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Humanities 10
Oct 18, 2019

The League of Nations: A Sense of Hope

Hope was reborn with the formation of the League of Nations, ending an era of war so people could look towards a future of peace. Thanks to Woodrow Wilson's vision, the League of Nations was born shortly after agreeing upon the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. The League put rules in place to prevent conflict, and these rules worked for the most part; however, due to the exclusion of Germany, this organization was not able to stop the nationalism that led to the Second World War (WWII). Without this failure, the United Nations would never have learned from the League's mistakes, and as such are now focused on promoting international stability. The League was an organized group of world leaders, who together worked to stop global conflict and achieve world peace. Despite failing to prevent WWII, this league laid the groundwork for the much needed United Nations.

By 1920, 48 countries across the globe had worked together to form the League of Nations, a peacekeeping group with many rules to stay civilized. Even though it was American president Woodrow Wilson's idea, the United States did not join as they were not willing to sign the Treaty of Versailles. The goal was to prevent future wars, similar to the tragic WWI that had just ended. This was done through a group effort of all the countries in the League. The three big rules they agreed upon were international cooperation, arbitration, and collective security. International cooperation meant that all members promised to promote the idea of unity among nations. This cooperation was

also done through a mediator, or international association so there was not any fighting. There was another promise made by League members to never go to war until submitting their disagreements to arbitration. This was a system in which the two members that were arguing had to go to a third party who would then discuss a solution. Collective security, one of the most significant rules, made league members bind themselves to help any other member who became the victim of aggression. The point of these rules was to keep communication clear and to promote peace over war.

Although the League of Nations could not prevent WWII, they did stop many other significant problems that could have escalated badly. In 1940, Russia had occupied a Polish city called Vilna, and said they would not give it back to Poland, threatening Poland's independence. The League of Nations returned Vilna to Poland and diffused the conflict. The League also stopped disputes between Finland and Sweden, disputes between Hungary, Romania, and Finland, disputes between Yugoslavia and Austria, and lots more. While none of these were hugely significant conflicts, the league stepping in stopped them from escalating. Unfortunately, the one conflict that needed to be stopped the most was not, and WWII began. For Hitler and all of Germany, the league seemed like a good target. This was because it was formed from the Treaty of Versailles, which was something most Germans hated. Hitler decided to invade countries that were members of the league in order to gain more influence. As he invaded counties and took control of them, one by one he was able to

undermine the League. Eventually enough countries were occupied by Hitler that the League had no choice but to disband.

Back in the 1920s, Woodrow Wilson had an idea that has gone on to shape our global culture right through to today. In 1945, representatives from 50 countries met at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to make a charter for a new League of Nations. This would be called the United Nations and still exists today. However, instead of having 50 member states, there are 193. Their four main goals are to keep global peace, develop and maintain relations between countries, provide help to nations whenever needed, and be a centre for nations to achieve these goals. The United Nations also provides a feeling of comfort to people less fortunate than most. This makes it a modern symbol of hope, just like how the League of Nations brought hope to citizens immediately after the First World War.

The League of Nations should always be remembered as a step towards peace. These world leaders came together in a way that allowed them to collaborate with each other and stop conflict. Although the Second World War was the end of the league, the idea and morals from it were passed along to the United Nations. Take some time to stop and think about our world and imagine it without the United Nations. These two peacekeeping organizations have given us so much and it often gets taken for granted. These significant symbols of peace gave a sense of hope back in the 1900s and still do today.

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