

Activity 1 Recap: What were the weaknesses of Belfast's Defences?

Weaknesses of Belfast's defences	Reasons why Belfast was so weakly defended
<p>Belfast's sole squadron of Hurricanes could not fly at night The city's balloon barrage was very light. There were only 6 light and 16 heavy anti aircraft guns. There were no searchlights until after the first German raid; Belfast had searchlights but these had been transferred to the mainland in 1939 The city's passive defences (firemen, ARP, medical) were under equipped, understaffed and unready When war broke out there were only 4 air raid shelters; they were made from sandbags and were found in the grounds of the City Hall. After the raids on Coventry in November 1940 the number of air raid shelters was increased but they could still only provide protection for 25% of the city's population.</p>	<p>Craigavon and the Unionist government were more concerned with dealing with the IRA and internal security Stormont was faced with serious domestic problems in the 1930s e.g. unemployment and social deprivation Complacency: there was an almost unshakeable belief that because of its location Northern Ireland would not be a target. Even the Committee of Imperial Defence said in 1939 that 'there was little likelihood of an attack'. There was a great deal of confusion over responsibility. It was never made clear where the responsibilities of London ended and those of Belfast began. There was similar confusion about the roles of the Northern Ireland government and that of the local councils. The Northern Ireland government was unwilling to commit itself to large scale defence spending, preferring to keep a tight grip on the purse strings.</p>

Activity 3 CCEA textbook questions

1. How effective were preparations for war in Northern Ireland?

Preparations in northern Ireland were not very effective. Belfast only had 22 anti-aircraft guns, insufficient air cover from fighter aircraft and only enough public shelter for a quarter of the city's population.
2. Why did German bombers see Northern Ireland as a target?

Germany was aware of the key role the city's industries were playing in the war effort. Northern Ireland was also important strategically.
3. What did the Blitz reveal about living conditions for many of Belfast's citizens?

The Blitz exposed the poverty, poor housing and levels of health being endured by many in Northern Ireland. Only 50,000 houses had been built in the interwar years and housing standards were much lower than in Britain. Children were infested with lice and many were suffering with illnesses such as tuberculosis.

Activity 4: Complete the PPQs

1. Why did German bombing raids cause so much loss of life and damage during the Blitz? (6marks)
 - The Northern Ireland government did not have adequate defence preparations for Belfast – it did not expect a German attack.
 - It also believed that the country would be protected by Britain's defences as German bombers would have to cross over the British mainland to reach N. Ireland.
 - Belfast was poorly prepared for the air raids.
 - There were only 22 anti-aircraft guns (and they failed to shoot down any German bombers), very few barrage balloons (which were too low to deter enemy aircraft!), and only one squadron of fighters to protect the city.
 - There were not enough air raid shelters (enough for only 25% of the city's population), and blackout restrictions were not carried out properly.
 - Also, few people took up the offer of evacuation, and there was a shortage of fire-fighting equipment.
 - The use of incendiary bombs caused extensive fires in the densely populated areas of Belfast.

Activity 4: Complete the PPQs

2. Why did Germany target Belfast during WW2?

(6marks)

- It was believed in the early years of the war that Northern Ireland would not be targeted, but Belfast was important to the British war effort.
- Aircraft, ships and munitions were being built there, and the Germans knew that these industries were helping the British war effort against Germany.
- Belfast also played an important strategic role in the war against Germany, especially in the Battle of the Atlantic
- Belfast was seen as a legitimate target as it was part of the UK.
- Germany also hoped that the bombing raids would undermine the morale of the civilian population.