

The Irish Free State

The Anglo-Irish war continued until the summer of 1921, when both Sinn Fein and the British government were tired of fighting and wished to settle the issue. In July 1921, meetings were held to decide what should happen to Ireland next.

Negotiations were held until October 1921 when Sinn Fein nationalists Micheal Collins and Arthur Griffith signed the 'Anglo Irish Treaty of 1921'

The main consequence of the treaty was that 2 new countries - The Irish Free State and Northern Ireland were created.

As it did not give complete independence (although it did give home rule) some Nationalists were not happy with this treaty.

Main Terms of the Anglo-Irish Treatment

- Ireland will be split into 2 countries - the IFS and Northern Ireland
- The IFS will have its own government, parliament and army.
- Members of the new IFS parliament will swear an 'oath of allegiance' to the King of Britain.
- Ireland will remain as part of the British empire.
- A governor-general will be appointed to represent the British Crown in Ireland. They will make sure all new laws passed by the new Irish government do not go against British wishes.
- The British army will keep control of the ports of Cobh, Berehaven and Lough Swilly.
- The new Northern Ireland parliament will have the right to opt out of control of the IFS - if the people of Northern Ireland don't want to be apart of the Irish Free State they don't have to be.
- A boundary commission will be set up to review the border between the IFS and Northern Ireland; will be changed if suits both countries.

Two groups of nationalists emerged: pro-Treaty nationalists led by men such as Micheal Collins and Arthur Griffith and an anti-Treaty group led by Eamon de Valera.

The pro-Treaty nationalists believed that the setting up of a Boundary Commission would make Northern Ireland too small to survive and a United Ireland would follow.

However anti-Treaty nationalists were not convinced. They believed agreeing to partition was abandoning thousands of nationalists in the new Northern Ireland.

The Irish Free State (cont)

Terms such as British control of treaty ports, the Governor-General and the oath of allegiance annoyed anti-Treaty nationalists greatly. Remaining part of the British empire made anti-Treaty nationalists feel that the IFS was far from an independent country.

Another criticism was that an 'oath of allegiance' to the British crown meant Ireland was still being controlled by Britain. They argued that an oath to the British monarch would go against the oath they would take for the IFS.

As a result Sinn Fein nationalists found it impossible to come to an agreement and ended up fighting a civil war amongst themselves from 1922-23.

The signing of the treaty led to a massive split in Sinn Fein. In the short war the pro-Treaty side were victorious despite the death of both Collins and Griffith.

Pro-Treaty nationalists started the 'Cumann na nGaedheal' political party whereas the anti-Treaty nationalists formed 'Fianna Fail'

N.I after the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921-1932)

A New Parliament Opens

Elections held for new Northern Ireland parliament in May 1921. Unionists, under leader James Craig, won 40 of 52 seats. King George V officially opened the new parliament on 22nd June 1921.

Unionists established as dominant group in Northern Ireland.

Under new partition rules, new Belfast parliament responsible for everyday affairs of new country. Westminster still had control over foreign affairs, defence and taxation. Held onto right to stop any law passed by Belfast government.

Nationalists in Northern Ireland

Disliked Northern Ireland - did not want to be a part of it. Nationalists made up one third of the country, a permanent minority ruled by a Unionist government.

Discrimination appeared everywhere in the new Northern Ireland as Unionists denied Nationalists a fair share of jobs and housing.

Nationalists also faced violence. Reports of Unionist expulsion from homes in the IFS increased Protestant fears and suspicions in Northern Ireland.

Sectarian attacks increased: 257 Nationalist and 157 Unionist civilians killed in Belfast between July 1920 and July 1922.

Nationalists being removed from jobs. 11,000 Nationalists lost Belfast shipyard jobs.

NI after the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921-1932) (cont)

Nationalists therefore hardened attitudes towards Northern Ireland. Many refusing to admit that Northern Ireland even existed - demonstrated in several ways. Refused to take seats in parliaments or apply for jobs in NI Police (called the Royal Ulster Constabulary)

Shocked and devastated by 1925 news of border being there to stay.

Unionist Response to Nationalists

Rise of IRA activity due to growing Nationalist unrest. Unionists saw this as all Nationalists being out to undermine new state of Northern Ireland.

Unionist rulers acted out against Nationalist population as a result.

Special police unit known as 'B Specials' which was virtually all Unionist, dealt with 'difficulties' in Nationalist communities.

'Special Powers Act' in 1922 gave government permission to arrest and keep people in prison for as long as considered necessary.

Used firmly against Nationalist population.

Northern Ireland became even more divided.

Protestants and Catholics attended separate schools, participated in different sports and showed off different traditions with marches and parades.

De Valera Dismantles the Treaty (1932-1937)

William T. Cosgrave was the IFS president from 1922 to 1932; in this time he attempted to show the IFS's new-found independence, but by co-operating with Britain.

Throughout this period anti-British feeling, and a continued desire for complete independence, remained strong in the IFS. Cosgrave was criticised for co-operation with Britain and blamed for the country's poor economic condition.

