**International:** **Epochal Reasons Behind the Closure of the "First International" Including New Nationalism

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　　**Abstract:
　　In the 1860s and 1870s, the new development of globalization and industrialization in Europe and North America promoted the emergence of the First International. At the same time, the rise of modern nations and nationalism in this context became an important reason for the split and eventual disintegration of the First International. The universal establishment and consolidation of "modern nation states" further weakened the power of the internal unity of the First International, making national and state positions become the basic propositions of workers' organizations in various countries. Since then, the international communist movement has been constantly affected by "narrow national views".** **The reason for the split of the First International was certainly not entirely due to national and nationalist issues, but in any case, it is a fundamental factor that cannot be ignored.**Regarding the reasons for the dissolution of the First International, the popular explanations in China in the past has been: the harsh suppression by reactionary governments of various countries after the failure of the Paris Commune; the struggle between different internal ideologies and factions and the resulting split; and the new developments in the European and American workers' movement. In this article I will argue that the vigorous development of European nationalism under the conditions of capitalist globalization in the 1860s and 1870s, and the universal establishment and consolidation of nation-states, were the fundamental two reasons that led to the inevitable dissolution of the International.
　　Keywords: First International, Modern Nationalism

The development of World socialism is closely related to developments in capitalism, and the world proletariat is closely related to the world [bourgeoisie](https://zhidao.baidu.com/search?word=%E8%B5%84%E4%BA%A7%E9%98%B6%E7%BA%A7&fr=iknow_pc_qb_highlight). Therefore, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and their relationship constitute the basic relation in the evolution of capitalist society and development of world socialist movement.

The establishment of the International Workingmen's Association (also known as the First International or simply "International") in September 1864 was an important event in the history of the international communist movement.

Marx and Engels once placed high political expectations on it and wanted to make it "a center for communication and cooperation between workers' groups in various countries pursuing a common goal, namely the protection, development and complete liberation of the working class." Marx devoted all his efforts to protecting and promoting the growth of the International, especially the struggle with various internal thoughts and factions, which consumed almost 10 years of his energy. However, the painstaking maintenance ultimately led to its inevitable dissolution.

**Why did Marx fail to achieve the political goals that he had worked so hard for the International?**

 The popular explanation for the dissolution of the International is mainly attributed to the suppression and encirclement of reactionary governments in various countries after the failure of the Paris Commune; the struggle between different internal ideologies and factions and the resulting split; and the so-called new development of the European and American workers' movement. Re-studying history, I have found that the vigorous development of European nationalism and the universal establishment and consolidation of nation-states under the conditions of globalization in the 1860s and 1870s can be the fundamental reason why the International was inevitably heading for dissolution.

　　**Part 1.**
　　The establishment of the International was first of all the inevitable result of the industrialization of European countries and the great development of globalization in the mid-19th century. Industrialization has greatly changed the class structure of European countries. In the 1860s, the number of industrial workers in Europe reached 8.74 million, and the number of handicraft workers was 11.23 million. Due to the improvement of the level of large-scale machine production and the training of the factory system, the organization, consciousness and militancy of the working class in major industrial countries have been strengthened compared with before the 1850s.

Therefore, starting from the London construction workers' strike in July 1859, the workers' movement flourished in major European countries and influenced the rotation of the European political stage in various organizational activities. The cross-border flow of people and the intensification of competition between countries driven by globalization have also made workers' organizations that have initially achieved domestic unity realize the need to further strengthen international unity. For example, when British workers went to strike, capitalists often disrupt the strike by hiring workers from other European countries. Therefore, as one of the initiators of the international movement, the British trade union needed to rely on the mutual solidarity of workers from various countries to maintain the results of the strike.
　　However, industrialization and globalization have not only brought about the development of the workers' movement, but also the rise of national movements; in fact, the 1860s and 1870s were the period of rapid growth of modern nations and the prevalence of nationalism in Europe. Therefore, what we have long ignored is that the international reality has faced severe challenges from the issue of nation and nationalism since its birth.
　　Modern ethnology regards ethnic group and nation as two concepts that are both related and different. "Ethnic group", which was once understood as a nation, mainly refers to a human group formed by differences in religious beliefs, language, customs and habits; while the concept of "nation" "reflects the combination of subjective attitudes and objective political will environment", and its prominent features are strong subjective consciousness and clear regionality. The entire history of modern human civilization is inseparable from the formation, evolution and influence of "nation". Eric Hobsbawm said: If you do not understand the concept of "nation" and the words derived from it, it is simply impossible to explain the history of the last two centuries of mankind. In ancient Europe, the so-called "English", "French", etc. were mainly geographical concepts, not political entities.

