The Response of the Vienna Government and Population to the American Bombing Attacks of 1944-1945

Aurelia Roth

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd_legacy

Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd_legacy/97

This thesis (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Legacy ETDs by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.
THE RESPONSE OF THE VIENNA GOVERNMENT AND POPULATION TO THE
AMERICAN BOMBING ATTACKS OF 1944-1945

BY

AURELIA ROTH

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty
of the College of Graduate Studies
At Georgia Southern University
In Affiliation with Armstrong State College
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree
Master of Arts

Statesboro, Georgia
1994
THE RESPONSE OF THE VIENNA GOVERNMENT AND POPULATION TO
THE AMERICAN BOMBING ATTACKS OF 1944-1945

BY

AURELIA ROTH

Approved:

Olavi Arens, Chairperson

Mark R. Finlay

Janet D. Stone

Vice President and Dean of the
College of Graduate Studies

Date

11/21/94
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 1: THE AIR ATTACKS ................................................................. 5

CHAPTER 2: AIR PROTECTION .............................................................. 14

CHAPTER 3: THE CITY GOVERNMENT ........................................... 37

CHAPTER 4: THE POPULATION: DUTY, DEPENDENCY, DETERMINATION ......................... 55

CHAPTER 5: NUTRITION AND HEALTH ..................................... 77

CHAPTER 6: BOMBARDMENT FROM WITHIN: THE PROPAGANDA 91

CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE ...................................................... 101

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................. 106
INTRODUCTION

After Germany declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941, Allied military strategists decided to give priority to the defeat of Hitler’s forces which had already overrun most of Europe. But before the Allies were to build up a force strong enough to cross the English Channel and establish a front on land against Germany, the American Army Air Force (AAF) joined the British Royal Air Force (RAF) in the already raging air war against German dominated Europe. The strategic goal for the Allied air campaign was finalized at the Casablanca Conference, in January 1943. According to the adopted policy statement, called the Combined Bomber Offensive, the US Army Air Force and the RAF were to use their air strength for the “progressive destruction and dislocation of the enemy’s war industrial and economic system and the undermining of his morale to a point where his capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.”

After the Allied invasion of Italy which began with a landing on Sicily on July 10, 1943, the Americans moved a part of their flying force to Italy, in order to facilitate a more efficient bombing of Austria and parts of Eastern Europe from the South, rather than from across the English Channel. The American 15th Army Air Force was officially created on November 1, 1943. Under the command of General Spaatz, it was assigned the task of the bombing of Austria

---

2 Ibid.
and parts of Eastern Europe. Headquarters were set up in Bari, Italy, and planes began to fly out of Foggia International Airport.

In July 1944, after D-Day, the British Air Ministry formulated proposals for speeding up the end of the war through "aerial terror raids." A proposal document contained suggestions for the bombing of small towns, raids on larger cities, and the strafing of roads and railroads. A copy was sent to Washington; after analysis, the American General Laurence Kuter, the Assistant Chief of Air Staff for planning, contended that it was "contrary to our national ideals to wage war against civilians," but General Henry ("Hap") Arnold, his superior, came out in favor of it and proposed strafing and bombing of populated areas, believing the sight of Allied aircraft flying over Germany would "deepen the [Germans'] feelings of hopelessness." By that time, major German cities, such as Hamburg and Berlin, had already been extensively bombed, mostly by the RAF's massive use of "precision bombing" at night.

Even though moral considerations were concerns in the discussion on the adoption of a bombing plan, as well as worries about public opinion, at this point the U.S. rejected the British concept in favor of "strategic bombardment," a concept already accepted in January 1943 by the American Army Air Force. It was argued that "strategic bombardment" would play an important part in the final defeat of the enemy. The official intent was "to cause disruption of the enemy's war effort by bombarding vitally important industrial areas with a long-range aim of disrupting the German economy."
installations, and destroying specific targets, thereby breaking down the fighting ability and morale of the enemy." Thereupon American bombing of Vienna and other parts of Austria, (annexed to the Reich in 1938,) began in earnest.

