

In the third place, the socialist thought began to gain momentum in the Arab World immediately after the war. One reason for its growing impact was the victory of the October Revolution in Russia. Lenin's theory of "imperialism the highest stage of capitalism" appealed to many Arab intellectuals who embraced the idea of an alliance between their people and the Soviet Union. The first decade after the war witnessed the spread of revolutionary socialist cells in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The emerging socialists repudiated altogether the democratic ideals of the pre-war generation. Instead they applied Marxism to the study of Middle Eastern society.

It is significant to note that while Marx and Engels threw light on the process of social evolution and investigated pre-capitalist historic stage, Arab Marxists and especially communists gave only little consideration to the understanding of the Arab nationalist movement and its socio-economic formations. They hastily embarked on a program befitting an industrial nation. They tried to organize proletarian mass parties in countries without an industrial proletariat.²⁶ Moreover, they failed to understand Arab nationalism in the context of the wider struggle for national independence and social advancement of the colonial peoples. In fact they alienated the Arab nationalists by assuming that the nation

²⁶Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (New York: Praeger, 1956), p. 271.