

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The League of Nations, established in 1919, was the first attempt to organize a form of GLOBAL COLLECTIVE SECURITY for all nations.

STATED GOALS OF THE LEAGUE

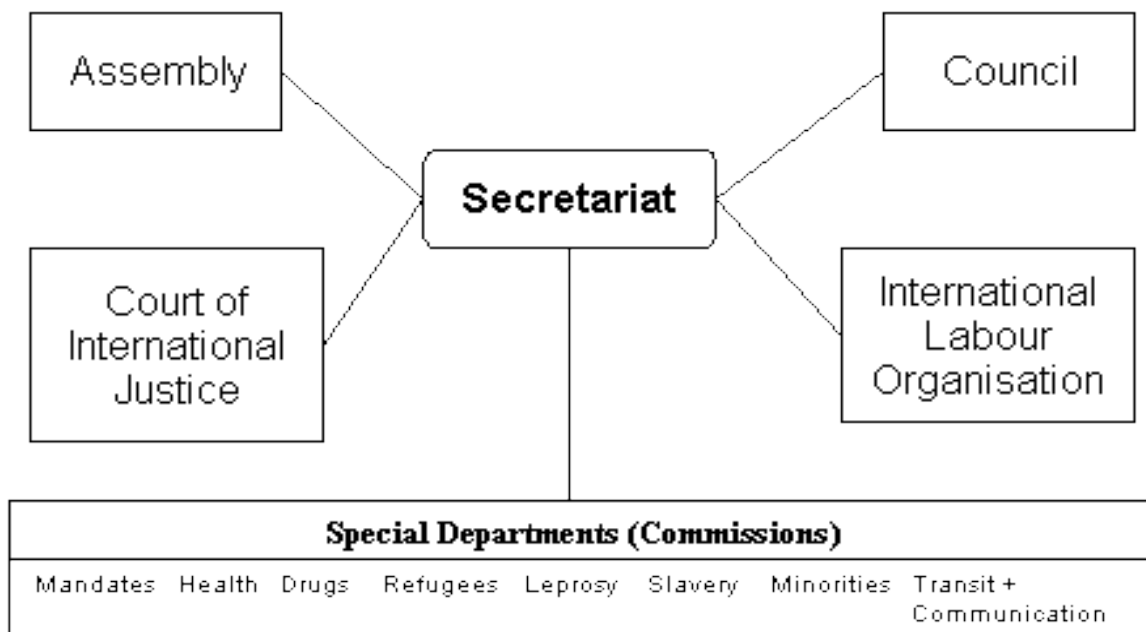
- * international cooperation in business and trade
- * international peace & security
- * disarmament of nations
- * improve global working and living conditions
- * establishment of international law

Security for weaker nations seemed to be promised in Article 10 of the Covenant - "undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression, the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League."

President Wilson was the leading supporter of global collective security. He died before he could convince Americans to ratify the peace treaty. Thus the U.S.A. was NEVER a member of the League of Nations. According to Wilson nations would resolve problems through:

- *discussion
- *arbitration
- * economic sanctions

The Structure of the League of Nations



PROBLEMS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE LEAGUE

* 32 Allied states that signed treaties of peace plus 13 neutral states were invited to join the League but only 23 made the first meeting. By Nov.1920 there were 42 members. In 1937, the last nation, Egypt, joined.

* needed the support of the great powers, yet the U.S.A. never joined - a serious matter if any nation challenged treaty terms

- * Russia was not a member either - Lenin's government not recognized in 1919 --Br. and France worked towards its collapse (due to communist concept of World Revolution. Russia became U.S.S.R. in 1923 yet viewed League as an agency intent on furthering capitalism and imperialism
- * Germany joined in 1926 but withdrew in 1933. Under Hitler, Germany was viewed as a threat to communism, when coupled with Japanese aggression in East, led Stalin's Soviet government to join the League in 1934.
- * Japan left in 1920 over Manchuria
- * Italy left in 1937 over Abyssinia

Success in the 1920s

- With the League's help over 400 000 prisoners of war were returned home
- The slavery Commission brought about the freeing of over 200 000 slaves in British-owned Sierra-Leone and organized raids against slave owners and traders in Burma
- The Health Committee worked hard to defeat leprosy and malaria. It later became the World Health Organization
- Sweden accepted the League's decision to give the Aaland Islands to Finland. The two countries thereby avoided going to war for them
- The League divided Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland after a plebiscite showed a clear divide. Both countries accepted this decision.