Before regular bombing began, there had been two previous isolated incidents. The first was the bombing of the Messerschmitt factory, in August 1943. This factory in Wiener Neustadt, about 25 miles south of Vienna, produced single-engine fighter aircraft. The second consisted of an attack on Vienna itself, in January 1944. Following two more attacks in the spring of 1944, regular bombing of Vienna began in September 1944 and increased in the following months. When the attacks ceased in April 1945, following the Soviet capture of the city, the population had endured a total of 110 air attacks, 215 hours and 30 minutes in duration, and causing the deaths of 8769 civilians." The Americans used most often general purpose (GP) bombs of either 227 or 454 kilograms of weight, containing 51% explosives, and demolition bombs, with 60% explosives.12

The American bombing presented a new challenge for the city government as well as the city population who found themselves ensconced already in the dire circumstances of a 5-year war.13 The city government, stripped of its pre-Anschluss officials, consisted of dedicated National Socialist party members from Germany proper who spouted Nazi philosophy in all their

10 Ibid.
11 All statistics of Vienna air attacks from: Official Statistics of Frequency and Results of Bombing, as reported by the Chief of the Statistics Office of the City of Vienna, Dr. Karl Pospischil in the collection Reports of private persons (survivors) (Kleine Bestaende Gruppe VI/83-1-3, part 1, folder 1, and VI/82-1/ RA - 71/44.), Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (City Archives).
13 The British, except for minor sporadic incidents earlier in the Austrian provinces, did not get involved in the bombardment of Vienna; it fell therefore to the Americans to direct their bombing power towards the city.
endeavors, but needed the cooperation of the population, not only in the quest for winning the war, but also to survive. Viennese citizens, coping with every-day deprivation and struggling to survive, had to rely ever more on the help of the government and its aid programs in order to exist. The bombing seemed to bring out their resilience and a determination to pursue their normal day-to-day life as much as possible until the end of the war.

While various aspects of WWII, including American bombing missions, have been treated and analyzed, the bombing of Vienna and its impact on the population has escaped major attention, especially in English-language literature. It is the intent of this thesis to trace the history of the 1944-1945 bombing of Vienna and the response of the government and the population to this ordeal.
CHAPTER I: THE AIR ATTACKS

Vienna experienced the full-fledged air war only from September 1944 to April 1945, but then in all its severity in terms of the destruction of housing and lost lives, as well as the destruction of major cultural monuments. The inclusion of Austria in the air war (only Germany proper had been bombed so far) followed from a number of factors:

By 1944, Austria had become integrated into the Nazi war effort. Because of the bombing of her war production facilities, Germany transferred some of her war-related production to Austria, which had become labeled as "the air raid shelter of the Reich." Small Austrian factories were also built into bigger ones, making Austria more inviting as a target.

The Allies recognized the geographical position of Austria between Italy and the rest of Germany, as well as its role as a gateway to southeastern Europe as strategically important. Railway lines from Germany to these areas went through Austria. Fresh supplies, troops and ammunition for the South-Eastern (Balkan) fronts were transported through Austria. The Danube river, which went through Austria and Vienna, served as the most important inner waterway for the shipment of Rumanian oil into Germany. After the Allied conquest of Southern Italy and the establishment of Allied air bases there, Austria became vulnerable to Allied air attacks from the south and a prime military target. The important war-related facilities in Austria were:

(1) airplane factories
in Wiener Neustadt (--the Messerschmitt plant, together with the facility in
Regensburg, produced 48% of all German single-engine airplanes--),
in Schwechat (about 6 miles outside of Vienna,) and Klagenfurt (in the
province of Carinthia,)
(2) steel, chemical and fuel plants
particularly the oilfields in Zistersdorf (province of Lower Austria),
refineries in Vienna-Floridsdorf and other districts on the periphery of
Vienna,
(3) transportation factories
such as the Steyr-Daimler-Puch truck manufacturing plants in
Vienna, Wiener Neustadt and Steyr (Upper Austria), and the
"Hermann Goering" Panzer factory in Linz.16

The bombing of industrial targets were highlighted by an attack on
Wiener Neustadt in August of 1943. The air raid concentrated on Wiener
Neustadt, because it contained the only significant Messerschmitt airplane
factory in the country. It has been estimated that between 1943-1945, the
whole town was 88% destroyed.16

Sporadic air attacks on Vienna started in September of 1943 and
increased in frequency and intensity as the war progressed.17 In January 1944.

