

Task 2: Exam style question AFL

Explain two of the following:

- The different attitudes to conscription in Northern Ireland
- The impact of the Belfast Blitz
- The effects of blackouts, rationing and evacuation on the people of Northern Ireland

(9 marks x 2)

Instructions:

- Use the following information to assess your answer.
- Mark each section separately.

Level Descriptors

- **Level 1 ([1]–[3])**
- Answers will be vague and generalised showing limited knowledge and understanding of the event/issue chosen. Writing communicates ideas using a limited range of historical terminology and shows some skills of selection of material, but the response lacks clarity and organisation. Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with limited accuracy.
- **Level 2 ([4]–[6])**
- Answers will include relevant information demonstrating some knowledge and understanding of the period. An explanation is given showing an attempt to analyse the importance of the event/issue chosen. Writing communicates ideas using historical terms accurately and shows some skills of selection and organisation of material. Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with some accuracy.
- **Level 3 ([7]–[9])**
- Answers will provide more detailed, relevant information demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of the period. A developed explanation is given demonstrating analysis of the importance of the event/issue chosen. Writing communicates ideas effectively, using a range of precisely selected historical terms, and organises information clearly and coherently. Candidates spell, punctuate and use the rules of grammar with consistent accuracy.

The different attitudes to conscription in Northern Ireland

- Even before the war had started, Craig (NI PM) proposed that conscription be extended to NI.. Craig did so to show Ulster's loyalty and to counter the low number of men volunteering.
- Britain introduced conscription in April 1939, but conscription was not introduced to N. Ireland because the British government realised that the large nationalist minority there were opposed to it.
- In addition, the government did not want to alienate de Valera, and lose any goodwill that they hoped to gain from his policy of 'benevolent neutrality'.
- This disappointed the Unionist leader, Lord Craigavon, who believed N. Ireland should be treated the same as the rest of the U.K.
- The Stormont government supported conscription as a symbol of their loyalty to Britain, and unionists believed that since N. Ireland was part of the U.K. it should be introduced to N. Ireland.
- Most nationalists believed that participation in the war effort should be voluntary, and they did not want to be forced to fight for Britain, which had been responsible for the partition of Ireland, and many of them had an Irish identity and would have preferred to be part of Eire.
- Also Eire, the country they preferred to be in, had adopted a policy of neutrality in the war, and they wanted to do the same.
- Also, the choice of Sir Basil Brooke to lead the recruitment drive was not popular with nationalists, who remembered him encouraging Unionists only to "employ Protestant lads and lasses". In May 1941 there were large nationalist protests against conscription.
- There was a great upsurge of nationalist opposition led by de Valera.
- He said that conscription was 'an act of war against our nation'. A similar line was taken by the Roman Catholic Church and Irish American groups.
- There were further proposals by various Unionist politicians in 1940 and 1941 but all of these were rejected, on the advice of the RUC. Conscription was never introduced in NI.

The impact of the Belfast Blitz

- The air raids claimed the lives of 955 people, with almost 2,500 being injured.
- Over 56,000 houses were destroyed or damaged (53% of the total)
- No British shipyard suffered greater damage during a single raid than did Harland and Wolff as a result of the attack of 4–5 May 1941 and production did not recover for six months.
- 11 churches, two hospitals and two schools were also destroyed
- There was also a less hostile attitude to Eire as its government had sent fire engines to N. Ireland to help tackle the fire caused by the Blitz. Relief funds were also set up in Eire for those affected by the Blitz
- At least 100,000 people left Belfast to get away from the bombing, and to try to find homes in the country.
- Ten thousand officially crossed into Éire. Thousands of other people left the city to live with family/friends in places like Bangor, Larne, Carrickfergus and Antrim
- There was deep criticism of John Andrew's government in N. Ireland. In 1943 he was replaced as the Unionist leader by Sir Basil Brooke.
- In the months after the raids Belfast's air defences were strengthened and more shelters were built

The effects of blackouts, rationing and evacuation on the people of Northern Ireland

Blackouts

- Blackouts were intended to make it difficult for enemy bombers to locate their targets..
- Blackout hoods were put over vehicle lights and white strips painted on bumpers to make them more visible.
- The ARP (Air Raid Protection) was also set up to enforce blackouts, but there was widespread apathy towards them.
- However, blackouts did not stop the Nazi attacks but the blackout itself proved to be quite dangerous:
- 4,000 people were killed in traffic accidents throughout the UK;
- In Northern Ireland complacency meant that the blackout regulations were frequently ignored; in early 1941 in Belfast there were 1,000 offences each month.
- Cinemas, theatres and dancehalls remained open, unlike in Britain.

Rationing

- Rationing was considered essential during the war. Farmers were encouraged to produce more, and private citizens were encouraged to grow their own vegetables and to become more self-reliant. Limits were put on food and fuel supplies to discourage waste and reduce any reliance on imports.
- Although imported foods such as sugar, tea and fruit were rationed, food was more plentiful in N. Ireland than it was in Britain, and it was for this reason that many soldiers were sent there for training, and by 1944 there were 300,000 troops in N. Ireland.
- Shortages of fuel meant that priority was given to the military and essential users such as doctors. Private transport all but ceased. Transport was confined mainly to buses and most buses stopped at 7p.m. compared to 11p.m. before the war. Most people out at night cycled. Milkmen used the old horse and cart combination for their deliveries.

Evacuation

- Many parents in Northern Ireland kept their children at home
- At the time of the first German attack on Belfast in the spring of 1941 only 7,000 women and children had been evacuated (there were some 70,000 children in Belfast).
- The next few days after the raid saw a mass exodus from the city - the Ministry of Home Affairs estimated that inside a month 220,000 had fled (some 10,000 over the border).
- While many enjoyed their stay in the country evacuation did bring many problems:
- there was often poor organisation with villagers picking the evacuees they wanted,
- there were often severe food shortages.