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Put Out the Light

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Not a Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

1

Using a bombing raid by the Germans on Sheffield on the night of 12 December 1940 in which over 700 civilians died as a result of the city centre being bombed rather than the factories on the outskirts of the city, Terry Deary has woven an unlikely and highly implausible tale of children's involvement in this raid, two from Dachau and two from Sheffield.

Sally and Billy Thomas who live in Sheffield, are befriended by an Air Raid Warden who uses them as runners to spot lights showing, when they should of course have been down in the air raid shelters. They hear about a series of petty thefts and decide to catch the thief who appears to be using the air raids for cover. Their father is in the RAF at Firbeck Airfield and they phone him to discover whether an air raid warning is false or not, one of the implausible happenings in this story. Meanwhile Manfred and Hansl in Dachau befriend a Polish slave girl, Irina, from the nearby factory, and through her find a way to put a message on a bomb destined for England. Manfred's brother is a bomber pilot and in another unlikely act he agrees to get Irina to England, hiding her in the bomb bay of his Heinkel. Manfred also unexpectedly travels to England in the plane and both end up landing together in Sheffield using Irina's parachute, to be discovered by Billy and Sally.

The reason this story gives for the bombing of Sheffield city centre rather than the factories is that the RAF have worked out a way of deflecting the beam that the Germans use to direct their bombs. There is a scene in the story where an RAF Officer makes the decision to deflect the beam in order to save the factories despite the civilian casualties that would ensue. It is not clear whether this decision is fact or fiction. There is also a scene in which an officer is punched by a Sergeant pilot and instead of being court-martialled as he most certainly would have been, he is moved from bomber aircraft to fighter planes because he does not want to bomb civilians.

There are so many good stories about Second World War bombing raids that could have been reprinted; **Exeter Blitz** by David Rees and **Fireweed** by Jill Paton Walsh, come to mind, balanced accounts which did not need to sensationalise events which were horrific enough by themselves.

Running Order:

60

Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/put-out-the-light>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/185>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/janet-fisher>