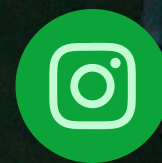


Ch. 7 - Northern Ireland, 1920-1949



Introduction

In this chapter you will learn about:

- The establishment of the state of Northern Ireland
- Political divisions and unionist control
- Social, economic and cultural developments
- The impact of economic depression in the 1930s
- Northern Ireland during the war years
- The bombing of Belfast (Case Study)
- The establishment of the welfare state after the war
- Improvements in health, social welfare and education



Useful Terms

- **Gerrymandering:** to draw the borders between constituencies in such a way to make it easier for one party to win. In this case, the Ulster Unionist Party could control the majority of local councils.
- **Discrimination:** excluding a person from a job, house or other benefit solely on the grounds of their gender, race or religion.
- **Proportional representation:** dividing up the seats so that they are in proportion to the number of votes won by different parties.
- **First past the post:** an electoral system in which a candidate or party is selected by achievement of a simple majority.
- **Siege mentality:** Unionists felt under threat, fearful of their position and of Catholics gaining a majority in Northern Ireland.
- **Sectarian:** a strong support for a religious group, which often causes conflict with other religious groups.
- **RUC:** Royal Ulster Constabulary, new police force set up in Northern Ireland.
- **Stormont:** Since 1931, the Northern Irish parliament has met in the Stormont building in East Belfast. The parliament is often referred to as 'Stormont'.
- **Nationalist Party:** following partition, the Nationalist Party replaced the IPP in Northern Ireland.

Useful Terms

- **Air Raid Precautions Act:** an Act passed by Stormont in 1938, which made local councils responsible for civil defence during the war.
- **Anderson shelter:** an air raid shelter for up to six people. Named after the Minister of Home Security, Sir John Anderson, who was given the task to prepare Britain for defence against bomb raids.
- **Barrage balloons:** large balloons, tethered with metal cables, used to defend against air attacks.
- **Blitz:** a sustained aerial bombing campaign.
- **Conscription:** compulsory enrolment into the armed forces.
- **Home Guard:** an unarmed citizen army, often made up of men ineligible for military service. It was set up to support the British Army.
- **Luftwaffe:** German air force.
- **RAF:** British Royal Air Force.
- **U-boats:** German submarines.
- **Craigavon:** James Craig became Viscount Craigavon in 1927.

THE *the establishment of northern ireland* ESTABLISHMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND

The Establishment of the State of Northern Ireland

- **Northern Ireland** was set up under the **Government of Ireland Act (1920)**. This Act was passed by the **Westminster Parliament** in **December 1920** as **Lloyd George's** solution to the Irish Question. Due to the failure of unionists and nationalists to reach agreement on the future of Ireland, **Lloyd George** implemented **partition**. Unionists agreed to accept **six counties** instead of nine, where they would outnumber nationalists by a ratio of **two to one**.
- The Government of Ireland Act provided for the establishment of the **state of Northern Ireland** with a **Parliament in Belfast**. Northern Ireland remained within the **United Kingdom**, and the **Westminster Parliament** continued to have supreme authority over its territory. The Parliament was to contain two houses - a **House of Commons** with **fifty-two members**, and a **Senate**. The House of Commons would elect the government. Originally, the **King of England** was represented by the **Viceroy in Dublin**, but when southern Ireland became the **Irish Free State**, the King's representative in the north became known as the **Governor of Northern Ireland**.
- Although the Parliament in Belfast could make laws for internal matters in Northern Ireland, its powers were quite limited. The **Westminster Parliament** continued to control **taxation, the currency, the post office and foreign affairs**. The people of Northern Ireland elected **thirteen MPs** to represent them at **Westminster**.

The First Parliament of Northern Ireland

- The state of Northern Ireland was due to come into existence in **June 1921**. Elections were held for the new Parliament in **May**. Out of fifty-two seats, the **Unionists** won **forty**, with **Sinn Féin** and the **Nationalist Party** winning **six seats each**. **Sir James Craig**, who succeeded **Edward Carson** as leader of the Unionist Party, became the first **Prime Minister of Northern Ireland**.
- The new Parliament was opened by **King George V** on **22 June**. Both the nationalist and Sinn Féin MPs boycotted the opening of Parliament and refused to recognise the new state. The first major challenge facing the new Unionist Government was to deal with a serious threat to law and order.

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Violent Unrest in Northern Ireland

- The northern state was born in an atmosphere of **sectarian violence and tension**. In response to IRA attacks, the **Ulster Volunteer Force** was revived in 1920 under the leadership of **Basil Brooke**. The level of sectarian violence increased drastically, especially in **Belfast**. The shooting of policemen by the IRA provoked attacks on ordinary Catholics. In economic depression, **5,000 Catholics** were driven from their jobs in the **Belfast shipyards** in **July 1920**, and anti-Catholic riots occurred in various towns in Ulster.
- Thousands of Catholics were also driven from their homes, and many moved to southern Ireland. In the violence of the years **1920-22**, two-thirds of those killed were Catholics, although they constituted only one-third of the population of Northern Ireland.
- In the autumn of 1920, **Dáil Éireann** encouraged a boycott of goods produced in **Belfast** because of the treatment of nationalists. This measure created further bitterness between unionists and nationalists. With serious levels of violent unrest, the Unionist Government took strong measures to defeat the IRA and to establish law and order throughout the province.

Law and Order

- **Craig** appointed **Sir Richard Dawson Bates** as the **Minister for Home Affairs** with responsibility for **law and order**. His approach involved strengthening the **police** and giving the **Unionist Government** strong **emergency powers**.
- Even before the establishment of **Northern Ireland**, a special force of police officers had been set up to support the regular police. This was the **Ulster Special Constabulary**, established in the **autumn of 1920**. **Class A Specials** were **full-time policemen**; **B Specials** were **part-time, fully armed police**; and **C Specials** were **unpaid reservists**. Many **Ulster Volunteers** joined these forces, which were composed almost entirely of **Protestants**. Whereas the **A and C Specials** were disbanded, the **B Specials** remained and were to be a major target for **IRA attacks**.
- In **May 1922**, the **Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC)** was replaced by a new police force called the **Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)**. It was an **armed police force** with **3,000 members**. Although one-third of the places in the **RUC** were reserved for **Catholics**, few of them joined. In the years ahead, the **RUC** became associated with the **Protestant community**. In **March 1922**, **Dawson Bates** introduced the **Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act** to deal with violent threats to the authority of the government. This law gave extensive powers to the **Minister for Home Affairs** to deal with threats to **peace** in **Northern Ireland**.

Key Personality: RICHARD DAWSON BATES (1876-1949)

- **Richard Dawson Bates** was born in **Belfast** on **23 November 1876**. He was educated at the **Coleraine Academical Institution** and was a **solicitor** by profession. A staunch **unionist**, he was **secretary** of the **Ulster Unionist Council** from **1906 to 1921**, one of the main organisers of the **Ulster Solemn League and Covenant** in **1912** and a founder member of the **Ulster Volunteer Force** in **1913**. He was a prominent member of the **Ulster Unionist Party** and was **MP** at **Stormont** for **East Belfast** from **1921 to 1929** and for **Belfast Victoria** from **1929 to 1943**. He was **Minister for Home Affairs** in the **Government of Northern Ireland** from **1921 to 1943**. In **March 1922**, he introduced the **Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act** to deal with the **violence** that had erupted in **Northern Ireland**. This Act imposed the **death penalty** for certain offences and allowed the minister to introduce **internment without trial**. As **Minister for Home Affairs**, **Dawson Bates** also set about ensuring **Unionist Party** election victories in areas with **nationalist majorities**. He did this by **abolishing PR** and **redrawing electoral boundaries**.

Questions

1. What role was played by Richard Dawson Bates in unionist activities prior to the formation of the Northern State?
2. What position did he hold between 1921 and 1943?
3. What actions did he take to deal with violence in Northern Ireland?
4. How did he set about consolidating unionist control?
5. What contribution did Richard Dawson Bates make to unionism in Northern Ireland?