Eamon de Valera was to be the new President of the IFS as Fianna Fail succeeded Cumann na nGaedheal as the ruling party of the country. Once in office, Eamon de Valera was determined to remove any remaining controls Britain had over the IFS.

de Valera hated the 'oath of allegiance' part of the treaty. In April 1932 he introduced a law to remove the Oath. Despite British protests and opposition from Cumann na nGaedheal, the government passed the 'Removal of the Oath Act' in May 1933. To Irish nationalists this was an important step in removing British links and strengthening their political independence. However it was regarded by Britain as breaking treaty terms and it increased their suspicions of de Valera.

Another part of the 1921 Treaty had been the appointment of a British Governor-General in the IFS.

De Valera Dismantles the Treaty (1932-1937) (cont)

de Valera was against this too as it meant the British could stop any laws which were passed against their control of the IFS. de Valera was determined to restrict the Governor-General so in 1932, de Valera instructed Fianna Fail ministers to ignore the G-G and boycott all official functions and events that he attended.

As a result, in 1932, the British government was forced to recall the G-G James MacNeill. He was replaced with the Fianna Fail member Domhnall O'Buachalla and he was given the role of 'Chief Steward'. Although he remained in this post until it was abolished in 1936, his powers were officially reduced in 1933. He never lived in the G-G's Phoenix Park residence and undertook no official duties.

The Privy Council was the highest court in British law - people who had appeals against laws or convictions against themselves took their cases to this group of judges based in London.

This affected the IFS because the Privy Council would be used to appeal against laws passed by Dail Eireann. In 1935, de Valera's actions in dismantling the treaty were challenged by the British government before the Privy Council. de Valera's actions were deemed legal due to the Statute of Westminster (1931) - this was the deal which had reduced British control over domestic affairs in countries making up the Empire.

de Valera's final action was the passing of the 'External Relations Act' with this law removing the King's authority within the IFS, although in theory the IFS continued to recognise the monarch as the Head of Commonwealth. Moreover, as a result of this law the Governor-General role ceased to exist.

de Valera had judged his time well when passing this law as the British government was too concerned with the crisis created by King Edward VIII's abdication to worry about de Valera's External Relations Act. Whilst there were protests the Irish ignored these complaints and the British took no further action.

Within four years of coming to power, de Valera had removed many limits on the power of the government of the IFS.

In 1922, pro-Treaty supporters had laid out a set of rules through which the IFS would be governed, known as a 'constitution'.

In 1937, de Valera decided to devise a new constitution of his own, meaning the country would almost be starting afresh. This would give him the opportunity to make the IFS even more independent from Britain. The new constitution known as 'Bunreacht na hEireann' introduced some changes to how the IFS would be governed.

De Valera Dismantles the Treaty (1932-1937) (cont)

Most notably the IFS changed its name to 'Eire' and 'Ireland' in English.

The leader of the government became known as the 'Taoiseach'. Instead of the King being head of state, the new constitution had a President as the top of the government.

'Article II' was the most remarkable part of the 1937 constitution. This claimed Eire had the authority to rule all 32 counties of Ireland, including Northern Ireland, but while partition was in force the constitution would apply only to Eire.

The new constitution made no mention of the King, but Eire remained part of the British Empire. de Valera agreed with this as he thought that it would make it easier to eventually get complete independence and possibly to end partition.

de Valera also chose to avoid the word 'republic' in the constitution to avoid angering Britain and Northern Irish unionists. Eire was now a republic in every way yet still remained part of Britain.

Unionists in Northern Ireland were very concerned at this new constitution; making them more suspicious of Eire and even more determined to stay as part of Britain. As a consequence, Unionists held an election in NI, during which many Unionist politicians denounced Eire publicly.

A main point of dispute to Unionists concerned 'Article II' of the constitution as this gave Eire a claim over the six counties which made up NI.

Nationalists in NI saw little in the new constitution to help solve the discrimination against them. Nationalists began to feel even more isolated and seemed resigned to their fate as a forgotten minority.

The Economic War (1932-1938)

Causes

- In 1870 the British government had given loans to Irish tenant farmers to allow them to buy the land on which they worked. Much of this land was owned by British landowners, with many of whom having never been to Ireland before. The farmers had agreed to pay this loan back each year in 'land annuities'

After 1922, the IFS government agreed to collect the land annuities and transfer the money to the British government; until 1932 these were increasingly disliked by farmers. Farmers believed that they should not be paying for land believed to be theirs.

When campaigning in 1932, de Valera promised to cancel these payments when elected to power. He kept his promise and stopped payments.

The Economic War (1932-1938) (cont)

de Valera claimed he was in the right because land annuities for Northern Irish farmers had been cancelled upon partitioning - this was unfair as the IFS would have to continue to pay whereas the north could keep the money for themselves.

The War Begins

The British were unhappy with annuities being stopped as this was £5 million to their economy each year. They decided to get the money they believed was owed by placing a 20% duty on Irish imports. This meant any goods coming from the IFS into Britain would have 20% added to their total price. As a result, Irish goods would be more expensive than similar goods produced by other countries.

The IFS government responded by putting extra import duties on British goods coming to the IFS.

de Valera saw this economic war as a chance to make the IFS a self-contained economic unit; meaning the IFS would not be reliant on any other country for goods it may need. However it was a risk for de Valera to take as in 1932, 90% of Eire's exports went to Britain. An economic war could mean the loss of market for all these exports.

de Valera also hoped that Irish people would respond to the expensive British goods coming into the IFS by setting up their own businesses to compete with British goods. de Valera was positive about success chances but was incorrect.

