

TOPIC 2: THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS



The formation of the League	Was Woodrow Wilson's idea. (US President)
	The first 26 Articles of the Treaty of Versailles formed the Covenant of the League.
	All members had to sign up to the Covenant
	Article 10 most important – no league member would attack another. Principle of Collective Security.
	Based in Geneva, Switzerland.
	Began in 1920
Describe the main aims of the League	To promote international cooperation between nations with the aim of using mediation / arbitration to prevent conflict.
	To bring about world disarmament.
	To uphold the Treaty of Versailles (This proved to be one of its weaknesses)
	To provide 'collective' security to its members as a deterrent to aggression.
Describe the structure of the League. (Overview)	An Assembly in which all member states sat. (42 members from the start)
	A Council to deal with crisis as they arose.
	A Court of International Justice (To which members states could refer for a judgement in a dispute)
	A Secretariat to act as a professional Civil Service to the league.
	Various agencies (commissions) with specific responsibilities e.g. a health committee, disarmament, drugs, refugees, slavery etc.
Describe the League's Assembly	The 'Parliament' in which each member state had a vote.
	It met annually
	Main function to agree membership and budgets.
	The voting system was unanimous.
Describe the League Council	Consisted of 4 permanent and 4 non-permanent members (voted by the Assembly)
	Permanent members were: GB, France, Italy, Japan (joined by Germany in 1926)
	It served as an 'executive' body – dealing with crises as they arose.
	Permanent members had a VETO (Preventing
Describe the sanctions available to the league	Moral sanction – effectively a warning.
	Economic sanctions – potentially very powerful if properly applied.
	Military sanction – League members would assemble a league Army (There was no standing army)
Describe the work of the Commissions	Refugee Commission - In 1921 it helped to assist the approximately 1.5 million people who fled the Russian Revolution of 1917. After WWI, Fridtjof Nansen (Norwegian) took immediate steps and in less than two years managed to repatriate more than 400, 000 prisoners of war to 26 different countries. Nansen received a Nobel Peace prize for his work.
	Slavery Commission – Held a convention (1926) on slavery with the aim of abolishing it. Helped free 200,000 slaves in British owned Sierra Leone. Challenged the use of forced labour to build a bridge in Tanganyika in Burma. Brought down death rate amongst workers from 50% to 4%.
	Health Commission - collected statistical information, spread good practice and sponsored research into infectious diseases. Helped develop vaccines and

	<p>medicines to combat infectious disease such as leprosy and malaria. (Its work was considered highly successful and the commission converted into the WHO after 1945)</p> <p>ILO – International Labour Organisation: Aim to improve working conditions. Banned poisonous lead paint and limited working hours for small children. Campaigns to get employers to improve working conditions and a 48-hour week and an 8-hour day. (Many countries ignored resolutions – afraid they would hurt their own economy) ILO left to ‘expose’ & ‘name and shame’ bad practice.</p>
How successful was the League in achieving disarmament in the 1920s?	Miserable failure.
	The only agreement (1921) was made outside the league – Washington Conference, in which USA, Japan, France and Britain agreed to limit the size of their Navies.
	Germany had disarmed – but no other country managed to!
Explain why some people thought the League was weak from the start.	Did not include the USA (The US Congress rejected it as the US followed a policy of Isolation).
	It was arguably too ambitious / idealistic esp. when many countries were outside the league.
	Other key countries were not members: Germany, Russia, so did not have a truly ‘global’ influence. (Too Eurocentric)
	Had no means of enforcing its rulings, as it had no standing army.
	Rulings of the International Court were ‘advisory’ (not enforceable)
How successful was the league in the 1920s?	
Outline the League ‘successes’ of the 1920s.	Sweden & Finland (Aland Islands) 1921
	Germany & Poland over Upper Silesia (1921)
	Greece & Bulgaria (1925)
	Supported Austria & Hungary from economic collapse.
	Commissions, especially refugee did good work.
Outline the League ‘failures’ of the 1920s.	Failed to prevent the Poles occupying Vilna (1920)
	Could not prevent Italian aggression towards Greece in a dispute over Corfu (1923)
	Failed to establish a functioning disarmament conference (a key League aim)
	It was ignored – most significant agreements were made outside of the league.
Describe what happened in the Vilna incident (1920)	At the end of WWI Vilna had been ceded (given) to Lithuania as their capital.
	The Poles disputed this & invaded Vilna. Lithuania referred to the League.
	The League ordered Poland to withdraw.
	Poland refused; the League could do nothing (It had no army)
	Britain did nothing – it didn’t want to upset Poland (a potential ally against communism)
Describe what happened over the Aland Islands (1921)	The islands lay midway between Finland and Sweden
	The population was Swedish and pressed for control by Sweden but Finland claimed ‘sovereignty’ over the islands.
	The matter was put to the League. Sovereignty was granted to Finland, but agreements were made to ensure the ongoing existence of Swedish culture, language and way of life.