Law and Order

- The **Special Powers Act** imposed the **death penalty** for throwing bombs, and **flogging** for carrying weapons. It also allowed the minister to introduce **internment without trial**. In the beginning, the Act had to be **renewed regularly**. However, in **1933**, it became a **permanent feature** of government in Northern Ireland. Because it was used almost exclusively against **nationalists**, it was deeply resented by the **minority Catholic community** in the decades to come.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What did the Government of Ireland Act provide for?
2. Explain why the state of Northern Ireland consisted of six counties.
3. List four areas that remained under the control of the Westminster Parliament.
4. Who became the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and what was the first major challenge facing his government?
5. Who was appointed Minister for Home Affairs in the new government and what measures did he take to deal with the threat to law and order?

Relations Between North and South, 1921-5

- While the new state of Northern Ireland experienced **internal challenges** to its authority, it also had to face a **serious threat** to its existence from the south. During the Treaty negotiations in London in the autumn of 1921, the Irish delegates argued strongly for some recognition of Irish authority over the Parliament of Northern Ireland. Sir James Craig, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, **refused to participate** in the Treaty negotiations. In the event, the **Anglo-Irish Treaty contained three important provisions** relating to Northern Ireland:
 - a. The **Parliament of Northern Ireland** had the power to vote to remain outside the Irish Free State.
 - b. A **Council of Ireland** consisting of politicians from north and south was to be established to co-operate in areas of common concern such as agriculture and industry.
 - c. A **Boundary Commission** was to be set up to decide on the final border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.
- The **Boundary Commission** posed a serious threat to the northern state: any extensive loss of territory could undermine the economic survival of the province. Fortunately for the Unionist Government, divisions between Irish nationalists over the Treaty postponed the establishment of the Boundary Commission.

Relations Between North and South, 1921-5

- In order to ease north-south tensions and promote co-operation, Craig met Michael Collins three times between January and March 1922. Collins agreed to end the southern boycott of northern goods, and Craig undertook to reinstate Catholics who had been expelled from their jobs in the Belfast shipyards. However, neither leader had the power to fulfil these promises, and the so-called **pact between them soon broke down**. With the outbreak of **Civil War in the south in June 1922**, the security of Northern Ireland improved significantly. The threat from the IRA was removed, as republicans were engaged in conflict with the pro-Treaty forces in the south. Because of the Civil War, the work of the **Boundary Commission was postponed until October 1924**.
- The final outcome of the Boundary Commission in 1925 was quite favourable to Northern Ireland. The **border remained unchanged**, and the Northern Government was allowed to keep the **land annuities payments collected from farmers in the province**.
- By the end of 1925, therefore, the Government of Northern Ireland had **consolidated its authority** and had successfully **surmounted both internal and external threats to its security**. However, Northern Ireland remained a **deeply divided society** in which **sectarian conflict continued to be a dominant feature of life**.

Political and Religious Divisions in Northern Ireland

- The **unionist majority** in Northern Ireland was almost totally **Protestant**. As unionists comprised **two-thirds** of the population, they were guaranteed **permanent control over the government**.
- Almost all Unionist Party politicians were members of the **Orange Order**. The Order united Protestants of all social classes in a common defence of **Protestant supremacy** in Northern Ireland.
- The annual Orange Order marches on **12 July** were an expression of the strong attachment of Protestants to their heritage and identity. Despite their dominant position in Northern Ireland, unionists did not feel secure: they regarded the **Catholic majority** on the island of Ireland as a potential threat to their position. In particular, they regarded the **Catholic minority** within Northern Ireland as a **dangerous, disloyal force** that sought to undermine the state. The partition of Ireland was a major setback for members of the Catholic nationalist minority in Northern Ireland. They felt isolated and abandoned in a state that was dominated by unionists. These feelings were strengthened by the **anti-Catholic violence** in Northern Ireland between 1920 and 1922.

Political and Religious Divisions in Northern Ireland

- In the beginning, most Catholics refused to recognise the new state of Northern Ireland. They hoped that partition would be only temporary as they awaited the findings of the **Boundary Commission**. Whereas unionists were strongly united, striking divisions existed among nationalists. The **Nationalist Party**, led by **Joseph Devlin**, engaged in **peaceful, parliamentary politics**, whereas **Sinn Féin** was committed to **ending partition by force**. Up to 1925 all nationalist MPs refused to take their seats in the Belfast Parliament.
- However, following the failure of the Boundary Commission in 1925, Joseph Devlin led his Nationalist Party into Parliament. Sinn Féin, on the other hand, continued to abstain from attending Parliament. From the outset, the position of the Nationalist Party was extremely weak. With only a handful of MPs, the party exercised little influence in Parliament. Its MPs could not function as a real opposition and had no chance of replacing the Unionist Government.
- With a permanent Unionist Party majority in Parliament and deep sectarian divisions, normal political life could not prevail in Northern Ireland. While general elections took place at regular intervals, the sectarian divide ensured that there was never a change of government.

Unionist Control of the Electoral System

- In an effort to give the **Catholic minority** in the north a greater voice in local and parliamentary elections, the British Government introduced **proportional representation (PR)**. This was fairer to minorities than the British 'first past the post' system. Under the PR system, nationalists won a majority of seats in Counties Fermanagh and Tyrone and in Londonderry city in the elections of 1920. When Northern Ireland was established, these councils refused to recognise the new state and remained loyal to Dáil Éireann. As a result, the Unionist Government dissolved them in 1922. Under the direction of **Richard Dawson Bates**, the Unionist Government set about ensuring Unionist Party victories in areas with nationalist majorities. This was achieved in three main ways:
 - PR was abolished, and the British 'first past the post' voting system, which was more favourable to the Unionist Party, was restored.
 - Electoral boundaries were redrawn to ensure Unionist Party victories in areas with nationalist majorities. This practice is known as **gerrymandering**.
 - In local elections, only people who owned property could vote. In addition, people with a number of properties had more than one vote. Because Protestants were generally better off than Catholics, this measure served to strengthen Unionist control of local government.
- The unionist-controlled councils throughout Northern Ireland engaged in **discrimination against Catholics**. They favoured Protestants in areas such as employment and the allocation of council housing. Having abolished PR in favour of the straight vote in local elections, in 1929 the Unionist Government also abolished it in parliamentary elections in Northern Ireland. Although the change in the electoral system at parliamentary level did not have as significant an impact as the changes in local government, it nevertheless revealed the determination of the Unionist Government to maintain its position of dominance.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which political party controlled the Government of Northern Ireland?
2. What impact did the partition of Ireland have on nationalists in Northern Ireland?
3. How did unionists view the Catholic nationalist minority in Northern Ireland?
4. How did the unionist- controlled councils engage in discrimination against Catholics?

KEY CONCEPT: DISCRIMINATION

This refers to the **unfavourable treatment** of a section of society on the basis of **race, religion or political allegiance**. In the context of Ireland between 1912 and 1949 this concept refers mainly to the **unfair treatment of the nationalist minority** in Northern Ireland. Following the establishment of the state of Northern Ireland in 1920, three areas in particular involved widespread discrimination: **employment, housing allocation and electoral issues**. In employment in both the public service and private industry nationalists were seriously under-represented in relation to their proportion of the population. They were frequently denied houses by unionist-controlled local councils. In electoral terms, boundaries - particularly at local level - were **gerrymandered** to reduce nationalist representation and the existence of **multiple property-based votes** discriminated against nationalists who were generally not property owners.

Education in Northern Ireland

- Education in Northern Ireland was characterised by **deep divisions** between Protestants and Catholics. Practically all primary and secondary schools were managed by either Protestant clergy or Catholic priests, brothers and nuns. When the state of Northern Ireland was established, the Prime Minister, Sir James Craig, was committed to raising the standard of education. To achieve this, he appointed **Lord Londonderry** to head the new Ministry of Education.
- Londonderry set up a committee to examine the system. He was disappointed when he failed to persuade the Catholic bishops to take part. At the time, Catholic clergy and teachers did not recognise the new Ministry of Education and would take no part in discussions. In any event, the committee declared that the education system was in serious need of investment and reform.
- In 1923, Lord Londonderry introduced an Education Act, based largely on the recommendations of the committee. Under the Act, local Protestant and Catholic clergy would be replaced as managers of primary schools by committees in which the churches and local councils would be represented. Schools known as **‘transferred schools’**, which agreed to accept pupils of all religions, would receive higher grants from the state. Those retaining independent management would be eligible for smaller grants.