Almost immediately it was evident that the Irish were the ones badly affected; by 1935 it was clear that the IFS were suffering much more than Britain.

Some relief was achieved in 1935 when a 'Coal-Cattle Pact' was agreed; increasing trade on these goods, however this wasn't enough.

Effects of the War

The economic war had affected the relationships between Britain, Eire and Northern Ireland badly.

One of the first consequences was serious damage to the Irish economy.

During the war, cattle from the IFS had become more expensive in Britain, meaning demand fell and many farmers in the IFS went bankrupt as cattle exports fell by 35% between 1929 and 1934. Overall exports to Britain fell by 50% from 1932-34, with their value dropping by £55 million.

The Economic War (1932-1938) (cont)

There was also a big drop in beef and dairy exports from the IFS to Britain - this led to overproduction in the IFS and the resultant and unnecessary slaughter of animals like cattle. In an attempt to meet huge losses suffered by the farming community, de Valera's government was forced to increase taxes for everyone in the IFS.

There was a decline of rural living standards in the IFS. People here suffered more from the import tax on coal in particular. Migration to urban areas sped up and many left Ireland altogether. The IFS peat industry benefited during the war due to the scarcity and cost of British coal.

de Valera attempted to build up the IFS's industry during the war; (eg. hydro-electric power, wheat cultivation, sugar beet production) but this was not successful because raw materials such as coal and iron were only found in Britain.

With industrial development in mind, de Valera's government set up an Industrial Credit Fund which provided funds for people wishing to set up new businesses and industrial ventures during the economic war. With this support, industry employments rose by 50% during the war.

The end result was that by 1935, the IFS's economy was suffering from a serious balance of payments problem - meaning they were spending far more money on bringing goods into the Free State than they were raising by sending their goods abroad. This meant that more money was leaving the IFS than was coming into the country.

The 'economic war' also damaged trade between Northern Ireland and the IFS. The Belfast government responded to the end of land annuity payments by cutting imports of IFS goods in Northern Ireland. This led to lots of smuggling across the border to avoid paying import duties.

The economic war also damaged relationships between the IFS and Northern Ireland as many farmers in the North were affected by the import duties as they regularly used goods from the South. Those in Donegal, Derry and Strabane were especially affected.

Even though Britain wasn't seriously affected economically places such as Liverpool suffered from increased unemployment.

Britain's economy wasn't as badly affected due to the economy being based on more things than just agriculture and could survive without much IFS imports.

The Economic war led to a worsening in relationships between the IFS and Britain.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement

With the growing threat of war in Europe in 1938, the British prime minister - Neville Chamberlain - saw the Irish treaty ports could be useful should hostilities begin.

Chamberlain was also convinced that if he gave them back to de Valera it would bring an end to the economic war and gain the support of Eire should a war begin.

For de Valera the treaty ports were an important issue. He believed that while they were under British control it would be impossible to consider Eire a separate and independent country.

de Valera saw the return of the ports to Eire's control as another step in his dismantling of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. de Valera thought that this would finally end British interference in Eire's affairs and remove all British soldiers from Eire. It would also allow Eire to decide for itself whether or not to get involved in a potential war in Europe.

So, as the possibility of war with Germany increased, Chamberlain's government sought to secure Irish goodwill by agreeing to give back the treaty ports.

What was the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Efforts between Eire and Britain increased dramatically as a determined effort was made to reach an agreement between Eire and Britain.

On 25th April 1938 Britain and Eire signed the 'Anglo-Irish Agreement'. Under this the economic war officially ended and the treaty ports were returned to Eire.

- Eire will (a) remove any taxes put on British goods sold in Eire and increase trade with Britain for 3 years; (b) Pay Britain £10 million as settlement for all debts owned (remaining debts were actually worth £78 million)

- Britain will (a) remove any taxes put on Eire's goods sold in Britain and increase trade with Eire for 3 years. (b) leave the naval bases occupied by British soldiers as part of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Reactions to the Anglo-Irish Treaty

The general reaction was mostly positive, especially as Eire and Britain's relationship had improved at a time of increasing worry across Europe.

Some people like William Churchill complained about the deal as it gave up important strategic ports at a time where it was quite clear they may be necessary in the near future.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement (cont)

Northern Ireland Unionists were also concerned about the agreement; they disliked the idea of Eire and Britain increasing relations as they feared it may lead to partitioning ending and a United Ireland soon following.

The Significance of The Anglo-Irish Agreement

Both Britain and Eire were affected by consequences of the Anglo-Irish agreement. Britain received a short-term advantage from the deal with the £10 mil but when war broke out it soon became clear that the Treaty Ports would have been of some use to the war effort. Overall though it was de Valera and Eire who benefited most from the 1938 Agreement. It was another success for him in his attempts to break British links.

Britain & Northern Ireland Prepare for War

Preparing for air attacks - radar

A new secret weapon known as 'radar' was employed successfully across most of mainland Britain. This tool would allow the British to detect any incoming German aircraft heading for British shores from up to 30 miles away and quickly send British fighter planes to intercept them. Indeed, by 1940, radar covered the whole coastline of mainland Britain from the Isle of Wight to the Orkney Islands.