---
16 Today the state-subsidized Austrian steel plant, "VOEST."
17 Der Luftkrieg, p 6-7.
18 "Kleine Bestaende Gruppe VI/83--1-3", part 1, folder 1: "Berichte von privaten Personen
("Reports of Private Persons.") Official Statistics of Frequency and Results of Bombing, City
Archives.
only one took place, with no fatalities; there were two attacks in April, killing 161 people. Air attacks increased in number with thirteen in December, which lasted altogether 29 hours, 33 minutes and caused 347 fatalities. For the entire year 1944, the total number of air attacks was 63; the attacks lasted 103 hours, 43 minutes, and 4,175 people were killed. The course of daily life in Vienna was interrupted every second or third day.

In 1945, the number of attacks increased. In March, 17 attacks took place, lasting 54 hours and 31 minutes; 1,526 civilians were killed. By April, accurate statistics could no longer be kept because of widespread confusion and chaos, capped by heavy fighting in the streets, as the Soviets attacked Vienna from the east and the bureaucracy ceased to function. Though the end of the war was clearly in sight, by March 1945 air attacks on Vienna took place daily and nightly until April 9. On April 13, 1945, the Soviet 3rd Ukrainian Army under Marshall Tolbukhin captured Vienna.\(^8\) Bombing of other parts of Austria lasted until April 29, when capitulation on the Southern front was announced and a new Austrian government was formed. In 1945, from January until the first part of April, 41 attacks lasting 101 hours and 30 minutes took place, and 4594 fatalities were recorded. If the single attacks from 1943 are also counted, the number of air raids on Vienna during the war totaled 110, their duration was 215 hours and 30 minutes, and 8769 civilians were killed.\(^9\)

Two hundred and fifteen total hours of actual bombing time may seem little when measured against a certain time frame, but how deeply the air attacks became imprinted on the minds of the frightened people who fled into

---


\(^9\) *Der Luftkrieg*, pp 30-31.
the shelters can only be imagined; an examination of the statistics of a single day may highlight the destruction of an average bombardment:

The Air Defense Damage Report of June 16, 1944, of an attack on the Vienna suburb of Floridsdorf, a peripheral district with some heavy industry as well as housing, was compiled by the Vienna Chief of Police himself, Herr Gotzmann. This document, originally stamped "classified," assessed damages and accounted for people's lives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of life</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounded</td>
<td>1239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses hit</td>
<td>895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally destroyed</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavily damaged</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium damage</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light damage</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count of bombs</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public buildings hit:
- railway station Floridsdorf (1 incendiary bomb)
- public bath Floridsdorf   (3 incendiary bombs)
- public pawn shop          (5 incendiary bombs)
- Office of Health           (2 incendiary bombs)
- NSV Headquarters           (6 incendiary bombs)

20 "Kleine Bestaende" Gruppe VI/82-1/ RA - 71/44, City Archives.
21 NSV = Nationalsozialistische Volks Wohlfahrt (National Socialistic Peoples’ Welfare.)
Additional targets hit: Reich railroad premises, street cars, tracks and overhead wires, electric-, gas-, and water works.

If the number of 209 people killed by the bombing seems high, it must be pointed out that this attack was only one of the earlier, smaller ones. The heaviest air attack took place on March 12, 1945, in which not only 925 people perished and lost their homes but, in addition, numerous industrial as well as cultural buildings were hit.\(^2\)

On that day, according to Goebbels' diary, as many as 550 American four-engined bombers from Italy raided Vienna.\(^3\) A later Austrian account reports 747 bombers (225 B-17 and 522 B-24) and calls the mission the biggest single operation of the 15th AAF. 1,667 tons of bombs were thrown at the oil refinery in Vienna-Floridsdorf.\(^4\) An American account for that day, though, reports otherwise:\(^5\)

"12 March: Fifteenth AF: 90 B-24's and B-17's bomb Vienna/Floridsdorf oil refinery and alternate tgts of Graz, . . . Bad weather forces 60 P-51's sent against Austrian comm [communications] to abort."

