

History Knowledge Organiser

Conflict and tension 1918 - 1939 The League of Nations



Key facts

The idea of American President Woodrow Wilson to bring the world together in peace. It would be a group of countries that would work together to solve world problems.

Aims

- To stop war from breaking out again
- To encourage disarmament
- To improve working conditions
- To tackle deadly diseases

Based in Geneva, Switzerland where the Red Cross was also based.

The USA never joined when the Senate refused to agree.

The plan was to keep peace through collective security, where the countries worked together to keep the peace and look after the interests of every nation.

Structure

The Assembly

Worked like an international parliament. It met once a year on the first Monday of September.
Every country sent one member and had one vote.
All votes had to be unanimous.
When it began there were 42 countries involved.

The Council

The Assembly was too big to react quickly in an emergency. The Council met more regularly and had the power of veto to stop an Assembly vote.
There were four permanent members: Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Four and later nine other countries were non-permanent members.

The Secretariat

The civil service of the League. It was in charge of administration and organising any action the League wanted to take.
It had experts who were responsible for carrying out decision except military issues.



The Permanent Court of International Justice

This was a court of law that would settle international arguments. Any country could bring an issue to the eleven judges and four deputy judges.
The court came to a verdict but this was not compulsory but without an army they could not force countries to follow it. It was elected by the assembly for 11 years.

Special commissions

Special groups to tackle issues the League was worried about including:
The International Labour Organisation (ILO)
The Disarmament Commission
The Health Organisation
The Slavery Commission
The Commission for Refugees
The Permanent Central Opium Board

Membership

Britain 1919 - 1945
France 1919 - 1945
Japan 1919 - 1933
Italy 1919 - 1937
Germany 1926 - 1933
USSR 1934 - 1939
USA never joined
At its largest it had 63 member states.

Strengths

It was written into all of the peace treaties at the end of WW1.
It had a large membership which could work well with mitigation, moral condemnation, and economic sanctions.

Weaknesses

Membership. The USA did not join. The USSR and Germany were not allowed to join. Countries could leave when they wanted to. No army so could not enforce decisions. Decisions were difficult due to unanimous votes and the structure made it slow.

Key dates

25 th March 1919	Lloyd George issued the Fontainebleau Memorandum in support of the League.
1921	Helped free 427 000 prisoners of war.
1922	Recommended banning white lead in paint. Set up refugee camps in Turkey and created the Nansen Passport.
1925	Other drugs now tackled by the newly named Permanent Central Narcotics Board
1928	77 countries set a minimum wage.
1930	Helped Greece set up social insurance.
1933	Tried to appoint a High Commissioner for refugees - mainly Jews from Germany (who voted against it)
1935	Attempted 8 hour day.

KEY VOCABULARY/ TERMS

Assembly, unanimous, veto, Secretariat, civil service, International Labour Organisation (ILO), slavery, refugee, Council, Geneva, collective security, Permanent Court of International Justice, Covenant, mitigation, moral condemnation, economic sanctions