Education in Northern Ireland

- The **Catholic Church** decided to remain outside the new system. Many Protestant schools transferred to the new system, although members of the clergy objected to the removal of religion as a mainstream subject. The Protestant churches and the Orange Order then conducted a campaign to have the Education Act changed. They succeeded in persuading the government to allow increased clerical control and Bible reading in the 'transferred schools'. When Lord Londonderry resigned in 1925, his plans for a non-denominational system of primary education remained largely unfulfilled. From then on, the state system of education was largely under Protestant control. Because Catholics remained outside the state system, their schools continued to receive lower grants. Although Catholics resented this situation, they were partly responsible because they had refused to enter into discussions with the Ministry of Education.
- At secondary level, the schools were also controlled by the different churches. As in the rest of Ireland, most pupils did not stay at school beyond primary level. However, between the foundation of the state in 1921 and the outbreak of war in 1939, the numbers attending secondary school showed a slow but steady improvement. Expenditure on schools rose from **£51,000 to £200,000**, and the number of pupils between ages eleven and nineteen rose from **6,200 to 11,500**.
- Northern Ireland also had a university - **Queen's University, Belfast** - and separate teacher-training colleges for Catholics and Protestants. Whereas the Irish language was one of the major issues in education in the Irish Free State, in Northern Ireland **religious divisions dominated the debate on education**.

Social and Economic Policy

- The **Government of Ireland Act (1920)** allowed limited self-government to Northern Ireland, but the state had very little financial independence. Most taxes were set by the British Government at Westminster. The British Treasury wished to prevent the use of British taxpayers' money to raise living standards in Northern Ireland above those in Britain itself. As a result, 'the principle of parity' was introduced: this meant that taxation and government expenditure should remain the same throughout the United Kingdom. This system greatly limited the scope of the Northern Ireland Government and reduced its capacity to spend on areas of need such as health, education and housing.

Agriculture

- Despite the existence of heavy industry in Northern Ireland, about a quarter of all workers were still employed in agriculture in the 1920s. There were many similarities between farming north and south of the border. However, farm sizes were generally smaller in the north. During the 1920s the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland, like its counterpart in the Irish Free State, sought to improve farming through a number of initiatives, including agricultural education, the establishment of co-operatives, the provision of credit and the introduction of quality control.

Industry

- During the establishment of Northern Ireland in 1921, **two-thirds** of all Irish industrial workers were concentrated in north-east Ulster. The major heavy industries, such as **shipbuilding, engineering** and **linen manufacturing**, had prospered during World War I. However, demand decreased in 1920, around the time the new state was established. During the 1920s and 1930s industrial employment fell throughout the United Kingdom because of failure to modernise and falling prices. Northern Ireland's industries were to experience the same problems as those in the rest of the United Kingdom. The numbers working in the shipyards fell from **15,000** in 1913 to **7,500** in 1924. Those employed in the linen industry fell from **74,000** in 1924 to **55,000** by 1930. By the mid-1920s nearly a **quarter of the workforce** in Northern Ireland was unemployed.

Health, Housing and Welfare

- Expenditure on **housing, health** and **welfare** was low in Northern Ireland during the 1920s and 1930s. There was little investment in healthcare: many hospitals were old and inadequate, and the old nineteenth-century structures remained in place. Between 1921 and 1939 fewer than **8,000 houses** were built by local authorities throughout Northern Ireland. Welfare payments were extremely low. Unemployment assistance was introduced only in 1934, and many benefits were strictly means tested. The already low standard of living for many people in Northern Ireland deteriorated further during the **economic depression** of the 1930s.

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The 1930s: A Period of Depression

- After the **Wall Street Crash** in New York in 1929, economic depression spread from the United States to the rest of the world. During the 1930s in Northern Ireland economic activity declined and **unemployment, already high, soared to new levels**. In 1935, Belfast's second largest shipyard, Workman, Clark and Co., closed; and by 1937 the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland was the highest in the United Kingdom. Between 1926 and 1937 over **50,000 people emigrated** from Northern Ireland. With the deepening economic crisis, **sectarian divisions** came to the fore.
- In August 1931, serious anti-Catholic riots occurred in various towns after the IRA attacked an Orange Order meeting in Co. Cavan. A new Protestant organisation, the **Ulster Protestant League (UPL)**, was formed to protect Protestants. Like unionist leaders, the UPL advised Protestants to employ fellow Protestants in preference to Catholics. Throughout 1932, tension between Catholics and Protestants remained high, owing partly to unionist fears of the newly elected Fianna Fáil Government under de Valera in the Irish Free State.
- In 1932, a cut in welfare rates brought about a **temporary alliance** between Protestant and Catholic trade unionists. However, this was to be short-lived, and **sectarian divisions** soon re-asserted themselves. During the summer of 1935, serious **rioting between Protestants and Catholics broke out in Belfast**. The RUC failed to prevent the destruction of Catholic property by Protestant mobs. As a result, the British Army was called in to restore order, although tensions between the two communities remained high.
- It is clear, therefore, that in Northern Ireland loyalties and allegiances were formed along **religious and political rather than class lines**: Protestant workers looked to their employers for protection and regarded Catholics as their political and religious enemies.

Adapted from Modern Ireland (Fourth Edition) by Gerard Brockie and Raymond Walsh, Gill Education.

The Onset of War

- It is true that by **1939**, Northern Ireland was characterised by **deep religious and political divisions**. It was governed by a **permanent unionist majority**, and most Catholics remained implacably opposed to the state. The Prime Minister, **Lord Craigavon (James Craig)**, had once declared, '**Ours is a Protestant government and I am an Orangeman.**' Under such a regime, Catholics considered themselves to be **second-class citizens**. Once the state of Northern Ireland had been established, successive British governments did not become involved in its internal affairs, thus facilitating its development along sectarian lines. However, with the onset of war in 1939, Northern Ireland assumed a strategic importance for the British Government. The involvement of Northern Ireland in World War II would strengthen its links with Great Britain and separate it even further from the Irish Free State, which was to remain neutral.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What changes in education were introduced by Lord Londonderry in 1923?
2. How did the Catholic Church respond to these changes?
3. In what regard was the financial independence of Northern Ireland limited?
4. What problems faced industry in Northern Ireland during the 1920s?
5. What challenges in housing and health confronted the new state?
6. What impact did the depression of the 1930s have on the economy of Northern Ireland?

Key Personality: JAMES CRAIG (1871-1940)

- James Craig was born in Belfast on 8 January 1871, the son of a millionaire businessman. He was educated in Belfast and Edinburgh before setting up his own stockbroking business. On returning from the Boer War, he became interested in politics and was elected Unionist MP for East Down in 1906.
- Craig, along with Edward Carson, played the leading role in organising resistance to the Third Home Rule Bill, and his home at Craigavon became a meeting place for unionists. He decided on the wording of the Solemn League and Covenant, played a key role in the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force and contributed to the success of the Larne Gun-Running in April 1914.
- When World War I broke out in August 1914, Craig saw it as an ideal opportunity for Ulster to demonstrate loyalty to Britain. A special Ulster division of the British Army was created, while Craig continued to serve in Parliament and held a minor position in the government during the war. He participated in the Buckingham Palace Conference and the Irish Convention, seeking to ensure a good deal for Ulster.
- When the Northern Ireland state was established in 1921, Craig became its first Prime Minister. His priority in 1920-22 was to restore order to a state beset by violence. He appointed Richard Dawson Bates as Minister for Home Affairs, and Dawson Bates proceeded to introduce very harsh security measures under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act. Craig's determination that the border would not change was seen in his make to the affairs of refusal to appoint a representative to the Boundary Commission, which was set up in 1924.

