

League of Nations Dissolved - [April 20, 1946] This Day in History

The League of Nations, the intergovernmental organisation which was the precursor to the present United Nations was officially dissolved on April 20, 1946. Formed first in 1919 it lasted for 26 years. The ineffectiveness of the League to enforce its mandates and decisions was regarded as its primary failure ultimately leading to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Facts about the Dissolution of the League of Nations

- The precursor to the League of Nations (LN) was the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) formed in 1889. It was established by Frédéric Passy, a French economist and Sir William Randal Cremer, an English politician.
- When the First World War broke out in 1914, there was a huge public support in the UK and the USA for an international organisation that would prevent further wars in the future.
- In 1914, British political scientist Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson framed a scheme for such an organisation and named it 'League of Nations'.
- Dickinson, along with British academic and politician Lord Bryce, formed an international pacifists group called the **Bryce Group**. This was later renamed the League of Nations Union.
- In 1915, in the USA, a similar organisation was formed called the 'League to Enforce Peace'.
- It championed arbitration and imposed sanctions to resolve conflicts rather than going to war.
- A British Committee called the Phillimore Committee recommended the formation of a 'Conference of Allied States'. Many of the recommendations of this committee were incorporated into the Covenant of the League of Nations which served as the charter of the LN.
- The LN covenant was chiefly drafted by Britain's Lord Robert Cecil and South African statesman Jan Smuts.
- At the Paris Peace Conference of January 1919, the delegates deliberated on the proposals and agreed to form the LN.
- In June 1919, 44 nations signed the covenant. The LN was established by Part I of the **Treaty of Versailles**. This treaty was one of the most important peace treaties that terminated World War I.
- LN's official founding date was 10 January, 1920. The USA did not join the organisation even though American President Woodrow Wilson had played an active part in its formation.

- The league's first meeting was held on 16 January 1920. Its initial headquarters was in London. Later on, it was moved to Geneva.
- There were 42 founding members and the largest number of members was 58. Many members withdrew membership during the course of its existence.
- The permanent members of its executive Council were the UK, France, Italy and Japan.

When did the League of Nations end and why?

- Once the Second World War started, the league existed only nominally. It was officially dissolved on **20 April, 1946** after the United Nations was formed in October 1945.
- Many of the organisations and agencies working under the LN were passed on to the UN.
- The League was formed with the intention of preventing another war but it was unsuccessful in this mission. It could not prevent certain notable incidents that would lead to the outbreak of the Second World War. Some of them include the Spanish Civil War and the invasion of China by Japan.
- German involvement in the Spanish Civil War and the battles fought by the Imperial Japanese Army gave the future belligerents of World War 2 much needed military experiments for their own campaigns
- The failure was largely attributed to the lack of support for the league by the USA. Although President Woodrow Wilson was enthusiastic about supporting the League of Nations but the isolationist elements in the US Congress were opposed to the idea of being involved in "European politics"
- Although marginally less compared to the casualties suffered by European nations in World War I, the losses suffered by the United States were still enough for its Congress to be wary of any further involvement
- As a result the League was unable to enforce any of its mandates and thus only paid lip-service to the objectives it sought to fulfill.