

**We were walking up a wall of flak.
The sky was darkened by the black
puffs.**

We were walking up a wall of flak. The sky was darkened by the black puffs. This was Vienna, the target city in southern Nazi territory, the nucleus of resistance to the Russians and the rail center of Austria. Three hundred and twenty anti-aircraft guns blackened the sky with a barrage. They had our altitude, our speed, and our heading. We used no evasive tactics. A tight formation against fighters is more important. It seemed incredible that those innocent black puffs were fountains of millions of pieces of slashing steel. Yet they spelled death. It seemed that no planes could penetrate that rain of steel without at least partial destruction but they did.

The first group was dropping its bombs. There was a white flash and like a child's toy a B-24 plunged earthward in a flaming spiral. No chutes appeared. Then two more planes, streaming smoke from the engines, were dropping rapidly. Then we were in it.

It was above us and below us and in front of us. There was a burst to our left that sounded like gravel being thrown against our side. It gave a quick thick bark. Our speed of two hundred miles per hour was apparent now. Then the ship rocked crazily from the concussion of two bursts directly beneath us. Time stood still. Would they ever drop those bombs! Number three of A flight slid out to the side and dropped away. That was Horn's crew. We had trained with them.

The target was clearly visible beneath the pall of smoke. In the city proper raged great fires caused by the shower of incendiaries from a B-1 group. We watched the flak and the lead ship. It's essential to release just as the lead does in order to insure a complete target coverage. The group plowed steadily on. Then a bomb appeared below the open bomb bay of the lead ship. I hit my switch. Nearly everyone shouted, "there they go."

I looked at the target as the smoke thickened and closed over it. The city was ablaze. The thousands of incendiaries with the hundreds of five pounders made Vienna blaze like the lights of Broadway. I wondered what it was like to be down there. How impersonal this war was! Perhaps we had killed hundreds and several of our boys had died, but none of us saw the carnage of it. This was the aerial war.

We wanted to jam the throttles and peel off our heading to escape the fearful bursts, but we held our formation. The flak lessened, the formation swung in a slow turn; the bomb run was over. We headed for Italy.

Back home the papers reported: "High flying B-24's of the 15th Air Force blasted targets at Brux, Linz and in the Vienna area."

THE END



Ship #38 825 Squadron, sustaining heavy battle damage manages to make it back to the base at Torretta. It appears much of the destruction took place when she bellied in as parts were flying through the air. Notice the inboard section of landing flap hanging by only one hinge. The laws of the air were lopsided, some aircraft sustaining major damage would maintain flight while others seemingly unscratched were seen dropping out of formation never to be seen again. Robert A Harrison photo 825 Sq.