The same picture was not apparent in Northern Ireland. In 1939, a government committee recommended building two radar stations in Northern Ireland. By 1941, most of the province was covered by a radar network. However, there were still some ways into Northern Ireland for German bombers which were not covered by radar, the province was partly unprotected from German attack.

Preparing for air attacks - the RAF

The RAF was reorganised for war in 1939 and split into three main wings; fighter command, bomber command and coastal command.

During the early years of the war; aircraft technology was improved and the development of new types of planes such as Spitfires and Hurricanes was sped up.

As a result, mainland Britain was reasonably covered with RAF protection, with at least a squadron in each English county.

In Northern Ireland there was only one squadron for the whole province, with many planes being old and out-of-date.

In July 1940 improvements were made. Hurricane fighters were sent to the province. Despite only being able for usage during daylight conditions, the new Hurricane fighters showed the importance of defending the province had increased.

Britain & Northern Ireland Prepare for War (cont)

By the end of 1941 there were 12 squadrons based in Northern Ireland. Several new airfields were also constructed in Northern Ireland, including those at Ballykelly and Aldergrove, widening the range of the RAF's defence of Northern Ireland.

However the RAF in Northern Ireland was still too poorly equipped to properly defend the province from German attack.

Preparing for air attacks - other air defences

Many other efforts were made to make the job of German bomber even tougher. In Britain large numbers of anti-aircraft measures were undertaken. Many more anti-aircraft guns searchlights and barrage balloons were put into use here.

Anti-aircraft guns ringed major cities while powerful searchlights scanned the sky for potential bombers.

This was not replicated in Northern Ireland. In 1939 there were no searchlights, no RAF fighter protection and no anti-aircraft guns.

By the spring of 1941, 38 more anti-aircraft guns were being used in the province. However, only 22 of these were situated in Belfast, the likely target for a German bomber. The government thought it was for 50 anti-aircraft guns to be used around Belfast; the city was under-prepared.

Northern Ireland was not as well prepared for air defence as the rest of Britain.

Air raid protection - gas masks

Around 85% of Britain received a gas mask within the first 6 months of the war.

The same was not true for Northern Ireland; the Stormont government asked for 1.5 million gas masks (enough for entire population), but only 260,000 received one, mostly those in Belfast. Gas masks were rarely carried by people, and those who were doing so were assumed to be from the mainland.

Air raid protection - 'blackout' and ARP wardens

The 'Air Raid Protection' organisation was set up by the British government at the start of the war. In 1939 it had around 500,000 civilian members. ARP 'wardens' supervised ordinary Britons to make sure they were contributing to air raid protection.

One of the main features with which ARP wardens had to deal was the enforcement of the blackout. Homes had to black out, but so did shops, businesses and even trains and cars. Indeed, the number of road accidents doubled in September 1939, but in time people got used to operating in blackout.



Britain & Northern Ireland Prepare for War (cont)

ARP wardens had to supervise the blackout. Householders had to make sure no light was visible from their windows after dark and the ARP could fine people for showing a light.

ARP wardens also organised patrols during raids to check for firebombs. They often organised teams of local people with buckets of sand, to fire-watch for these bombs during raids. Factories and large buildings were especially

In Britain, ARP wardens served a useful purpose and contributed well to air raid protection.

Attitudes to the blackout in Northern Ireland were very different to those in mainland Britain. It was very badly implemented in many places. Regulations were considered to be pointless, as Belfast would be easy for an aircraft to locate, especially as 3/4 of Ireland was still lit up at night.

There were almost 1000 cases of blackout offences per month in Northern Ireland. It got to the point where it got too much for the courts and people were just let off.

ARP wardens were not well respected either. They were mocked and few took their job seriously.

Air raid protection - shelters

2 million Anderson shelters were provided for British citizens in February 1939. However they had serious weaknesses and were not much protection from falling masonry.

Many poor people had no gardens for shelters so 500,00 Morrison shelters were provided instead.

Once again this fell flat in Northern Ireland. By June 1940, only 4000 of 60,000 households entitled to a shelter in Belfast received one.

In the first 10 months of the war only 200 public shelters were erected across the entire province.

Air raid protection - evacuations

In Britain around 1.5 million were evacuated upon war breaking out.

In mainland Britain evacuation was largely well planned. However as many urban children were moved to rural areas there was a clash in values and culture (eg. standards of behaviour such as bathrooms) and some children were even exploited or mistreated.

However in Northern Ireland only 12,095 people volunteered for evacuation when it was introduced, with 5053 returning to Belfast again by the middle of 1940.

Britain & Northern Ireland Prepare for War (cont)

When one evacuation was organised, 17,000 women and children signed up but only 7000 people turned up. The following month only 1800 of 5000 evacuees came forward.

What else was done to prepare for the war?

In January 1939, the British government launched a campaign for voluntary national service - asking people across Britain to volunteer for military and other useful work like the preparation of sandbags and coastline reinforcement. However on April 26th 1939 military conscription was announced; with 34,500 put into the military by the end of the month.

