**Belfast during World War II, 1939 – 1945**

Belfast was poorly defended from air attack, it had only 24 anti-aircraft guns. The fire brigades were inadequate. There were no public air-raid shelters because the government did not want to spend money and there were no searchlights.

The Northern Ireland Government failed to accept that there was a threat from the German Luftwaffle, but some air-raid shelters were built when the British Government warned about the danger of air attack. The German conquest of France and the Blitz of British cities brought the threat closer.

Belfast was bombed on 7 April 1941 by seven German bombers. 13 people were killed and there were fires in the city. A much more serious attack occurred on 15th April. Belfast was attacked for 5 hours by 180 aircraft. They missed the docks and bombed mainly the working class areas. 900 people were killed and about 600 were seriously injured. After this people left the city for fear of attack, some left for the South of Ireland, others left the city each night.

The Northern Ireland Government requested fire brigades form DeValera. DeValera sent fire brigades from Dublin, Dundalk, Drogheda and Dun Laoghaire. There were further raids in May 1941. Incendiary and high-explosive bombs were dropped on the harbour and on Harland and Wolff, who produced warships, aircraft carriers, merchant ships and tanks for the British war effort. Harland and Wolff was put out of production for 6 months.

There were 1,100 people killed, half the houses in the city were destroyed. 20 million pounds of damage was done to the city. The government was criticised for poor defenses and preparations. It was one of the factors that led to the replacement of J.M. Andrews as Prime Minister by Basil Brooke. Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 ended the danger of more bombing.