<p>Describe the Corfu incident</p> <p>1923</p>	<p>Crisis was triggered when an Italian general, Tellini, along with others working for a commission to resolve a border dispute between Albania and Greece were murdered in Greek territory.</p>
	<p>In response, Benito Mussolini (Italian leader) issued an ultimatum to Greece.</p>
	<p>Greece rejected it so Mussolini dispatched forces (c 10,000) to bombard and occupy Corfu.</p>
	<p>Italy 'pressured' the league into making Greece pay 50 million lire in compensation.</p>
<p>Describe the crisis between Greece & Bulgaria (1925)</p>	<p>Greece & Bulgaria had border clashes for a number of years.</p>
	<p>A Greek soldier manning a border post wandered a few paces into Bulgarian territory to retrieve a dog. (War of the Stray Dog)</p>
	<p>A keen-eyed sentry took aim and shot the intruding Greek soldier dead.</p>
	<p>Given the 'historic' differences, this escalated as the Greek leader (hotheaded Pangalos) order the invasion of Bulgaria.</p>
	<p>Bulgaria appealed to the League – The League put diplomatic pressure on Greece and Greece withdrew.</p>
<p>Was the league successful in the 1920s?</p>	<p>YES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It had proven it could provide effective mediation and had a wider role to play via commissions to make the world a 'better place'. (see examples above) • It contributed to a spirit of 'Internationalism'. • It was unrealistic to think that it would solve every dispute.
	<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It had failed in a major aim – not organising an effective disarmament conference. • 'Successes' were only with weaker countries. • Two members of the Council had taken matters into their own hands (France in the Ruhr, Italy over Corfu) • The main agreement in the 1920s that achieved anything was not the work of the League. (Locarno Treaty 1925) – creating what was called a 'Sprit of Locarno'
<p>What was the Wall Street Crash?</p> <p>1929</p>	<p>Wall St. was the location of the US stock exchange (where stocks & shares are bought & sold)</p>
	<p>US economy was 'overheating' (Boom & bust)</p>
	<p>October 24 1929 (Black Thursday) confidence collapsed – 13 million shares were sold in the panic. By 29 October \$10 billion wiped of share values.</p>
	<p>Many bankruptcies and economic panic contributed to what became a worldwide depression.</p>
<p>Describe the impact of the depression</p>	<p>'When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold.'</p>
	<p>US banks withdrew their global investments. Caused economic instability globally – countries responded with economic protectionism.</p>
	<p>Unemployment a global problem – people turned to extremist politics.</p>
	<p>Nationalism and militarism increased e.g in Germany. Japan and Italy.</p>
	<p>These countries did not believe in international co-operation.</p>
	<p>Japan invaded Manchuria, Italy Abyssinia and Germany an aggressive nationalism leading to WWII.</p>