Over the summer of 1939 over 35,000 businesses and factories moved out of London. This was encouraged by the government.

In August 1939 the government requisitioned trains for evacuation and troop movements. Laws were also agreed to limit opening hours of dance halls and cinemas. National football leagues were suspended for the duration of the war. The BBC's radio output was reduced to a single news program per day. Petrol was also rationed.

From September 1939 road signs were removed to confuse enemy parachutists. Government posters encouraged motorists to disable unattended vehicles while maps and bikes were too be hidden as well. Car drivers had to be content with only one headlight.

The RSPCA killed nearly 400,000 cats and dogs in the last 4 days of August 1939 alone as people were afraid of them suffering under German hands.

Why was Northern Ireland less prepared than mainland Britain?

Many of the population felt that Belfast was too far out of the way of the war to warrant German invasion.

Over 1000 people were evacuated from England to Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland was just within range of the German bombers and it was felt that the Germans would never risk flying the 1000 mile round trip to attack Belfast. It was commonly believed that the bombers would not risk two crossings over mainland Britain to get to Belfast and back again.

The Battle of Britain

Blitzkrieg is no threat to Britain

Hitler realised 'blitzkrieg' would not work - his generals told him that no invasion could succeed if German soldiers were attacked by the RAF and the British Royal Navy. Clearly, conquering Britain would require a joint air and sea invasion. Clearly conquering Britain would require a joint air and sea invasion.

The Battle of Britain (cont)

Hitler's first aim therefore was to destroy the threat the RAF posed. If they could do this, Hitler believed that Britain's dockyards could be destroyed by bombing. Without the RAF's protection, British ships would be vulnerable to air attack by the Germans.

The Battle of Britain Begins

'Operation Sealion' therefore had to begin with the destruction of the RAF. German bombers would bomb British air bases and cripple the RAF.

On the 1st of July 1940, the first German aircraft crossed the Channel and the air war that became known as the 'Battle of Britain' begun.

The RAF had been planning Britain's air defence system since 1936, many important technical developments had been introduced, including bulletproof windscreens for fighter planes. The main RAF planes, Spitfires and Hurricanes, were more than a match for the Luftwaffe.

Britain's investment in radar meant that RAF planes were rarely caught on the ground by the Luftwaffe.

RAF fighters were organised into regions so they could meet attacks quickly, even if they came from different directions. What made this all easier was that if RAF pilots baled out over Britain, they would be able to return to duty.

Another problem was that although the Luftwaffe had lots of aircraft, they were often the wrong type for trying to gain dominance over another air force. Planes like the Stuka dive bomber were designed for helping an army in battle, not attacking other planes.

Other problems included...

- German fighter planes only had enough fuel on board to guarantee them 30 minutes' flying time over England.
- Luftwaffe bombers were too small to cause really massive destruction. They did not cause enough damage to put them completely out of action.
- German intelligence was regularly poor - the Germans did not realise how important radar was.
- Luftwaffe pilots who baled out over Britain became prisoners of war and were no use for the rest of the German war effort.

The Battle of Britain - What Happened?

The Battle of Britain was not a single battle. Instead it was a series of air battles that lasted through the summer of 1940.

Waves of German bombers escorted by fighter aircraft would attack targets in Britain. In response, British fighters were sent to intercept them.

In the air the RAF was consistently outshooting the Luftwaffe.

The Battle of Britain (cont)

As pilots were killed, hundreds were recruited to fill the gap. As planes were destroyed more planes were needed. Production in Britain focused on making fighter planes and not bombers. This had an effect, between July and September 1943, Britain was making 563 planes per month, therefore outproducing the Germans.

The Blitz - how did this come about?

In September 1940, the Luftwaffe changed tactics. Instead of attacking the RAF, the Luftwaffe began to bomb London. This gave the RAF breathing space, although it started the most terrifying phase of the war for civilians.

British cities, including Belfast were bombed intensively for the next 8 months. This was known as the 'Blitz'.

The Battle of Britain was effectively over once the Blitz began. It gradually became clear that if Hitler had given up on his plans to destroy the RAF then he must have also given up his plans for invasion.

The Northern Irish Blitz

On the night of April 7 – 8, 1941 Belfast suffered the first of four air attacks by the Germans Air Force, the Luftwaffe. At least 1,000 people were killed in the attacks as the city lay unprepared and undefended. It was believed that the Luftwaffe could not travel that far.

In total there were four attacks on the County Antrim city. The first (April 7 -8), a small attack, was most likely carried out to test the city's defenses. The next took place on Easter Tuesday, April 15, 1941. In this attack, 200 German bombers targeted military and manufacturing sites across the city. Some 900 people were killed and 1,500 were injured as a result of this air raid. Apart from London, this was the greatest loss of life in any night raid during the Blitz. The third was over the evening and morning May 4 and 5. The death toll was 150. The final attack took place on May 5 – 6.

Belfast city was a target during second World War due to its large shipyard and aircraft manufacturing base. On the night of the most fatal of the attacks, Easter Tuesday 1941, an air warden said, "The sirens started at quarter to eleven, and by eleven o'clock my team was on the street – that started six hours of horror, death and destruction." For several hours, hundreds of tons of high explosive bombs and incendiaries were dropped on the city.