Key Personality: JAMES CRAIG (1871-1940)

- James Craig, the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, ensured Unionist Party domination of county councils by abolishing PR and redrawing electoral boundaries. He made no efforts to reassure the Catholic nationalist minority, on one occasion insisting that Northern Ireland was 'a Protestant state for a Protestant people'.
- In social and economic terms, Northern Ireland was beset by **depression** in the 1930s. Although reforms were introduced, especially in healthcare and education, **unemployment and poverty were widespread**. However, Craig did succeed in securing an agreement with the British Government in 1938 that guaranteed equality of taxation and social services in all parts of the United Kingdom.
- Craig (who became Lord Craigavon in 1927) continued as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland until his death in 1940. Although he had succeeded in establishing the Northern Ireland state, he presided over a period of **economic difficulty and sectarian division**.

Questions

1. What role was played by James Craig in opposing Home Rule for Northern Ireland?
2. In what respects did he see the outbreak of World War I as an ideal opportunity for Ulster?
3. What position did he hold in Northern Ireland from 1921 to 1940?
4. In what respects were his years in power characterised by economic difficulty and sectarian division?
5. What contribution did James Craig make to the affairs of Northern Ireland?

The Outbreak of World War II

- When war was declared between Britain and Germany in September 1939, the Unionist Government and people of Northern Ireland regarded it as an opportunity to show their loyalty to the British Crown. In contrast to the neutral Irish Free State, Northern Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, was fully involved in the British war effort from the beginning. The return of the Treaty ports to the Irish Free State in 1938 greatly increased the strategic importance of Northern Ireland. In the absence of port facilities in the south, the ports of Northern Ireland were vitally important for the Royal Navy. Ships sailed from ports such as **Londonderry** and **Belfast** to protect convoys carrying essential supplies from the United States of America. The Royal Air Force also had important bases in Northern Ireland.
- Although conscription was introduced in Great Britain, it was not extended to Northern Ireland. Unionists were divided on this issue: whereas some strongly supported the introduction of conscription, others argued that it would be unwise to train members of the Catholic minority in the use of arms. In the event, many people from Northern Ireland, both Protestant and Catholic, volunteered to join the British forces during the war.

The Wartime Economy of Northern Ireland

- The outbreak of World War II transformed the economy of Northern Ireland. Under government supervision, both agriculture and industry were mobilised to meet the war effort, and the depression of the 1930s was replaced by growth and expansion. At a time of rationing and food shortages in Britain, Northern Ireland was an important source of food. To increase food production, the government introduced compulsory tillage, which resulted in a vast increase in the acreage of land used for growing crops. Farmers in Northern Ireland prospered during the war years because the British Government guaranteed good prices for the produce.
- During the 1930s, Northern Ireland was beset by **depression**. However, even before the outbreak of war in 1939, industry in Northern Ireland benefited from British rearmament. The **Harland and Wolff shipyard** received orders from the British navy, and aircraft factories such as that of **Short Brothers and Harland** expanded to meet the increased demand. Textile factories were commissioned to provide shirts, uniforms, parachutes and tents.
- The war brought prosperity to Northern Ireland and ended the economic depression of the 1930s. **Unemployment declined sharply** from around 25 per cent of the workforce during the 1930s to 5 per cent by the end of the war. This improvement was due to a number of factors, including the expansion of industry, enlistment in the armed forces and migration of workers to factories in Britain.

The Wartime Economy of Northern Ireland

- Between 1940 and 1944, Belfast shipyards produced **140 warships and 123 merchant ships**. Employment in shipbuilding increased from **7,200** in 1938 to **20,600** by 1945. During the war, the numbers employed in engineering almost doubled to reach **28,000**, and the number of aircraft industry employees rose from **6,000** to **23,000**. Wages rose in Northern Ireland during the war. Whereas during the 1930s the average industrial wage there was only 60 per cent of the equivalent wage in Britain, by 1945 it had risen to 75 per cent. Despite this, a certain amount of industrial unrest arose during the war. Although strikes were illegal, over **250 occurred**, and **6,000 workers were imprisoned** for interfering with the war effort. While World War II affected life in every part of Northern Ireland, the city of Belfast was the centre of most wartime activity.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the Unionist Government and people of Northern Ireland react to the outbreak of World War II?
2. In what ways did the outbreak of war transform the economy of Northern Ireland?
3. Why did agriculture in Northern Ireland prosper during the war years?
4. How did industry fare during those years?
5. What impact did the war have on wages in Northern Ireland? Did this prevent industrial unrest?

5.3 CASE STUDY BELFAST DURING WORLD WAR II

Belfast during World War II

- When war broke out in September 1939, Belfast was an important city in terms of producing war materials for the British forces. The **Harland and Wolff shipyard** - the largest in the United Kingdom - was rapidly increasing its production of warships; at the same time, the **Short Brothers and Harland aircraft factory** was engaged in a massive expansion of its operations. Engineering works also manufactured armaments for the British forces. Despite the obvious fact that the city was a major target for enemy attack, it was very poorly defended. Whereas Glasgow had eighty-eight anti-aircraft guns, Belfast possessed a mere twenty-four. Furthermore, the fire brigade and other civil defence services had not been developed to meet the challenges of warfare.
- Failure to anticipate devastating attacks on the city of Belfast can be traced to the Northern Ireland Government itself. Shortly before the outbreak of war, a junior minister wrote a report for the Cabinet that seriously underestimated the threat from the German air force.

DOCUMENT 1: MEMORANDUM BY EDMOND WARNOCK, 19 JUNE 1939

[Belfast] is the most distant city of the United Kingdom from any possible enemy base. It is 535 miles from the nearest point in Germany. An attack on Northern Ireland would involve a flight of over 1,000 miles. For aeroplanes of the bombing type, loaded, this is a very big undertaking. To reach Northern Ireland and to get back again, the enemy aeroplanes must twice pass through the active gun, searchlight and aeroplane defences of Great Britain... In coming to Northern Ireland the attacking plane would pass over targets which would appear to be more attractive than anything the North of Ireland has to offer. Bearing these facts in mind, it is possible that we might escape attack altogether. But if Northern Ireland is attacked, the above factors would suggest that at least we shall not be subject to frequent attack or to attack by large concentrations of enemy aircraft.

Edmond Warnock, Civil Defence Memorandum, 19 June 1939, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Cabinet Papers

QUESTIONS

1. How long of a flight would a German pilot have to undertake to reach Northern Ireland from the closest point in Germany?
2. What obstacles would German pilots face, according to the writer?
3. What was the main argument in this document? Do you think it was valid?

Belfast during World War II

- Warnock's predictions were to be proved completely incorrect by the tragic events that were to occur in Belfast.
- The German conquest of France in June 1940 transformed the military situation. Belfast was now vulnerable to attacks by German aircraft, which could fly from France and travel up the Irish Sea, thus avoiding Great Britain on the way. With cities in Britain under constant attack, there was little anti-aircraft material to spare to strengthen the defences of Belfast. In effect, the city was a prime target for enemy attack. In November 1940, the German Luftwaffe sent out reconnaissance flights that took photographs of the city, including its main factories.

The Bombing of Belfast

- The first attack on Belfast took place on 7 April 1941. It was carried out by six German bombers, resulted in the deaths of **thirteen people** and started **seventeen fires** in the city. Although a relatively small-scale attack, it was a warning of what lay in store. James Kelly, the Northern Political Editor of the Irish Independent, recorded his experience of this first airborne attack (Document 2).

DOCUMENT 2: THE FIRST ATTACK FROM THE AIR

I have a vivid memory of walking home in the blackout from the bus stop at the end of the Glen Road when the sirens went at 11.40 p.m. I had just reached the open fields at the city boundary when I heard the unfamiliar heavy 'bub-bub-bub' sound of aircraft approaching from the south-east. As the noise got closer my instinct that the menacing sound spelt danger was confirmed when suddenly a couple of anti-aircraft guns crashed into life. I reached home to find that we were at last about to experience an attack from the air with God knows what consequences. We could hear more and more planes droning overhead and we waited with bated breath, wondering when some unknown airman would press the button releasing his deadly load of high explosives upon the hapless victims below... Soon there were other sounds from the city five miles away from our suburb. Every minute or two came the dull boom and echo of bombs landing on their targets, the din increasing in intensity as the attack was pressed home by new waves of bombers. Down there in the city, people were being killed, homes destroyed and buildings levelled to the ground. We prayed for them and for ourselves for who knew when one of the aircraft homing in on the city might release its load out in the suburb and fly back to base?

