

Was the League of Nations doomed from the start?

KS3 History- Lesson 4 of 4

Enquiry: What kind of Peace was made in 1919?

Ms Gault



What was the League of Nations?

The League of Nations was the idea of Woodrow Wilson, the American President. The League of Nations was an international organisation set up to support future world peace. Wilson believed that the countries of the world needed to speak about their problems and use **diplomacy** to solve them, instead of going to war.

The **covenant** was the rule book of the League of Nations, another way to think of this was that it set out the aims of the League of Nations. These were:

- To stop war.
- **Disarmament.**
- To uphold and enforce the **Treaty of Versailles.**



The Structure of the League of Nations

The League was based in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Assembly

- All member states could send representatives to the Assembly.
- The Assembly was the League's Parliament. It met every year and had the final say on what the League did.
- All nations in the Assembly were equal and could vote on actions.
- The Assembly was too large to react to sudden issues, so the Council was set up which met more often.

The Council

- Britain, France and Italy were permanent members.



Membership of the League of Nations

When the League of Nations was first set up, there were 42 member states. Despite the League being Wilson's idea, the USA was not a member. Germany and other **defeated** nations were not allowed to be members. Finally, Russia was not allowed to join because other countries did not like its **Communist** government.

Britain and France were the most powerful countries in the League. They did not agree about the role that they thought that the League should play. Britain thought the League was a place for discussing ideas. France thought that the League existed to make sure that the Treaty of Versailles was followed by all countries. Because France and Britain had different ideas about how the League should be run, the League was weakened. They were the two strongest **member countries** and they were not working together.



Security Issues

The League was not as strong as Wilson had hoped. Member states were meant to allow the League to use their armies to create a more peaceful world. In practice, however, the member states wanted to keep control of their own armies.



Idealism

The League of Nations was the first ever organisation to have governments from different countries working together for world peace. It was created to try and make sure that people did not have to live through the terrors of the First World War ever again.

The League did do some good work in its early years; for example helping **refugees** to return home and working to end slavery. The International Labour Organisation encouraged governments to improve workers' pay.



Weaknesses

Unfortunately it was difficult for the League to make decisions on anything. This is because all of the states who were members had equal rights to vote and all decisions had to be **unanimous**. This meant that everyone had to agree – if even one member voted against a decision, nothing could happen.

Also, some of the aims of the League of Nations were impossible to achieve because of the attitudes of the member states. For example, in terms of disarmament; France refused to **disarm**, she was too worried about another attack from Germany.

Most importantly, the fact that the USA was not a member, meant that the wealthiest country in the world was not involved. This made it difficult for the League to hold any real power or to actually stop war from breaking out.



Glossary

Covenant: An agreement (in this case, the aims of the League of Nations).

Communist: A theory that property is owned by the community and each person gets everything they need and is seen as equal.

Defeated: The loss of a war.

Diplomacy: Solving international problems through discussion and compromised, not war.

Disarm: The action of reducing the number of weapons a country has.

Disarmament: To reduce the number of weapons a country has.

Idealism: Trying to find perfection

Member state: A country which could vote in the League of Nations.

Refugees: People who have had to leave where they live to find safety. In this case because of war.

Treaty of Versailles: The treaty which set out the terms of peace for Germany after the First World War.



Comprehension Questions

1. What was the League of Nations?
2. What were the four main aims of the League of Nations?
3. What were some of the achievements of the League of Nations?
4. Why was the League of Nations weak from the start?
5. Explain why peace in Europe was not likely to last very long.