From the 16th to the 18th century, the expansion of trade, commerce and market relations, the reform of technology, especially military technology, various political thoughts and the restoration of classical political thought, the Renaissance and other factors led to the situation of disputes among heroes. Napoleon's conquest and counter-conquest across Europe greatly stimulated and triggered a wave of nationalism.

For the industrially developed nations in Western Europe, global colonial expansion was carried out under the national flag. The need for competition constantly strengthened the economic dependence on the nation-state, and they always experienced the expansion of national superiority in the process of conquering the world. For backward countries, the process of resisting foreign invasion or being colonized is inevitably a period of comprehensive formation and unprecedented rise of national consciousness and "motherland" consciousness.

In his 1913 article “Critical Remarks on the National Question”, Lenin pointed out: **“Developing capitalism has two historical trends on the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, and the establishment of national states. The second is the development and increasing frequency of various contacts between nations, the elimination of national barriers, and the formation of international unity in capital, general economic life, politics, science, etc.”**

The two trends summarized by Lenin happened to exist at the same time in the late 19th century. So, on the one hand, there was the birth of the International, and on the other hand, there was the prosperity of nations and the great development of nationalism. And at this time, the national question was no longer limited to industrially developed countries. Mazzini, who once led the Italian national independence, believed that there were only eleven “real nations” in Europe in 1850.

 However, after the 1870s, nationalist movements could even emerge in unexpected remote corners. Moreover, the biggest feature of the national movement during this period was the identification of nation with state, the splitting of “ethnic groups”, and the establishment of nation states became an increasingly common phenomenon. Therefore, "British", "French", "Germans" and so on, which were originally mainly geographical concepts, also have rich political connotations.
　　Compared with political trends such as socialism and liberalism, nationalism is more likely to influence the thoughts and feelings of the majority of citizens and is expressed and manifested in international contacts and exchanges.

 The idea of ​​the world's working class achieving international unity had already emerged in the late 18th century, for example, in the works of Thomas Paine and the Manifesto of the British Correspondence Association, and the utopian socialist Gracchus Babeuf also discussed this issue. In the first half of the 19th century, three international organizations that reflected the workers' desire for unity emerged one after another: the League of the Just, the Brotherhood of Democrats, and the International Association. However, these organizations did not have much influence and were all very "short-lived".

**The fundamental reason lies in the contradiction between the workers' tendency to social unity and the activities of political exiles, which were mostly nationalistic.** The coexistence of the workers' internal unity requirements and nationalist expressions in international organizations is essentially consistent with the two historical trends of globalization revealed by Lenin above.

By the time of the First International, under the background of the universal establishment of nation-states driven by nationalism, on the one hand, unity has developed from the previous behavior of individuals or small groups to the overall organizational participation focusing on the country as a unit. On the other hand, nationalism also has more nationalist characteristics. The reason for the establishment of the International was that the workers' organizations of Britain, France and Germany supported Poland in launching a national uprising against Russia. However, during the existence of the International, national issues often became the focus of debate between different factions.

**It can be said that the struggle between Marxist and non-Marxist ideas and factions that we have summarized in the past was actually mainly revolved around** **nation or nationalism issue.**

For example, as a major member group of the International, the British Trade Unions obviously disagreed with the views of the International General Committee represented by Marx on the Irish issue.

Marx believed that the task of the International was "to give priority to the conflict between Britain and Ireland everywhere and to openly stand on the side of Ireland everywhere." However, out of the need to safeguard the interests of their own nation, the Trade Unions showed a narrow nationalist position everywhere, which eventually led to a complete break between the International General Committee and the British Trade Unions. For example, one of the important differences of opinion with Proudhonism was how to deal with the Polish issue.