Recollections of James Kelly, April 1941 in S. Dowds, The Belfast Blitz (Belfast, 2011)

Adapted from Modern Ireland (Fourth Edition) by Gerard Brockie and Raymond Walsh, Gill Education.

QUESTIONS

1. What sound alerted the author of the document to the presence of danger?
2. What did he hear when he reached the city boundary?
3. When did he realise that his suspicions concerning danger were correct?
4. What did he discover when he reached home?
5. Describe the sounds that could be heard from the city centre of Belfast.
6. How did the writer convey his sympathy with the people in the city centre?

The Bombing of Belfast

- A week later, on the night of 15 April, the Luftwaffe carried out a mass raid on Belfast. The attack involved **180 aircraft** and lasted some **five hours**, between **11.00 p.m. and 4.00 a.m.** It resulted in **huge loss of life and destruction of property**. An Irish civil defence expert, **Major Seán O'Sullivan**, arrived in the city from Dublin on the morning of Wednesday 16 April. He prepared a detailed report on the event (Document 3).

DOCUMENT 3: O'SULLIVAN'S DESCRIPTION OF CONDITIONS IN BELFAST, 16 APRIL 1941

In the Antrim Road and vicinity the attack was of a particularly concentrated character and in many instances bombs from successive waves of bombers fell within 15-20 yards of one another ... In this general area scores of houses were completely wrecked, either by explosion, fire or blast, while hundreds were damaged so badly as to be uninhabitable ... In suburban areas, many were allowed to burn themselves out and during the day wooden beams were still burning... During the night of 16-17, many of these smouldering fires broke out afresh and fire appliances could be heard passing throughout the night... It is estimated that the ultimate number of dead may be in the neighbourhood of 500, and final figures may even approach 2,000 ... The greatest want appeared to be the lack of hospital facilities ... At 2.00 p.m. on the afternoon of the 16th (nine hours after the termination of the raid) it was reported that the street leading to the Mater Hospital was filled with ambulances waiting to set down their casualties... There were many terrible mutilations among both living and dead... In the heavily 'blitzed' areas people ran panic-stricken into the streets and made for the open country ... During the day, loosened slates and pieces of piping were falling in the streets and as pedestrians were numerous, many casualties must have occurred.

Major Seán O'Sullivan, Report on a Visit to Belfast, 16-17 April 1941, National Archives, Dublin, Department of the Taoiseach

Adapted from Modern Ireland (Fourth Edition) by Gerard Brockie and Raymond Walsh, Gill Education.

QUESTIONS

1. How did the writer show that the damage was 'particularly concentrated'?
2. What, according to the author, was 'the greatest want'?
3. Describe the scene on the street leading up to the Mater Hospital.
4. How did the people in the 'heavily "blitzed" areas' react?

The Bombing of Belfast

- In the event, the number of casualties was almost midway between O’Sullivan’s higher and lower estimates: the death toll was around **900**, and **600** were seriously injured. The traumatic impact of the bombings on the people of Belfast is to be seen in the recollections of eye witnesses such as William McCready (Document 4) and Terry O’Neill (Document 5). Rescuers and medical staff faced huge challenges as they attempted to cope in the aftermath of the bombings.

DOCUMENT 4: A CITY ON FIRE

It was in Keadyville Avenue about midnight and I was sitting at the table trying to calculate how much in Income Tax I would pay in the next financial year. Suddenly I heard a long roaring whine and next moment a hell of a heavy thud. I went upstairs to the attic and standing on a box, opened the skylight. Something in my stomach seemed to drop, for the whole length of the shipyard, for two to three miles, was ablaze with stark white light like the flash when taking a flash photograph. Then guns, all over the city, began to roar. I knew it was our air raid. From the timber yards, about a mile from our house, flares were soon leaping in the sky. I was fascinated. A feeling of despair came over me - at last, I thought, it's our time now, but I found myself engrossed by the spectacle. The whole sky in every direction was a mass of flame. The German planes taking part had now disappeared, but in half an hour I again heard the drone, very high in the sky, and many explosions followed.

Eye Witness Account by William McCready in S. Douds, The Belfast Blitz: The People's Story (Belfast, 2011)

QUESTIONS

1. What were the first signs of a bombing raid that the eye witness noticed?
2. How did he describe his impression of the situation at the Belfast shipyards?
3. Despite his feeling of despair, the eye witness continued to observe the air raid. What reason did he give for doing so?
4. What occurred half an hour after the first air raid?

DOCUMENT 5: THE IMPACT OF THE BLITZ

The first air raid took us a bit by surprise. When the sirens went off we just sat back to wait as usual, for the all clear and the lights to come back on. Instead there was the boom boom of anti-air craft guns being fired from Victoria Barracks and the blasting sound of bombs not far away for comfort. I can truthfully say that I have never had another frightening experience to match that night. The thunder of the bombs and the anti-aircraft guns, combined with the drone of the bombers, never ceased until the following morning. The most frightening of all were the 'whistling bombs', so-called because they had holes specially designed in their fin-tails that produced a high-pitched screeching noise like an approaching train whistle as they came down seemingly just over our heads. So the object of the raid was, not just to destroy strategic targets like the ship yards, aircraft factory and docks etc., but to terrorise and destroy the morale of the civilian population.

Eye Witness Account by Terry O'Neill in S. J. Connolly (ed.), Belfast 400: People, Place and History (Liverpool, 2012)

QUESTIONS

1. What unusual happening alerted the writer to the fact that all was not well?
2. What did the writer describe as 'most frightening of all'?

The Bombing of Belfast

- Another description of the impact of the Easter Tuesday attack of 15-16 April was compiled by J.B. Meehan for the Ministry of Public Security (Document 6)

DOCUMENT 6: DEVASTATION IN BELFAST

At daybreak the County Antrim side of the city presented a gruesome picture. The ruin fringed roads were blocked with great heaps of smoking debris and pocked with acrid smelling craters. Water ran through the rubble in rivulets, gas mains still spouted fountains of flame and walls crashed everywhere now and then where the firefighters still fought the flames. Mud and water, and everywhere the smell of wet, charred wood. Through this desolate scene, clambering over the rubble and picking their way over the maze of hose, an unending trek of civilians made their way to Rest and Feeding centres in the unblitzed area of the city. Many were carrying all their worldly belongings in small attaché cases or in knitted pillow slips. Others returned from their 'hideouts' to stand silent and benumbed before the wreckage of what once was their homes, or to search forlornly in the wreckage for belongings.

*Ministry of Public Security [1941] Report on Air Raids, Public Record Office,
Northern Ireland*

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the conditions in the County Antrim side of the city at daybreak.
2. What activity was carried out by the firefighters?
3. What was the destination of the 'unending trek of civilians'?
4. Does the author succeed in conveying the complete helplessness of the victims of the bombings? Explain your answer, referring to the document.

Responding to the Crisis

- The immediate reaction of many Belfast people was to leave the city. Although before the raid the government had estimated that **10,000 people might be rendered homeless** in an attack, in the immediate aftermath of the actual attacks about **100,000 people were made temporarily homeless**. The destruction of their homes and the fear of future attacks led to a mass exodus from the city which was recorded by Major Seán O'Sullivan (Document 8).

DOCUMENT 8: O'SULLIVAN'S ACCOUNT OF THE EXODUS FROM BELFAST

From the early morning of the 16th and all throughout the day there was a continuous 'trek' to railway stations. The refugees looked dazed and horror-stricken and many had neglected to bring more than a few belongings - I saw one man with just an extra pair of socks stuck in his pocket. Any and every means of exit from the city was availed of and the final destination appeared to be a matter of indifference. Train after train and bus after bus were filled with those next in line. At nightfall the Northern Counties Station (in York Street) was packed from platform gates to entrance gates and still refugees were coming along in a steady stream from the surrounding streets ... Open military lorries were finally put into service and even expectant mothers and mothers with young children were put into these in the rather heavy drizzle that lasted throughout the evening. On the 17th I heard that hundreds who either could not get away or could not leave for other reasons simply went out into the fields and remained in the open all night with whatever they could take in the way of covering.

