

radio and heard the announcements you could look at the map and see in which square the bomber formation was approaching. So you knew where the bomber formation flew and in which direction. Then there was the Air Attack Alarm. When the bomber formation was located within fifteen minutes flight time from a probable target, an air attack alarm was given for this area. But often the air attack alarm and the bomber formation reached the target at the same time. In Vienna after the announcement "Bomber formations approaching from Carinthia and Styria" you could see many people, mostly women and children, wandering to midtown where the flak towers stood. Only flak towers gave safe shelter. Today these flak towers still stand but they are used for storage purposes.

At the beginning of the air raid alarm things always happened in the same way. After the hooting of the sirens a tremendous quietness lay upon all places. Most people went down to the basements and started to wait. Some courageous people stayed in the building, the windows of which were opened widely, and watched the sky to see whether the bomber formation is approaching or not. From the aerial state announcement and from the map you knew from which direction the bombers must come. When there was a clear day you could suddenly see many tiny glittering dots often with vapor trails already from a distance of thirty miles. If this was the case the bombers would reach you within ten minutes. Ebergassing lay right on the outer flak ring around Vienna. Therefore the flak began to fire when the bombers were approaching Ebergassing. It was always the same picture, the flak shot a barrier and the bombers flew through it. It was a real sight. First the roaring of hundreds of engines, then the cracking of the flak guns, the bursting of the shells in the sky and the crashing of one or more planes. When a plane went out of the formation and down you could hear a sound just as if the plane would howl. This howling was probably caused by the engines working with full power. Then the waiting to see if the crew could bail out. When a target near Ebergassing was bombed I could hear the whistling of the bombs and if we could hear this sound we considered ourselves lucky. There was a common saying,

some kind of rule: "The bomb you hear whistling does not hit you".

After twenty minutes everything was over until the next aerial state announcement was given, informing about a new bomber formation approaching which could be followed again by the announcements and the Aerial State map. If no other formation was approaching within half an hour they gave the "All clear" signal. The siren was wailing in a continuous tone for one minute.

Now let me tell you how I saw the



*Young gunner awaiting orders to fire.*

first raid and what was to follow: On the 13th of August we had daylight saving time which meant that the clock was put two hours ahead at the beginning of summer. About half past one a.m. I was fishing in a brook next to the carpet factory in Ebergassing when I heard the loud noise of engines in the air. I looked in the sky to the South and saw some planes flying to the West. They flew high in the sky and I could not recognize the type. Shortly after that I heard a dull rumbling. The earth was shaking. I thought that this was a result of the practice firing of the German Army. But suddenly the sirens in the factory were wailing. I did

not care and kept on fishing. Ten minutes later the director of the factory came running to the brook where I was fishing and shouted to me that I should go home at once because there was an air attack warning. So I ran home. But my mother was working out in the fields about one mile away from the village. So I ran to her. I met her in the open fields. She pointed to the direction of Weiner Neustadt which lies approximately 20 miles away and said that there was bombing. I saw three huge clouds of smoke rising 10,000 feet straight up in the sky drifting towards the west. That evening our neighbor who was working in Weiner Neustadt told us about the attack. He was assigned to the flak. They had their 37 mm flak gun in position on the roof of a workshop building. Shortly after the air attack alarm many people were still walking slowly across the airfield to the air shelter. He said that the planes were approaching in V formation from the South. The leader of the flak position looked through his binoculars and shouted, "They are Americans!". The flak crew was only able to shoot a few shells at the bombers. Then they had to seek shelter because the bombs were coming down. Some bombs broke through the roof on which the flak was in position and exploded in the workshop building. The attack came as a surprise to the people also to those who did not reach the air shelters. There were many casualties.

Also at the second air attack on October first, 1943 the air raid alarm system was not fully in place in the whole area. On this day, it was a Friday, I was still in school when shortly before 12:00 o'clock noon the earth was shaking as if there was an earthquake. Soon after that we heard a dull rumbling and sirens wailing. We ran out of the school building to a bus stop from where a bus usually drove us the three kilometers home. This bus stop was situated on an elevation where already a few people were standing looking to the direction of Weiner Neustadt. From there for the first time I saw the maneuver of an air attack. The people said that the first wave of aircraft had already dropped their bombs but in the East you could already see the second wave approaching. And indeed there I saw a number of glittering dots in the sky approaching a light gray cloud. At this point I knew that