Describe the Disarmament conference of 1932-34	Germany complained only they had disarmed. They demands military equality.
	They could not agree on what constituted offensive and defensive weapons.
	Did agree on resolutions prohibiting bombing of civilians and chemical warfare – but no progress on ‘how’ to achieve this.
	Britain produced a plan – but it was not supported by the conference.
	Germany used this as an excuse to leave the conference.
	The conference collapsed and Europeans began to rearm!
What happened in Manchuria? 1931 -33	September 1931 – A Japanese owned railway at Mukden (In South Manchuria) was attacked.
	Japan blamed the Chinese and occupied Manchuria in retaliation. (It was most likely sabotage on the part of Japan)
	China appealed to the League – an obvious case of aggression.
	The League ordered Japan to withdraw – Japan ignored the League. Japan installed a ‘puppet’ ruler in Manchuria (Pu Yi)
	The League established a commission to investigate – the Lytton Commission.
Why did the League fail in Manchuria?	Japan was a powerful (and permanent member of the League) – The League had no other powerful authority in the Far East.
	The League had a ‘Eurocentric’ attitude, the crisis was too far away – what could they realistically do? (Lack of resolve)
	Attitudes towards China – some thought Japan was bringing ‘order’ to China, which was a weak and unstable country.
	The Lytton commission was ‘half-hearted’. It took a year to get to Manchuria by which time it was all too late. The report only came in 1932.
	The League, however, could not agree on sanctions , and Britain and France were not prepared to send an army. Not only did the Japanese stay in Manchuria, but in July 1937 they also invaded China.
What happened in Abyssinia? (1935 – 37)	In October 1935 Italy invaded Abyssinia (N.E Africa) After forces had clashed at Wal-Wal in 1934.
	The Italians had a modern well-equipped army & air force that Abyssinia could not resist. Italy's 100,000-strong army invaded Abyssinia . The Italian troops used poison gas and attacked Red Cross hospitals.
	In January 1935, Haile Selassie, the emperor of Abyssinia, asked the League to arbitrate
	The League banned arms sales to either side, and in September 1935, it appointed a five-power committee to arbitrate.
	Sanctions did not include oil nor did Britain cut off access to the Suez canal, which would have hindered the Italians. (The US actually increased oil sales to Italy!)
	Britain and France refused to intervene. Behind the scenes their Foreign Minister, Hoare & Laval proposed to give 2/3rds of Abyssinia to Italy.
	The plan was leaked to the press and publically condemned – embarrassing the league. (Hoare & Laval were sacked)
In the end, the League did almost nothing. By May 1936, Italy had conquered Abyssinia.	

Why did Italy invade Abyssinia?	Revenge – for defeat in the battle of Adowa (humiliating) in 1896.
	Style of leadership – Mussolini needed ‘military victory’ to promote his
	Mussolini wanted to restore Italian ‘glory days’ of the Roman Empire. (Put Italy on the ‘map’ again)
	Economic – Abyssinia had fertile lands and mineral wealth (At a time of depression)
	Opportunity – The League had proved weak over Manchuria.
Why did the league fail in Abyssinia?	The self-interest of Britain & France (Hoare –Laval Pact) – Both desperate to keep Italy as an ally against Germany.
	Attitudes: Britain and France had large empires in Africa – why shouldn’t Italy be allowed the same.
	Sanctions: applied half-heartedly and USA not being in League exposed the frailty of sanctions without the globe’s biggest economy.
	Economic concerns – The British Government was told 30,000 miners jobs were at risk if sanctions were applied

Why did the League fail? (Overview)	
Membership	No USA, and Britain & France both weakened by war. No longer the ‘great powers’ they once were. Some in Britain said if they foresaw the USA not joining, they would have voted not to join themselves. (Had a lack of authority from the outset)
Sanctions	Economic sanctions without the USA weakened the ‘threat’ from the outset. (Proven over Abyssinia) No League Army to enforce a decision.
Power Politics	France and Britain made decision based on their own self-interest rather than that of the league. E.g Vilna, Abyssinia. Italy a permanent member acted in its own interest over Corfu (23) & Abyssinia (35)
Lack of resolve	i.e, Lytton Commission took a year to report over Japan, GB did not close Suez over Abyssinia & Hoare-Laval agreement undermined the League
Collective Security	In reality there were too many smaller nations looking to the League for security, but did not have the resources to make Collective security a reality.