O'Sullivan, Report on a visit to Belfast, 16-17 April 1941

QUESTIONS

1. Where did the 'continuous "trek" described in this document lead to?
2. List some evidence of the troubled state of the refugees.
3. Describe the scene at nightfall at York Street Station.
4. What action was taken by those who could not get away from Belfast?

Responding to the Crisis

- The evacuation of people from the slums revealed the terrible conditions that many of these people had to live in. Moya Woodside, a surgeon's wife from the prosperous south Belfast area, recorded her impressions of the condition of the poor in her diary (Document 9).

DOCUMENT 9: THE CONDITION OF THE POOR IN BELFAST

My mother telephoned to say that she took in eight evacuees last night, two mothers and six children. She says that one mother is about to have another baby any minute, that they are all filthy, that the smell in the room is terrible. They refuse all food except bread and tea; the children have made puddles all over the floor etc. She is terribly sorry for them and kindness itself but finds this revelation of how the other half live rather overpowering ... Belfast slum dwellers are pretty far down and to those not used to seeing poverty and misery at close quarters the effect is overwhelming. 'The smell is terrible,' said my sister-in-law... She said she had been given the job of finding private billets for the evacuees and she was ashamed to have to ask decent, working people with clean houses to take in such guests. More are 'scared out' than 'bombed out' too.

Moya Woodside, Diary, 17-18 April 1941, Tom Harrisson Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Brighton, England, cited in B. Barton, Northern Ireland in the Second World War (Belfast, 1995)

QUESTIONS

1. What complaints did the writer's mother make?
2. What does the statement, 'They refuse all food except bread and tea' reveal about the diet of the poor?
3. Explain the difficulty that the writer's sister-in-law had.

- The conditions endured by people in the slums of Belfast shocked other sections of society. As in Great Britain, the evacuation of poverty-stricken people led to calls for better healthcare, education and housing for all when the war was over.

Help Arrives from Dublin

- At the height of the bombing attack on the night of 16 April the Northern Ireland Minister for Public Security, **John McDermott**, sent a message to Dublin requesting assistance in fighting the fires in Belfast. The Town Clerk and City Manager of Dublin, P.J. Heron, made notes on the circumstances surrounding the request (Document 10).

DOCUMENT 10: DE VALERA AGREES TO SEND FIRE BRIGADES TO BELFAST, 16 APRIL 1941

5.10 a.m. Meeting of Public Security requested urgent assistance from Dublin Fire Brigade in fighting fires in Belfast. Supervisor Public Telephones phones Major Comerford and he got in touch in Belfast with Major O'Sullivan. Phoned An Taoiseach at the same time and informed him of this communication. He said a serious matter and he would get experts to advise him.

5.50 a.m. Phone message from An Taoiseach said to go ahead and give every assistance possible... 6.10 a.m. Phoned Comerford who said he would send three crews (two Fire Brigade and one Auxiliary Fire Service) men to volunteer. Rang Belfast regarding the message and was advised by the Supervisor Telephones there that Commissioner of Police there was asked by Minister of Public Security. 9.30 a.m. Rang An Taoiseach and informed him that three pumps with crews had gone - two more getting ready. One from Dún Laoghaire going and one from Dundalk gone.

P.J. Heron, Notes, 5 May 1941, Dublin City Council Archives, cited in S. Redmond, Belfast Is Burning: 1941 (Dublin, 2002)

QUESTIONS

1. What request reached Dublin in the early hours of 16 April 1941?
2. Explain the initial response of the Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, to the request.
3. What phone message was received from the Taoiseach at 5.50 a.m.?
4. Give examples to show that this document was not a final statement but consisted of the original notes taken at the time by the author.

Help Arrives from Dublin

- In agreeing to send assistance to Belfast, **de Valera** was in breach of strict neutrality. The Dublin fire-fighters were shocked at the conditions they witnessed in Belfast. Having worked all day, they returned home as night fell in order to avoid being caught up in a possible further bombing. The government and people of Northern Ireland were extremely grateful for their assistance. This is reflected in the coverage of the event in contemporary newspapers. Both the **Northern Whig** and the **Belfast Telegraph** were unionist newspapers (Documents 11 and 12). It is interesting to note their emphasis that Northern Ireland and Éire were neighbours, each in its own territory. The nationalist **Irish News** stressed the links between Irish people throughout the country (Document 13)

DOCUMENT 11: THE NORTHERN WHIG

News that fire brigades from Éire helped at certain places to deal with conflagrations started by the bombers deserves the fullest publicity. Without reserve our thanks are due for this assistance, not only because of its real usefulness, but because of the neighbourly spirit that it signifies. Northern Ireland is grateful and appreciative.

Cited in Redmond, Belfast Is Burning: 1941

DOCUMENT 12: THE BELFAST TELEGRAPH

The people will remember the magnificent spirit which prompted fire brigades from Éire to rush to the assistance of their comrades of the North. This is the good neighbour policy in action, worth months of speeches and assurances. Suffering can be a great leveller; cutting through all petty prejudices.

Cited in Redmond, Belfast Is Burning: 1941

DOCUMENT 13: THE IRISH NEWS

A word of high praise is due to the unstinted assistance given by our countrymen in the neutral part of this island to this area. Not only have they been prompt in sending their fire fighting units: No trouble is too great for the citizens of Éire when it is a question of housing and sheltering refugees. Never was sympathy so manifest: Never, pity so practised. We in our day of sorrow thank our countrymen from the South.

Cited in Redmond, Belfast Is Burning: 1941

QUESTIONS

1. According to Document 11, what 'deserves the fullest publicity'?
2. What two reasons does the author of Document 11 give for being grateful for assistance from the Irish Free State?
3. What point did the author of Document 12 make regarding suffering?
4. In Document 13, what was meant by 'the neutral part of this island'?

Counting the Cost

- The devastating raid of 15-16 April was followed by two further severe raids during the first week of May 1941. It has been estimated that, as a result of all the raids, around **1,100 people died** in Belfast, over **56,000 houses** were destroyed or damaged, and over **£20 million** worth of damage was done to property. Although some government members feared that public anger over the lack of preparation for bombing attacks would lead to riots, this reaction did not materialise. The widespread destruction in the heart of Belfast would require a massive programme of reconstruction. However, this would have to await the conclusion of the war. Meanwhile, in the immediate aftermath of the bombings, the inhabitants of Belfast remained defiant in the face of German attacks. This attitude was conveyed in the newspapers of the day, such as the Belfast Telegraph (Document 14).

DOCUMENT 13: THE IRISH NEWS

ULSTER BEARS THE FULL BRUNT OF NAZI VICTORIES

The following joint communiqué issued by the Ministry of Public Security, Northern Ireland, and the Headquarters of the RAF, Northern Ireland: 'Belfast bore the brunt of the indiscriminate enemy air attacks carried out against Northern Ireland during the night. 'Shortly after the alert had been sounded high explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped at random over the city. 'A considerable number fell in residential and shopping areas, causing numerous casualties, many of which, it is feared, are fatal. 'Other bombs caused damage to commercial and industrial premises. 'Whilst the enemy were being met by a spirited defence from the A.A. guns, the various A.R.P., A.F.S., and other civil defence units were carrying out their duties with courage and devotion under conditions of difficulty and danger. 'In other areas in Northern Ireland the intensity of the attack was not so severe and the casualties were on a correspondingly smaller scale.'

Belfast Telegraph, 19 April 1941

QUESTIONS

1. Would you agree that the headline in this document conveys a strong message? Explain your answer.
2. According to this document, which two authorities issued the joint statement?
3. Is this a biased or an unbiased document? Explain your answer.

Case Study: Review Questions

1. Belfast during World War II

- Name two types of armament being manufactured in Belfast for the British war effort.
- How well was Belfast defended against attacks from the air?
- Did the Government of Northern Ireland underestimate the dangers of a German attack? Explain your answer.
- How did the German conquest of France in June 1940 affect the safety of Belfast?

