



BELFAST BLITZ

**THE ROLE OF THE
IRISH FIREFIGHTERS**



ON THE NIGHT OF 7 APRIL 1941, THE GERMAN AIR FORCE, THE LUFTWAFFE, ATTACKED BELFAST FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT BECAME KNOWN AS THE DOCKSIDE RAID. FIFTEEN PEOPLE WERE KILLED.



WORSE WAS TO COME. ON THE NIGHT OF 15 APRIL 1941, EASTER TUESDAY, THE LUFTWAFFE RETURNED WITH 180 BOMBERS.




BY EARLY MORNING, BELFAST WAS ABLAZE AND HUNDREDS WERE DEAD. WITH FIRE CREWS STRETCHED TO THEIR LIMIT, THE STORMONT GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO ASK THEIR NEIGHBOURS IN EIRE FOR HELP.



THE TAOISEACH, ÉAMON DE VALERA, DID NOT HESITATE.

...ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS. EVERY AVAILABLE FIRE APPLIANCE MUST BE SENT TO BELFAST.



ARE WE GLAD TO SEE YOU! WE'LL MAKE SURE YOU GET THROUGH. HOW MANY OF YOU ARE THERE?

WE MANAGED TO GET 70 MEN AND 13 ENGINES.

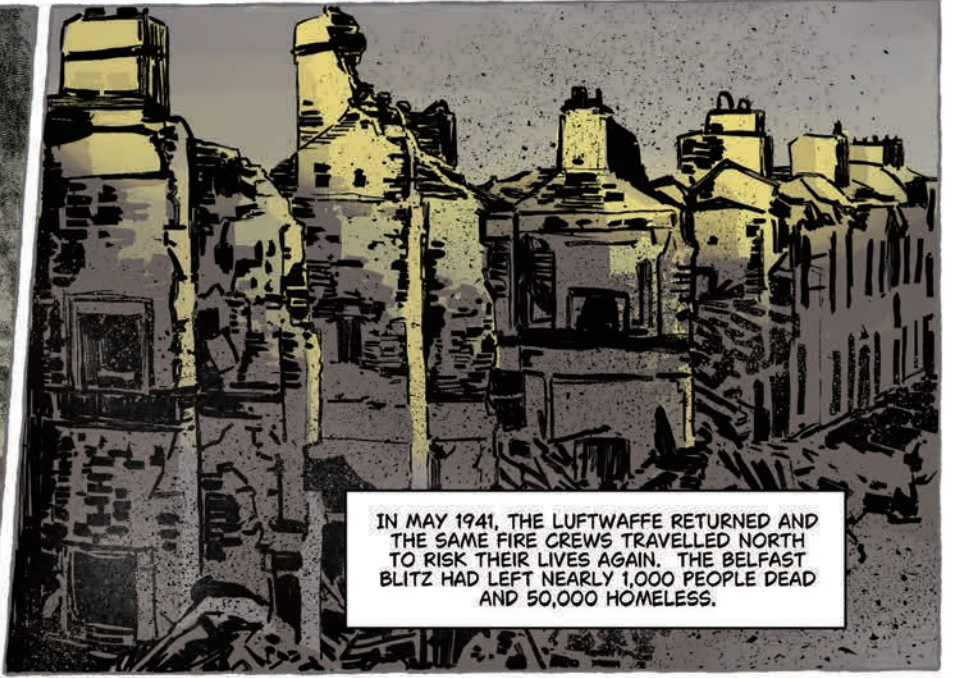
THE SOUTHERN MEN TACKLED FIRES AT THE DOCKS, IN THE CITY CENTRE, EAST BELFAST AND CRUMLIN ROAD.



THAT EVENING, THE EXHAUSTED CREWS CLIMBED BACK ON BOARD THEIR ENGINES TO RETURN HOME. AS THEY LEFT, THEY DROVE PAST TRAUMATISED PEOPLE, FLEEING BELFAST TO SLEEP IN THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE.



IN MAY 1941, THE LUFTWAFFE RETURNED AND THE SAME FIRE CREWS TRAVELLED NORTH TO RISK THEIR LIVES AGAIN. THE BELFAST BLITZ HAD LEFT NEARLY 1,000 PEOPLE DEAD AND 50,000 HOMELESS.



THE REMARKABLE BRAVERY OF THOSE FIREMEN WAS RECOGNISED IN BELFAST NEWSPAPERS.

The people will remember the magnificent spirit which prompted fire brigades from Éire to rush to the assistance of their colleagues in 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.

TODAY, THIS COURAGE IS STILL HONOURED AND A FIREFIGHTER'S HELMET FROM DUN LAOGHAIRE FIRE BRIGADE IS PROUDLY DISPLAYED IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND WAR MEMORIAL.

