

How successful was the League of Nations in the 1920's?

The League of Nations was established after the 1st World War. President Wilson came up with the idea of an organization that could prevent future wars. All countries could become members except for Germany and Russia, who were able to join later. In the early 1920s the League did manage to solve quarrels such as the fight over the Aaland Islands but its weaknesses were soon to become apparent.

Most of the League's successes came from their social reforms. The League helped to solve many refugee problems. It was also strong in organizing plebiscites in countries such as Germany. The League was concerned with a lot of social matters. They improved working conditions, pensions, wages and organized trade unions. These things affected people's everyday lives. The state of the health system improved. This was to the League's advantage because there was a noticeable improvement in people's general standard of living after the war.

Another area of success for the League was the way in which they helped the mandate commission. The League governed the land taken away from Germany and Turkey fairly until it was ready to be independent.

The League did not ignore Austria when it asked for help from them. Instead of refusing, the League helped them solve their problems; this was another of their major earlier successes.

Except for these successes the League failed in many ways. The League did not meet often enough. This resulted in problems, which should have been sorted but would turn into a crisis and sometimes could not be solved at all. The members were reluctant to make a commitment to the League, which meant the whole idea of world order backfire.

Many quarrels over land were brought to the League, and many times the countries involved were not satisfied with the outcomes. In 1921 Germany and Poland were dissatisfied with how Upper Silesia was split up. Instead of giving a reasonable solution, the League made Germany and Poland lose large parts to each other.

The League was not fair towards all countries. A prime example was when Iraq and Turkey both claimed Mosul. Britain favoured Iraq because they were British mandates even though there were mostly Turks living in Mosul. Both these disputes were failures, and caused a lot of bad feeling. Such countries as Italy did not agree with the League of Nations ruling and refused to accept their solutions when problems were brought to them. This proved to be another failure for the League as Italy took their problem to the League of Ambassadors instead.

The league had wanted their members to feel a greater sense of security. They wanted peace through collective security. The idea was for each country to feel safer but this did not seem to happen, partly because of the lack of armed forces and the league had no effective way of making the countries comply with their decisions. The members did not want to disarm and were reluctant to fight and protect the other members.

The covenant of the League was very unreasonable and some of the rules were unrealistic and did not work. The idea of not letting Germany join in the first place was not good as it caused even more hatred towards the Allies. Also, the idea of disarmament did not work because if the whole League fell apart, smaller unstable countries would not be able to defend themselves against attack.

Except for its social reforms, I would say the League of Nations was mostly a failure. Disputes brought to the League were either not solved correctly or were unjust. This was due to poor management and structure. The Leagues members did not meet often enough and because every decision had to be unanimous, solutions to problems were slow and not affective. This meant many countries that brought their problems to the League were dissatisfied with the outcome. Trade sanctions proved not to work either because they could not be enforced or powerful countries like America continued to trade. This resulted in some countries refusing to listen to the League and took matters into their own hands. Poland did this when they were asked to leave Vilna.

The poorness and lack of decision-making caused countries to suffer and rebel against the League. The idea of the League of Nations was to stop the outbreak of war and bring peace to all countries, but instead it seemed to create more problems from the many dissatisfied members. The idea of the League was a good one, but was not thought through and seemed very idealistic at the time.