2. The Bombing of Belfast

- When did the first German attack on Belfast take place and how many planes were involved?
- How long did the mass German air raid on Belfast on 15 April 1941 last?
- What was the extent of the casualties caused by this air raid?

3. Responding to the Crisis

- Why did medical staff with experience during World War I find the situation in Belfast so distressing?
- What was the immediate reaction of many Belfast people after the air raids?
- How many people were made temporarily homeless after the attacks?
- How did the bombing expose the terrible living conditions of the poor in Belfast?

4. Help Arrives from Dublin

- What message did the Northern Irish Minister for Public Security, John McDermott, send to Dublin on 16 April 1941?
- Describe the response of the Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera.
- How did the people of Northern Ireland react to the assistance from the Irish Free State?

5. Counting the Cost

- What is the estimate of the number of people killed in the bombing raids on Belfast in 1941?
- Why did some government ministers fear that riots would break out?
- Were those fears borne out by events?
- Did the bombings weaken the defiance of the people of Belfast in the face of German attacks?



Case Study: Documents-Based Questions

1. Comprehension

- a. What conclusion was reached by the writer at the end of Document 1?
- b. What, according to Document 5, were the two objectives of the air raid?

2. Comparison

- a. Contrast the approach to Éire of the authors of Documents 11 and 12 on the one hand, and the author of Document 13 on the other. Account for the difference in approach.
- b. What do Documents 5 and 7 have in common as primary sources for the historian?

3. Criticism

- a. Do you think that Document 3 is a biased or unbiased account? Explain your answer.
- b. What are the strengths of Document 7 as a primary source?

4. Contextualisation

- a. How were the city and people of Belfast affected by World War II?
- b. What was the impact of World War II on government and society in Northern Ireland?

Political Developments

- The **bombing blitz** on **Belfast** led to increasing criticism of the **Unionist Government**. Already in **1940** the government of **Lord Craigavon** had been criticised because **Northern Ireland** was slower to adapt to wartime conditions than the rest of the **United Kingdom**. When **Craigavon** died suddenly in **November 1940**, he was replaced by his deputy, **J.M. Andrews**. Andrews, who was **seventy years** of age, had been in government since **1921**. He refused to introduce younger men into his Cabinet, and public dissatisfaction was evident when the **Unionist Party** lost a number of by-elections. **Unionist MPs** revolted in **January 1943**, calling for the appointment of new faces to the Cabinet, and **Andrews** resigned from his position as **Prime Minister** the following **May**. His successor was **Sir Basil Brooke**, who reshuffled the Cabinet, dismissing some older ministers and replacing them with younger people.
- **Brooke** was a highly divisive figure because ten years previously he had advised **Protestant** employers to employ only **Protestants** wherever possible. Like his two predecessors, **Craigavon** and **Andrews**, he made no effort to involve the **nationalist community** in the war effort. During the war the **IRA** remained active in **Northern Ireland**. It attacked military targets but had very little success. The government used the **Special Powers Act** and the **B Specials** to counter the threat from the **IRA**. As in the **Irish Free State**, **internment** was introduced in **Northern Ireland** during the war. By **1943** the threat from the **IRA** was almost eliminated.

American Forces in Northern Ireland

- Even before the entry of the **United States of America** into the war in **December 1941**, the **British Government** had been planning the building of bases for **American troops** in **Northern Ireland**. In **January 1942**, **American troops** began to arrive. They constructed vast facilities in the **Londonderry** area, spending over **\$75 million** between **1942 and 1943**. In various parts of **Northern Ireland**, **American bases** brought money to the local economy. During the preparation for the **Allied landings in Normandy** in **June 1944**, thousands of **American** and **British troops** used **Northern Ireland** as a training ground.
- **American troops** praised highly the welcome they received in **Northern Ireland** both at government level and among the ordinary people. The leader of the **Allied invasion of Normandy**, **General Dwight D. Eisenhower**, later paid tribute to the role of **Northern Ireland** when he remarked, 'Without **Northern Ireland**, I do not see how the **American forces** could have been concentrated to begin the invasion of **Europe**.'

The War Ends

- Having fully participated on the **Allied side** in the war, the people of **Northern Ireland** joined in celebrating victory in **May 1945**. People in **Britain** felt great appreciation for the solidarity displayed by the people of the province. Around **38,000** people from **Northern Ireland** had enlisted, and almost **5,000** had been killed in action. The **agricultural produce** from the farms of the province, as well as the **ships, planes, textiles** and other goods manufactured there, contributed considerably to the **British war effort**. In addition, the people of **Northern Ireland** experienced suffering and death at the hands of **German bombers** in the same way as the people of **Britain**. All of these factors helped to strengthen the bond between **Northern Ireland** and the rest of the **United Kingdom**.
- In his **victory speech**, **Winston Churchill** paid tribute to the part played by **Northern Ireland** in protecting the essential **Atlantic shipping routes**. He also contrasted the involvement of the north with the **neutrality of the south** and stated that only for **Northern Ireland's ports**, **Britain** would have invaded the **Irish Free State**. In the aftermath of the war, **Northern Ireland**, like the rest of the **United Kingdom**, was to experience far-reaching social and economic changes.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in 1943 and why was he seen as a very divisive figure?
2. What impact did the arrival of American troops in Northern Ireland have on the local economy?
3. How had Northern Ireland contributed to the British war effort?
4. How did the participation of Northern Ireland in World War II affect its relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom?

PREPARING AN ANSWER QUESTION

What were the main social and economic challenges facing Northern Ireland, 1920-1945? (LC 2009)

General Guidelines

1. In answering this question, note the wide time span stretching from the foundation of the Northern state in 1920 to the end of World War II in 1945.
2. You are required to focus on the main social and economic challenges facing Northern Ireland in those years and the effectiveness of government efforts in dealing with them.
3. A chronological approach is best suited to answering this question, covering the early years of the state in the 1920s, the depression era of the 1930s and wartime conditions between 1939 and 1945.

ANSWER THE QUESTION, using the following structure as a guide:

Paragraph 1 (Introduction): Set out here the three distinctive periods to be discussed in the course of the essay. Refer to the sectarian and political divisions that characterised the formation of the Northern state, and how these created social and economic challenges for the government of Northern Ireland.

Paragraph 2: Refer here to the financial constraints on the government of Northern Ireland arising from the limited fiscal powers contained in the Government of Ireland Act (1920). Note in particular the effects on the ability of the government to spend in social areas such as health and housing.

Paragraph 3: Focus here on the problems facing industry during the 1920s, referring in particular to the decline in traditional industries such as shipbuilding and textiles. Also mention here the low levels of expenditure in areas such as health, housing and welfare, and the government's priority in dealing with law and order issues rather than economic/social development.

Paragraph 4: Refer here to the serious challenges facing Northern Ireland following the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Note in particular the high levels of economic decline, unemployment and emigration.

ANSWER THE QUESTION, using the following structure as a guide:

Paragraph 5: Consider the impact of the worsening economic conditions of the 1930s on society in Northern Ireland, mentioning widespread rioting and deepening sectarian divisions.

Paragraph 6: Refer here to the transformation of the Northern economy following the outbreak of war in 1939, focusing on the impact on agriculture and industry, high rates of employment and better wages.

Paragraph 7: Refer here to the bombing of Belfast and to its social and economic effects, including the loss of life and the destruction of property.