The Northern Irish Blitz (cont)

Crowded terraced houses were near the targeted docks area. The dead were stacked in the Falls Road public baths and in a market close to the city center. Many of the victims could not be identified. If Rosary beads were found in a pocket then it was assumed they were Catholic. As well as the huge loss of life, there was also extensive damage across the city, as half of the houses in Belfast city were hit by bombs which in turn left 100,000 people homeless.

The British Blitz

Began on 7th September 1940 in London. Bombers returned every night until 2nd November 1940.

Docks & factories targeted.

Bristol, Southampton, Portsmouth all targeted due to dockyards.

Impact

In each week of September 1940 - 40,000 to 50,000 lost their homes. 4500 killed in November 1940. 12,500 killed in December.

Biggest raid in Liverpool on 3rd May 1941, involved 500 bombers. Fire burnt out of control due to water mains being hit.

Glasgow & Clyde also affected.

Smaller towns hit in 'Baedeker' raids. 6000 V1 bombs actually reached British targets, causing 20,000 casualties.

V2 more severe - too fast to be shot down. Around 500 hit London. 9000 casualties.

Spirit

Blitz covered in depth. British people cheerful in face of adversity. Stories treat with scepticism.

Northern Ireland During WW2

Northern Ireland & The British War Effort

By 1941, no new factories had been built. 70,000 unemployed at end of 1941. Belfast men took 120,000 hours to create an aircraft, 40,000 on mainland. Despite this, NI made an improving contribution to war effort.

Harland & Wolff shipyard produced 170 warships, 123 merchant ships and over 500 tanks. Belfast shipyard produced 10% of Britain's total. 35,000 workers employed during war. By 1941, 11,000 people worked in shorts. 1500 Stirling bombers produced and 5000 others repaired. Made many flying boats.

Engineering companies in Belfast contributed 75 million shells and 180 million bullets. 50,000 bayonets. 50,000 camouflage and cargo nets. One third of ropes produced in Belfast.

Northern Ireland During WW2 (cont)

Textile industry also helped. 90% of uniforms produced by Northern Ireland. 200 million metres of cloth and 30 million shirts made for army in course of war. Belfast linen made 2 million parachutes for British army.

Thousands of NI workers went from NI to work in munitions factories in England.

Strategic Value

Lough Foyle became a natural refuge for trading ships which travelled to and from the USA. Furthermore, new naval base constructed at Lisahally. At one point, 150 ships and 40,000 servicemen based there. German submarine commanders ordered to surrender to nearest port at end of war in 1945. 43 German submarines put in Lisahally.

Two major air bases also located in North-West. New base at Castle Archdale opened February 1941. Used by planes which patrolled the North Atlantic area at night as protection for ships entering waters close to Northern Ireland. 21% of the 84 German U-Boats destroyed by RAF in NI based at Castle Archdale. Eire allowed their planes special permission to fly across Donegal to get to Castle Archdale.

Military

Around 4200 people from Northern Ireland in Armed Forces died. 2200 in Army, 1100 in Royal Navy, 900 in Merchant Navy. This was aside from Belfast Blitz victims and the 500 merchant seamen who perished.

Northern Ireland relied on enlistment instead of conscription. Conscription introduced in mainland in April 1939, before war had even begun. Conscription more controversial in Northern Ireland.

Many unionists felt conscription important for NI - would show how much province was behind British war effort.

British government decided that trying to introduce conscription would do more harm than good. In 1941 10,000 Catholics attended a protest rally against conscription in Belfast. Mainland was beginning to run out of workers due to conscription.

Northern Irish people still encouraged to volunteer. 38,000 from province served in armed forces. 43,000 Eire citizens also served.

Agricultural

'Dig For Victory'

Amount of land in NI available for growing crops increased significantly - 150,000 acres under tillage in 1939, became 270,000 in 1940 and 850,000 by 1943.

Number of allotments in NI grew from 2000 in 1939 to 8000 by 1945. Numbers of tractors also increased: 550 in 1939, 7000 by 1944.

Northern Ireland During WW2 (cont)

Northern Irish farmers had great time during war. Many farmers became wealthy. NI supplied 20% of mainland Britain's need for eggs. Province also exported £3 million worth of sheep, cattle and milk. On average, 100,000 litres of milk sent to Scotland everyday.

What was NI like during the war? Food & Rationing

Government had plans for increased food production from beginning of war. Private gardens turned over to vegetables, playing fields, railway embankments and major public buildings ploughed up. Lawns in front of Queen's university Belfast used. However Britain could only produce 80% of its own food.

Government's Ministry of Food worked out fair rations, gave advice on recipes and looked after the health of the country. 'Potato Pete' and 'Doctor Carrot' advised.

Rationing soon went beyond food. Caused equality in society - even Royal family had ration books.

Many of Northern Ireland's poor got first glimpse of better standard of living. Effects of rationing and shortages were different across different parts of Britain. Shortages in NI much less common. Sugar, tea and fruit in short supply.

Fuel was always something that was in short supply. Both public and private transport affected in Northern Ireland.