The General Council headed by Marx advocated the independence of Poland, because from the perspective of the International, and wrote: "national independence is the basis of all international cooperation"; the Poles "can only become an international nation when they truly become a national nation."

However, since Germany belonged to the nation that occupied Poland, the Proudhonists, from the standpoint of "Germans", clearly opposed the Polish people's struggle for national independence and rejected international's support for the Polish national liberation movement.

In addition, in the middle and late stages, workers' organizations of Mediterranean coastal countries represented by Italy became active within the First International, and the Italian group which was prone to nationalism opposed the "decision monopoly and centralized" attitude of a few people controlling the International.

Since because "this attitude of the Italian group has been combined with the already inflated nationalism", this attitude resulted in a split and resistance to Marx's views. The reason for the split of the First International was certainly not entirely due to national and nationalist issues, but in any case, it is a fundamental factor that cannot be ignored.

　　**Part 2.**

　　The reason why the national issue eventually evolved into an important factor in the disintegration of the International is closely linked to the achievements made in the "modern state" construction in Europe during this period. The establishment and development of modern states were essentially consistent with the process of capitalist industrialization. Marx described in The Communist Manifesto: **"The bourgeoisie is increasingly destroying the dispersion of the means of production, property, and population. It is agglomerating the population, concentrating the means of production, concentrating property in the hands of a few. The inevitable result is political centralization. The separate regions, which were almost allied, with different interests, laws, governments, and tariffs, have now been united into a single government, laws, national class interests, tariffs, and nation."**

Since the British bourgeois revolution ended in a compromise with the feudal dynasty in 1688, the door to the drastic transformation from an autocratic state to a modern nation-state in European history was mainly opened by the French Revolution. From the early 19th century to the 1860s and 1870s, major industrial countries were in the process of transitioning to modern states politically.

For example, in France, there was a fierce struggle between parliament and feudal autocratic forces, restoration and anti-restoration, bourgeois republicans and bourgeois conservatives... It was not until the late period of Louis Bonaparte's Second Empire that France's politics began to stabilize, and it also truly became a nation-state in the modern sense.

Unlike Britain and France, which had achieved national unity earlier, the German nation continued to experience the pain of feudal division from the late Middle Ages to the early modern times.

It was not until 1871 that the long-divided Germany finally became a unified modern nation-state with a common language, common social psychology and common economic interests.

The Italian people have long launched a "national renaissance movement" to strive for national independence and national unity, but it was not until 1871 that they first appeared on the European political stage as a modern nation-state.

After gaining national independence, the United States faced the opposition between industrial capitalism in the North and agricultural slavery in the South. After the Civil War, it became a powerful and homogeneous nation-state. Therefore, roughly in the 1860s and 1870s, the major countries in Western Europe and North America, on the basis of achieving unity, roughly completed the fundamental transformation from ancient countries to modern countries, and modern nation-states became the core of the emerging international order.
　　The "modernity" of modern states was prominently manifested in "political ruling apparatuses that are clearly distinguished from both rulers and the ruled, enjoy supreme administrative power within a demarcated area, are supported by a monopoly of violence, and enjoy legitimacy as a result of the minimum support and loyalty of the people to the state."

This interpretation, like many definitions in political analysis, may be controversial, but what is unanimous is the recognition of the legitimacy of rule. The rule of ancient states was of the nature of "divine right of kings", but after the rise of modern liberal political thought, "sacred rights" were increasingly challenged and eroded, and the national identity and loyalty within a fixed territory and nation became a goal that rulers had to strive for.

Some people argue that in modern Western Europe, national identity and loyalty were mainly obtained through three channels: in the political field - the expansion of universal suffrage and military service; in the ideological and cultural field - compulsory education and the cultivation of nationalist thoughts and emotions; in the economic field - taxation and social welfare policies.