Paragraph 8 (Conclusion): Summarise here the three phases in the social and economic life of Northern Ireland. Note the dominance of political and sectarian divisions, and the consequent neglect of social and economic progress, especially in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Establishment of the Welfare State

- In **July 1945** a general election was held throughout the **United Kingdom**, including **Northern Ireland**. Because of the war, it was the first election to be held in ten years. Whereas in **Northern Ireland** most of the thirteen **Westminster seats** were won by **unionists**, in **Great Britain** the **Labour Party** won a landslide victory. By electing a **Labour Government** under **Prime Minister Clement Attlee**, the voters were signalling clearly that they demanded radical change once peace returned.
- The **Labour Party** proceeded to **nationalise** - place in state ownership important industries, such as **coal** and **steel**, and the **rail transport system**. It also introduced sweeping changes in the area of **health**, **education** and **social welfare**. Because the state took over responsibility in these areas, the new system became known as the **welfare state**. **Unionist politicians** in **Northern Ireland** were mostly conservative in outlook and opposed to the **welfare state**. However, as the northern state was part of the **United Kingdom**, they had no choice but to implement the measures decided by the **Labour Government** in **London**. In the years ahead, these measures would have a huge impact on the quality of life enjoyed by people throughout **Northern Ireland**.

Health and Social Welfare

- By **1945** the provision of **healthcare** in **Northern Ireland** had not advanced much beyond the inadequate level of the **1920s and 1930s**. Whereas the better-off could afford private care, the poor had to rely on an underfunded, antiquated public system. This changed completely when the **Labour Government** introduced the **welfare state**. Large-scale social reform had been planned during **World War II**, when the **Beveridge Report** was published. This was an all-party report in **Britain** that recommended free healthcare and a system of insurance for all people, irrespective of their income. For the first time, rich and poor in **Northern Ireland** would be treated equally in the health system. People could attend a doctor of their choice, and all healthcare, including medicines, would be free. To pay for this, taxation increased.
- However, **Northern Ireland** did very well out of the new system: between **1945 and 1951**, taxation there doubled, whereas payments from the **British Exchequer** increased sevenfold. In effect, the **British taxpayers** were paying a massive subsidy to extend the **welfare state** to **Northern Ireland**. Along with a transformation in healthcare, **social welfare** was radically overhauled. The old system of outdoor relief, with its association with the workhouses, was abolished. Instead, a system of **National Insurance** for all workers was introduced. The unemployed, the sick, the elderly and the widowed received vastly improved welfare payments.

Improvements in Education

- Under the **Education Act (1947)**, all levels of education, from primary to university level, were reformed. At eleven years of age, students sat the '**11-Plus**' examination. Those who passed were given a free academic education in **grammar schools**. The remaining three-quarters went to **secondary modern schools**, which provided a more practical type of education. In effect, the vast majority of pupils from then on did not have to pay school fees. As a result, the numbers attending secondary school doubled between **1947 and 1952**.
- The reforms in education had a major impact on the **Catholic community**. The building grants paid to **Catholic schools** were increased, and about 80 per cent of their pupils did not have to pay fees. For able **Catholic students**, both school and university education could now be free. This opened up new opportunities that had not existed in their parents' time. As a result, by the **1960s** many well-educated and articulate **Catholics** were emerging from secondary schools and universities. They were no longer prepared to put up with discrimination under **Unionist rule**, and they led campaigns for **civil rights** for all the citizens of **Northern Ireland**.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by 'the welfare state'?
2. How did unionist politicians in Northern Ireland regard the introduction of the welfare state?
3. What changes were brought about in the provision of healthcare?
4. How was the provision of social welfare radically changed?
5. How did reforms in education affect the Catholic community in Northern Ireland after 1945?

Post-War Reconstruction in Northern Ireland

- Although traditional industries such as **shipbuilding**, **engineering** and **linen manufacturing** had done well during the war, the return of peace resulted in a decline in demand for their products. The government therefore saw the need for **diversification** of **Northern Ireland's** industrial base. In **1945**, it passed the **Industries Development Act**, which introduced **loans** and **grants** for new enterprises, as well as providing them with **factory sites**. Many jobs were created in the **construction industry** as the ruins in **Belfast** and elsewhere were cleared away and new homes and factories were built. Under the **welfare state**, new **hospitals** and **schools** were also built. As a result, **10,000 new jobs** were created between **1945 and 1950**. However, despite social reforms and economic progress, political life in **Northern Ireland** continued to be dominated by bitter disagreements over the **Union** with **Great Britain**.

Northern Ireland and the Declaration of a Republic in the South

- The declaration of the **Irish Republic** in **1949** and the consequent departure of the **Irish Free State** from the **British Commonwealth** gave **unionists** a further opportunity to stress their loyalty to the **British Crown**. The northern **Prime Minister**, **Sir Basil Brooke**, called a general election in order to rally his followers. At the time, the **nationalists** in **Northern Ireland** were supported by an **Anti-Partition League**. This consisted of supporters of **Irish unity** in **Ireland**, **Britain** and **America** who hoped to end partition by using peaceful means such as propaganda and lectures to state their case and persuade people of their views. It had the backing of the **Minister for External Affairs** in **Dublin**, **Seán MacBride**. However, in the election in **Northern Ireland**, the **Unionist Government** was returned to power with an increased majority, as **Protestants** who had voted for independents or **Labour Party** candidates in the previous election now supported official **Unionist Party** candidates. In response to the declaration of the **Irish Republic** in **Dublin**, the **British Labour Government** passed the **Ireland Act (1949)**. Although this Act accepted the declaration of a republic in the south, it gave the **unionists** the strongest guarantee of their position that they had yet received:
 - *In no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland.*

Northern Ireland and the Declaration of a Republic in the South

- This appeared to copperfasten **partition** for the foreseeable future. Hence, both **World War II** and the subsequent introduction of the **welfare state** in **Northern Ireland** deepened divisions between **north** and **south**. The **Americans** and **British** were grateful for the participation of **Northern Ireland** on the **Allied side**, whereas the **neutral south** suffered a certain degree of diplomatic isolation in the immediate post-war years. Whereas during the **1920s** and **1930s** there had been widespread poverty north and south, the introduction of the **welfare state** in **Northern Ireland** opened up a huge gap between the two states.
- The **Republic of Ireland** could not afford to match the huge subsidies that **Northern Ireland** received from **Britain** to finance its health, education and social welfare systems. In the years ahead, therefore, **unionists** had another powerful argument in favour of remaining in the **United Kingdom** - namely, a **welfare state** that was vastly superior to the welfare provisions existing in the **Republic of Ireland**. Thus, by **1949 Northern Ireland** was advancing socially and economically. However, the underlying structural problems of **sectarianism** and **discrimination** remained unresolved. They were to surface with tragic consequences in the decades ahead.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did the government of Northern Ireland see the need for a diversification of the state's industrial base?
 2. How did it set about doing this?
2. What was the Anti-Partition League?
3. How did the passing of the Ireland Act (1949) strengthen the position of unionists in Northern Ireland?
4. Why did the divisions between north and south deepen after the war?

THE CHALLENGES FACING UNIONIST GOVERNMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, 1921-49

1. The two main challenges facing Unionist governments in Northern Ireland between 1921 and 1949 were the maintenance of control over the state and the management of the economy. Following the Declaration of a Republic in Dublin in 1949, the position of the Ulster Unionists was strengthened. The Ireland Act (1949) guaranteed Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom as long as the Parliament in Belfast so wished.
2. The presence of a deeply resentful nationalist minority and the threat of republican violence was regarded by the Unionist Government as a justification for repressive measures like the Special Powers Act, the B Specials and discrimination against Catholics.
3. Unionist Prime Ministers like Lord Craigavon and Lord Brookeborough stressed the Protestant and unionist identity of Northern Ireland. In order to strengthen their control, the Unionists abolished proportional representation (PR) in elections and manipulated constituency boundaries (gerrymandering).
4. The limited self- government under the Government of Ireland Act (1920) meant that the Unionist Government in Belfast had limited powers in financial and economic matters, with most important decisions being taken by the British Government in London.
5. Between 1921 and 1939 there were very high levels of poverty and unemployment in Northern Ireland, with the decline of traditional industries like shipbuilding and linen.
6. Government expenditure on health, housing and social welfare was low in Northern Ireland during the 1920s and declined further during the economic depression in the 1930s.
7. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939 the Unionist Government pledged its full commitment to the British war effort. While there were many casualties and huge destruction in Belfast due to German bombing, the economy prospered due to the growth of war industries.
8. Between 1945 and 1949 the Unionist Government had to adjust to a radically changed political situation in London. Against their will, the conservative Unionist leaders had to implement the Welfare State provisions.