Failures of the League

Failure #1: Manchuria

- There was an explosion on the Manchurian railway that ran through China. The Japanese depended on this railway to transport goods into their country, whose natural resources and agriculture were limited by their mountainous terrain.
- The Japanese invaded China on the grounds that it needed to safeguard its railway. However, they later also bombed Shanghai
- China appealed to the League for help and the League ruled that the Japanese should return Manchuria to Chinese rule.
- But Japan continued to invade new areas of China
- The League discussed sanctions but its members were not prepared to send troops to enforce its decision...



Why was it a failure?

- *Japan was too far away
- *The League were worried about offending Japan who was an important member of the League
- *Britain and France were more concerned about the problems resulting from the depression in their own countries
- *Russia, the only country with troops and resources enough to combat the problem quickly in the region, was not a member of the League

Failure 2: The Disarmament conference 1932-3

In February 1932 the League of Nations began the long-awaited disarmament conference.

It produced resolutions to limit the size of artillery and tanks, ban the bombing of civilians and chemical warfare. HOWEVER, nothing was agreed upon as to how they would enforce these limits.

They were also unsure as to what to do about Germany- should all countries disarm to her level or should Germany be allowed to re-arm to the new universal lower level as the TOV had been too harsh?

Failure 3: Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia 1935

- The pale grey areas were Italian territory in eastern Africa.
- You can see why Italy, who wanted to expand her empire, would choose this area of land.
- Italy also wanted revenge after an embarrassing failed attempt to take Abyssinia in 1896

The League Response

*The League was anxious to keep Italy on side. Italy was their best ally against Hitler.

*Britain and France signed an agreement with Mussolini about standing united against Germany and the problem in Abyssinia was not even discussed

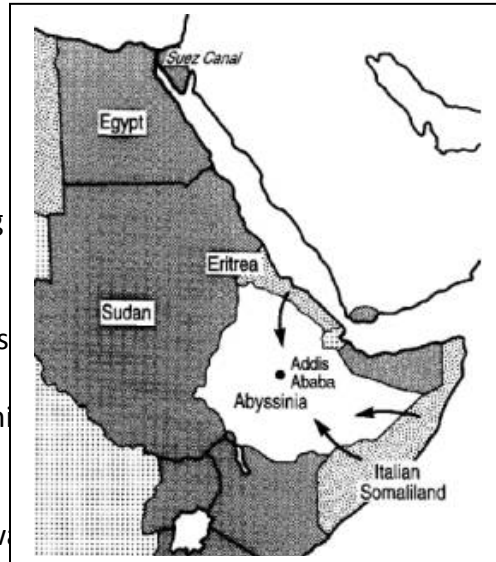
*There was much talking and negotiating but nothing was done by Mussolini.

- Like Japan, Italy was an important member of the League
- Like Japan, Italy wanted to expand its empire
- Unlike Japan, Italy was right on the League's doorstep
- Unlike Japan, Abyssinia had borders with British colonies
- UNLIKE Japan, the League could not claim the problem was too far away to deal with.






This was a very real test for the League.

- October 1935 A full-scale Italian invasion of Abyssinia commenced
- It was a clear sign of aggression and the League's covenant (set of guidelines) made it clear that sanctions should be imposed.
- It banned sales of arms, rubber, metals and loans to Italy.
- However, these sanctions caused economic problems e.g. British coal-workers lost jobs because of ban of exports to Italy
- And Britain and France were making secret plans behind the League's back, offering Mussolini more of Abyssinia in return for stopping his invasion
- Eventually, Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland made many countries unwilling to upset Italy any further, as their support against Hitler seemed crucial.

The League watched helplessly. Mussolini annexed the whole country. The League had failed.



What were the reasons for the League of Nations' failures during the 1930s?

<p><u>Self-interest</u></p> 	<p><u>Absence of important countries</u></p> 	<p><u>Lack of Troops</u></p> 
<p><u>TOV it was meant to protect was unfair</u></p> 	<p><u>Decisions were slow</u></p> 	<p><u>Sanctions were ineffective</u></p> 