Private car owners did not use vehicles in the whole course of the war due to petrol being so hard to come by. Many people's cars drove fewer than 1000 miles between 1940 to 1945. Public transport also affected. Buses stopped after 7pm. Railway lines used heavily.

Shortages created temptation to cheat system. Black Market flourishing across Britain. Smuggling across border from Eire widely practised.

The Home Guard

Home Guard's job was to help the regular army and protect important places and coastlines.

NI organised home guard differently. Unionist politicians feared giving weapons to Catholics so fewer Catholics made up the HG. Few members willing to work in Catholic areas.

Mounted coastal patrols, manned anti-aircraft guns and helped protect airfields.

Military Presence

In April 1941, 100,000 soldiers were in NI. By 1944, 300,000. 25% of Fermanagh's population in Armed Forces. Many thousands of soldiers (many American GIs) sent to Northern Ireland. Welcomed by most but there were problems.

Northern Ireland During WW2 (cont)

Cultural differences clashed. GIs better educated, infuriating locals. GIs earned lots of money which they spent on alcohol and entertainment, concerning people.

Racial tensions - many Northern Irish people had never seen a black person before.

Many local men disliked how local women liked American soldiers. Jealousy.

Life in Eire During WW2

Eire Remains Neutral

Declared neutrality to prove independence from Britain. Eire believed it was its duty to unite the Irish people against Irish forces and protect them from the hardships of war. One of 20 major countries to do so.

Did not secure Eire's safety. Eire not equipped to fight a war, armed forces were limited and relied on Britain to protect ships bringing Irish cargo.

Germany had already demonstrated it had little respect for neutral countries - had invaded and controlled 8 between April and August 1940.

Caused increased tension between NI and Eire. Saw as act of betrayal and threat to British security.

de Valera allowed for neutrality to be 'bent' slightly as it would have to have some type of relationship with countries at war. Became 'benevolent'

In 1941, 13 Eire fire engines helped assist Belfast Blitz damages. de Valera expressed condolences at number of fatalities.

Relief funds set up by Eire for those affected in Blitz. From April 23rd 1941, Eire enforced blackout on East Coast of country.

Secret deal with RAF - permitted them to overfly County Donegal.

Neutrality challenged by what to do when planes of those fighting crashed in Eire - happened 223 times. When allied pilots crashed, allowed to sneak over border. Germans were imprisoned instead.

Eire's government agreed to permit 43,000 Irish citizens to serve in the British armed forces. 5000 left the Irish army to enlist. de Valera allowed RAF to establish number of radar bases in Eire's territory.

de Valera protested US ambassador David Gray; arrival of US troops was an interference in Eire's affairs.

Offered condolences after Hitler's death.

These actions caused resentment in Britain and Northern Ireland yet maintained flexible neutrality.

Why was neutrality a problem for Britain?

Life in Eire During WW2 (cont)

Eire vulnerable to German attack. Britain worried Eire would be invaded and used as a base to attack the mainland.

German invasion plan for Eire had been drawn up, including 10,000 men in south of Eire. Night assault even considered. Plan dropped as Hitler turned attention to USSR.

Eire did not have blackouts, making NI a target for the Luftwaffe. British governments made several attempts to end neutrality.

June 1940 - offered to end partition. Not even discussed in Belfast, Unionist outrage. de Valera treated offer with caution. Offer rejected.

Effects of the War

Emergency Powers Act - Passed quickly after war began in Europe. Gave government extra powers to control country.

Eire's reliance on imports - Short supply during war years due to Britain being short of ships.

Shortage's & rationing - Eire enjoyed surplus of food during war years. Some goods had to be rationed. Gas, coal and electricity restricted. Petrol only for public transport.

Cross-border links - Lots of illegal smuggling

Eire fighting and defending itself - 200,000 Eire citizens left for England to work in the munitions factories. 40,000 joined the armed forces against Germany. Irish Army expanded from 7000 soldiers in 1939 to 41,000 in 1941. 250,000 reserves, 40% unarmed.

IRA - de Valera suspected the IRA would be sympathetic to Nazis in return of a promise to end partition. IRA had contacts in Germany but got little help from Nazis. Eire took firm stance against the IRA, allowing two hunger strikers to die in 1940. Could imprison without trial for indefinite spell of trial - demonstrated to British that de Valera was strong on the issue of IRA activity.

Blueshirts - Led by an enemy of de Valera, Eoin O'Duffy. Had turned his blueshirts into Irish Fascist group after being sacked from job as Chief of Police by de Valera.

Blueshirts were constant thorn. Fine Gael political party set up, opposed de Valera's actions whenever possible. Violence occurred between two groups, several blueshirts killed in street clashes. de Valera able to use powers against Blueshirts, O'Duffy went into exile.

A New Britain Begins

Churchhill Loses the Election

July 1945, first general election to be held in Britain for 10 years. Churchill expected his personal popularity would be enough for his Conservative Party to win the election. Instead, Churchill was defeated by the Labour Party and its leader Clement Attlee.

British people attracted by promises of full employment, new housing, government control of industry and a welfare system.

Labour wished to try out its socialist ideals. Nationalisation (believing industry and economy should be owned by the government on behalf of the British people, rather than for the profit of private individuals.)

In 1947, coalmines and electricity were taken over by the government followed by the railways in 1948. Iron and steel nationalised in 1949.

