Arab plans to change the course of the head-waters flowing into Lake Tiberias as well as to thwart the Israeli scheme. But it is unlikely that this threat will daunt Israel; it is even less likely that the Arabs will be able to carry it out, for the Arab States are in no position, politically or militarily, to launch a full scale war against Israel.

There is, of course, another way out of the impasse. It is to try for a negotiated division of the water of Jordan River. A scheme for sharing the waters was proposed as early as in 1954 by a special envoy appointed by President Eisenhower which gave 60 per cent of the waters to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and 40 per cent to Israel, but any negotiated settlement is unthinkable for the Arabs who refuse to recognise the very existence of Israel.

Israel is a political fact and by refusing to look at it the Arabs cannot drive it out of existence. Instead they are led to take up positions which leave them, as in the present ease, with a war or a political climb-down as the only alternatives.