After the second industrial revolution and the realization of national unity and state unity, the bourgeoisie of major Western European countries needed to use these means to consolidate their political rule. Take the expansion of democratic rights in Britain, France and Germany as an example:
　　- Although Britain established a political structure with democratic connotations by the "Glorious Revolution" in 1688, due to the lack of effective forms, the "state" essentially degenerated into a tool of oligarchy. In 1831, there were only 350,000 voters (2.6%) among the 13 million people in Britain. However, after the reform in 1867, the property requirements for voters were basically abolished, and most urban working-class people began to have the right to vote; shortly afterwards, 60% of male citizens in the country were granted the right to vote.
　　- Since 1789, the right to vote of citizens in France has been revised several times. The 1793 Constitution recognized universal suffrage for men and stipulated that members of parliament were directly elected; the Charter of Louis XVIII emphasized that only those who paid direct taxes of more than 300 francs had the right to vote, so only 1/10 of the 30 million French people had the right to vote; during the Second Empire, freedom regressed and universal suffrage became a decoration of the empire. However, in 1860, the "Liberal Empire" period began, and in May 1864, workers gained the right to strike; in May 1870, through a referendum, Napoleon III successfully won the "Second Reconstruction of the Empire."
　　- After the unification of Germany, the "Imperial Constitution" of 1871 also stipulated the principle of democratic elections, but only emphasized that men under the age of 25, men and women over the age of 25 who received poor relief, but soldiers had no right to vote.
　　The extension of the right to vote to the working class and the majority of the society has given the bourgeois state power the connotation of modern political legitimacy. We can accuse it of "hypocrisy" and the nature of maintaining its class rule. However, when a regime is mainly elected by society, any class that attempts to seize power will be charged with "illegality" unless the rulers are extremely reactionary or corrupt.

Moreover, in major bourgeois countries in Western Europe and North America, the working class has not only begun to gain political rights, but also has continued to gain economic benefits from the "state" as social reform measures were promoted.

For example, in the UK, in 1870, the government promulgated the Education Act, requiring children aged 5-13 to receive compulsory education; in 1875, the "Employers and Workers Act" was promulgated to safeguard workers' employment rights; at the same time, the British Parliament passed the "Public Health Act", which determined that municipal authorities were responsible for local health management. With the increasing consolidation of bourgeois political rule, the practice of workers fighting for their own rights and interests through strikes has gradually been permitted by law. All of this, coupled with the establishment of the status and role of the state in economic life, cannot but make people have a more concrete and personal feeling and understanding of the "motherland".

When the relationship between the state and society becomes more harmonious due to the expansion of national identity and national integrity, it becomes more and more important to have one's own country; when the nation-state penetrates people's social life to a deeper extent and nationalism plays a role in international exchanges more widely, in many cases, nationality cannot but overwhelm class nature and have a negative impact on political activities.

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx put forward the proposition that "workers have no motherland". However, with the universal establishment and consolidation of modern states in the late 19th century, the concept of "fatherland" has become more and more popular and has gradually become an obstacle to the international unity of workers.

In 1869, the German Social Democratic Workers' Party was established. It was the first proletarian party in the world to exist within the scope of a nation-state. In 1875, it merged with the Lassallean faction and changed its name to the "German Socialist Workers' Party" (after 1890, it was renamed the "German Social Democratic Party").

In the "Gotha Program" adopted by the 1875 merger conference of the two factions, the German party clearly positioned itself as "first of all to carry out activities within the scope of the modern nation-state" and regarded "the international fraternal union of all nations" as a secondary or later matter.

Marx pointed out that the party "Program" was colored and permeated with Lassalle's "most narrow national view". Marx criticized: Since the "modern nation-state" "is itself economically within the 'scope of the world market' and politically within the 'scope of the state system'", then as a proletarian party, it cannot ignore its "international responsibilities".

Unfortunately, however, the "Program" "does not mention a single word about the international responsibilities of the German working class!" "In fact, the internationalism of this program is incalculably worse than that of the free trade faction." If we think about it in the context of the above, we will not find it strange at all about the national positions of the German Social Democratic Party.

　　**Part 3.**
　　Looking back on history, we cannot rule out Marx's idea of ​​building the International into a world-wide communist organization. Engels once pointed out that among all the delegates who attended the founding conference of the International, "only one person clearly understood what was happening and what should be established; he was the one who issued the call to the world as early as 1848, 'Workers of the world, unite!'"

