

## MODERN WORLD GCSE / AS LEVEL HISTORY REVISION NOTES

### **Was the League of Nations a failure ?**

A. The League in the 1920's : successes and failures

B. The League in the 1930's : successes and failures

#### A. Successes and Failures of the League in the 1920's

##### **Successes**

1. Solving international problems eg. 1920 - 21 : The Aaland Islands ;  
1920 : Upper Silesia ; 1925 : war between Greece and Bulgaria
2. Work of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) : gained agreement withn League for (I) 8 hour day/48 hour week (ii) right for all to join trade unions (iii) minimum full time work age of 15
- 3 Other successes : slavery, gun - running, drug trafficking ; control of life - threatening diseases; re-patriation of 400,000 war prisoners

##### **Failures**

1. International disputes in 1920's eg. 1919/20 ; Vilna : 1923 ; Corfu
2. Disarmament : in 1922, in Washington, the first disarmament took place ;  
in 1925, preparations were begun for a world disarmament conference.  
Although, it did take place in Geneva, many coutries remained unprepared to cut their armed forces.

## B. The Failure of the League of Nations in the 1930's

By 1936, the League was no longer respected as an organisation able to keep the peace. Two international incidents help to explain why :

### **a. The Manchurian Crisis 1931 - 1933 :**

In 1931, Japan invaded the Chinese province of Manchuria. China appealed to the League for help.

The League was very slow to respond ; a commission was set up under Lord Lytton and sent to Manchuria. Based on the report, Japan was told to withdraw.

Japan ignored the demand and instead withdrew from the League. The League had failed to protect a member state from aggression

### **b. The Italian Invasion of Abyssinia 1935 - 1936**

In 1935, Mussolini invaded the African country of Abyssinia. Abyssinia appealed to the League for help. The League condemned Italy's actions and imposed economic sanctions.

The sanctions only partly worked as Italy was allowed to continue to buy certain key supplies, in particular, oil.

Behind the scenes, the British and French foreign ministers (Hoare and Laval) met (Jan. 1936) to discuss plans for a "deal" with Mussolini giving him most of Abyssinia. The plan was uncovered and the ministers forced to resign.

In 1936, Mussolini withdrew Italy from the League with Abyssinia under his full control

The two incidents showed up that the member countries of the League were unprepared to go to war to keep the peace. After 1936, the League was no longer regarded as an organisation able to defend world peace. Nazi

Germany in Europe and Japan in the Far East exploited the weaknesses of the League to invade neighbouring countries and seize new lands.

### **Reasons for the failure of the League of Nations**

In times of crisis, leading members of the League (in particular Britain and France ) were not prepared to take a stand against aggressor nations

America was never a member of the League . Russia did not join until 1934 ; Germany was admitted in 1926 but withdrew in 1933 ; Japan withdrew in 1933 ; Italy withdrew in 1935. Without the support and co - operation of leading world powers, the League lacked authority.

The system of sanctions failed to work. When economic sanctions were imposed against Italy in 1935, they did not fully work ; military sanctions were never imposed in the 1930's.

The League was slow to deal with crises as and when they arose.