Problems

Cost of WW2 had exhausted Britain's gold reserves and left it heavily indebted to the USA. Britain almost bankrupted by war. £1.1 billion had to be borrowed from USA in 1947.

Labour government also had to stop British goods being exported and increase imports at same time. Second-hand cars became more expensive than new ones.

Shortages also common. In 1947, little coal in Britain due to severe Winter. Power cuts even forced factories to close for weeks on end. Food was also in short supply - bread and potatoes rationed for the first time in 1946, despite being more readily available during war years. Period of shortages after WW2 known as 'age of austerity'.

Introduction of the Welfare State

In 1942 a committee chaired by a politician called Sir William Beveridge was set up. 'Social Insurance and Allied Services' published in December 1942. National Health Service set up immediately after. However doctors did not want to lose their professional independence and become government employees. Were concerned their incomes would suffer too. 90% of British doctors joined scheme.

Other taxpayers worried that cost of NHS would be too great for them to bear (£242 million in first year) NHS began to operate on 5th July 1948. Proved a success. By December, 36 million prescriptions dispensed, 8 million received glasses and 6 million got free dental care.

170,000 houses created a year between 1947 and 1950. Allowed people to live in much better conditions.

Northern Ireland & the 'Welfare State'

Like mainland Britain, NI had to adjust from war back to peace.

A New Britain Begins (cont)

NI faced serious problems. Shortages as economy was geared to war and had to revert back to peace. Factories and machinery in need of repairs.

Housing was a problem. From 1919-39 only 50,000 new houses built. Few houses built for poor. Many still lived in houses without running water or toilets.

In 1944, Government carried out first official housing enquiry in the province. Found out that in Belfast, 37% of people lived in unfit or overcrowded dwellings. 100,000 houses urgently needed. 43,000 houses deemed as unfit for living in. 3200 houses destroyed in Blitz, 53,000 more damaged. 53% of Belfast housing deemed unfit for habitation.

However WW2 had positively impacted NI in several ways. Conflict brought more prosperity to province and forged closer links with mainland Britain. Unionists thought Union with Britain closer than ever.

Security was shattered by election of Labour Government in 1945. This was due to Labour Party being known to oppose the partition of Ireland. Unionists feared Clement Attlee may try and force the six counties into a United Ireland. Concerned about NI having to pay for own welfare costs.

In spite of worries, Labour thankful for NI's contribution to war effort. In July 1948, NHS established in NI.

Over next 10 years changes improved health in NI considerably. In 1939 NI had highest death rate in Britain, lowest by 1962. Polio and tuberculosis eradicated in NI.

Arrival of 'Welfare State' in NI also had an impact upon housing. 'Housing Trust' set up. Group would 'orlit' and 'prefab' houses, though it took 20 years to complete.

However a negative side to the housing boom was how Protestant councillor's weighed the allocation system in favour of Protestants while Catholics struggled to receive a new home. The poor was often excluded due to not being seen as respectable.

1947 Education Act guaranteed free education to all children in primary school and secondary school education. Many new grammar and secondary schools were built. The 11+ exam also made the grammar schools available to children from poorer backgrounds for the first time. Resulted in gradual emergence of an articulate and self-confident generation who spoke out about Protestant mistreatment.

Eire After WW2

Eire's Economic Problems

Economy was in state of distress. Worst economic depression since 1870s. Big problem was Eire's close relationship with Britain.

Britain gave priority over its own needs and exported little to Eire, especially fuel or raw materials. Had been case during war and continued in years afterwards.

Prices in Eire rose, emigration started again. In 1945, 24,000 emigrated from Ireland, while 40,000 in 1948.

Groups of important government workers in Eire began to strike from work.

Serious shortages. Timber virtually unobtainable, impossible to build new homes. Severe coal shortage after harsh winter 1946-47.

Bread rationed from 1947 and butter rations cut from 4 ounces a week to 2.

Benefits virtually nonexistent, no Welfare State.

Eire's Political Changes & Economic Success

Soon political changes in Britain had impact on Eire. Jealousy arouse over British welfare system. Led to discontent with government and de Valera's defeat in 1948 general election.

New government led by John Costello. 'Inter-Party Government'

Made changes to Eire's economy to industrialise it and produce enough goods for export.

'Industrial Development Authority' helped in this, as did another called 'Coras Trachtala' which aimed to increase Irish exports to the USA and Canada. In this new area, government had success. Industrial production rose by 60% in 1946-53.

House building program started. Led to construction of 12,000 new houses. Helped by fewer shortages of building materials. Attempts made to improve relations with Britian, eg. in 1948 a trade agreement on farm produce guaranteed Eire's farmers better prices.

An independent member of the Dail - James Dillon - also made a contribution when he became Minister for Agriculture in 1949. Worked hard with his 'Land Rehabilitation Project' to reclaim 4 million acres of Eire's land which was out of use and laying idle. Work added around £50mil to value of Eire's economy from 1951 onwards.

Differences between Eire & NI

Clear contrasts. Eire suffered an economic depression. Prices went up, unemployment rose. Eire in State of economic emergency. After 1945, NHS in NI introduced. Emigration remained high in Eire. NI population rose.