At the beginning of the establishment of the International, Marx believed that the development of the workers' movement in European countries had reached a point where it was possible to achieve the political goal of the unity of the proletariat of the whole world, and therefore the purpose of establishing the International was "to replace those socialist or semi-socialist sects with the fighting organizations of the true working class." However, in the context of the universal establishment of modern nations and national states, in fact, it could only be by the establishment and development of socialist parties in various countries. In 1875, the year when the International announced its dissolution, Marx recognized that the International Workingmen's Association was "the first attempt to establish a central organ" for the international unity of the proletariat; at the same time, he also pointed out that "this attempt... after the failure of the Paris Commune, could no longer continue in its first historical form."

**What was the root cause?**

Marx did not give a clear explanation, or the matter was not so clear at the time, or Marx was unwilling to admit it.

But looking from today, it seems that it is mainly due to the universal establishment and consolidation of national states. In the late 19th century, not only the major capitalist industrial developed countries in Western Europe and North America were nationalized, but also the industrially underdeveloped countries (such as Eastern Europe and Northern Europe) and underdeveloped countries began to establish modern nation-states.

Under the modern state form, whether it is the competition between developed capitalist countries or the confrontation between developed and underdeveloped countries, it would inevitably form a serious obstacle to the international unity of the proletariat and make the international communist movement continue to be adversely affected by the "narrow national view".

However, because the problem has just begun to emerge, perhaps because of the subjective overemphasis on the international unity of the proletariat, as Hobsbawm pointed out, Marx believed that the issue of nation and its national state was "secondary" to socialists at that time. We certainly cannot be too harsh on Marx, because it is often the case that the understanding and research of practical problems lag behind the development of facts themselves.

The national issue has already played an important role in European politics and world politics in the 19th century, and the entire international academic community paid attention to it and conducted in-depth research in the 20th century.

 In 1907, Austrian social democratic theorist Otto Bauer pointed out that "science has almost completely left the national question to lyric poets, essayists, and orators in national assemblies, parliaments, and beer tables."

 However, what was secondary in Marx's thought later became the core of the debate in the Second International. Because it constituted a fundamental challenge and even conflict to the basic theory of socialism and its movement’s development requirements, it was the social democrats in the Second International, such as Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Otto Bauer, and later Lenin, who first conducted scientific research on the issue of nation and nationalism.

 Engels later concluded that the International Workingmen's Association "belongs to the Second Empire period" and that this "old form has become outdated."

 Engels's summary was linked to the understanding of the newly emerging modern states, but this idea was long ignored by later generations. If we think about the many setbacks and lessons learned in the international communist movement in the 20th century, especially the mistakes of the Third International, we will have a more accurate grasp of the nature of the problem and its consequences. Lenin later commented on the First International in 1919: **"It laid the foundation for the international organization of workers and prepared the workers for a revolutionary attack on capital"; "It laid the foundation for the international proletariat's struggle for socialism".**　　In summarizing the history of the international communist movement in the 20th century, Lenin's evaluation was obviously too "high" praise, because at least after the International, there was no real large-scale action of workers "making a revolutionary attack on capital" and "fighting for socialism" in developed countries. Against the background of the rise of nation-states, the First International ultimately failed to complete the tasks and goals designed by Marx for it, but from today's perspective, it was the world's first international non-governmental organization that clearly aimed to fight against capitalist globalization under the leadership of the West and achieved significant influence; it was established earlier than the first intergovernmental organization in the context of globalization, the International Telegraph Union (1865). Even with this fact alone, the First International has an established value and historical status and be always remembered by the contemporary world.

　　**Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 2, People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 610.
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　　The Complete Works of Lenin, 2nd Chinese edition, Vol. 24, p. 129.
　　See Jacques Droz, Democratic Socialism: 1864-1960, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1985, p. 4.
　　The Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 32, p. 656.
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　　See the Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 19, pp. 25-26; boldfaced words belong to the original text.
　　The Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 22, p. 398.
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　　The Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 33, pp. 643, 644.
　　The Selected Works of Lenin, Vol. 3, People's Publishing House, 1995, pp. 790, 791.**