---

\(^2\) "Kleine Bestaende" Gruppe VI/82-1/ RA - 71/44, City Archives.

\(^3\) *Final Entries*, p. 147. (Goebbels' account of statistical figures stem from government reports.)

\(^4\) *Der Luftkrieg*, p. 29.

\(^5\) Kit. C. Carter and Robert Mueller, *Combat Chronology 1941 - 1945* (Washington, DC: Center for Air Force History, 1991), p 597. According to its foreword, (p III) the *Combat Chronology* "is a factual record of combat operations conducted by the United States Army Air Forces during World War II. No attempt has been made to interrelate the events."
The second-heaviest attack was recorded on Feb 21, 1945, with 849 fatalities, and the third-heaviest on Sep 10, 1944, with 776 fatalities. Again, there is only laconic acknowledgment in American sources:

"10 September: Fifteenth AF: 344 B-17's and B-24's bomb 5 ordnance depots and SE industrial area in Vienna and 2 oil refineries in the area."

Compared with the great amount of damage and destruction of buildings, the loss of human life was, in hindsight, relatively small. If we take into account that 110 air attacks took place during the 1944-1945 period, the loss of less than 9000 lives is not excessive. The Chief of the Statistical Office offered the following explanations for relatively high survival rates of the Viennese population:

(1) An enforced building code
Details had been well-thought-out; for example, wooden stairwells were not allowed; roofs had to be separated from the top floor.

(2) Height of buildings
Since, statistically, rural districts of Vienna had heavier losses, it was assumed that the height and multiplicity of stories in the apartment buildings contributed to survival. Often the bombs did not penetrate to the basement.

---

26 "Kleine Bestaende Gruppe VI/82-1/ RA - 71/44, City Archives.
27 Combat Chronology, p 447.
28 "Kleine Bestaende Gruppe VI/83--1-3: "Reports of private persons," City Archives."
(3) Adherence to rules
Strict adherence to the rules, which became law, such as descending to basements as well as all the other rules of self-protection, contributed to survival and in the end justified themselves.

4) Indoctrination and acceptance of authority
Playing on ready acceptance of higher authority by the populace, Nazi indoctrination turned out to be helpful for the implementation and acceptance of the strict rules of air protection and played a major role in upholding the morale of the people and their ultimate survival.

(5) A professional fire department
Founded in 1686, it had a long tradition of prompt arrival at the stricken place. Stations were located in parts of the city in such a way that under most circumstances, the first vehicle was able to arrive at its destination within five minutes of notification.

6) Fewer fire bombs dropped
Major surface fires, like the ones in German cities, did not take place because Vienna was spared, except for a few instances, the fire bombing that ravaged some German cities.

For example, on the night of July 24/25, 1943, the British attacked Hamburg with 700 aircraft, resulting in firestorms. Again, on July 29/30, the city
was bombed and from an economic point of view was now practically "knocked out." Nearly a million inhabitants fled, 40,000 died and about the same number were injured, all by 7,196 tons of bombs. What made the devastation so complete, again, were the types of bombs utilized: high capacity bombs, high explosives and incendiary bombs, capable of starting terrible and uncontrollable fires. In another case of the usage of incendiary bombs, on February 3, 1945, in only one attack on Berlin, 25,000 civilians lost their lives. Answering widespread protests, Allied Air Force leaders insisted that they were not conducting terror warfare, but striking legitimate military objectives such as rail centers.  

The reasons for the "better treatment" of Austria in comparison with the German cities have never been defined. In 1942 alone, while Austria was still considered a safe haven, 41,400 tons of bombs had been already dropped on Germany; and by October 1942, the number of civilians' death stood at 10,900, according to Goebbels' reports. One cannot help but think that an element of revenge was involved on the part of the Allies. Germany, after all, had instigated the war and had furthermore bombed England.

Statistics of London which suffered the September 1940-May 1941 "Blitz"-bombing attacks of the Nazi Luftwaffe, reveal that up to November 13th, 1940, an average of 160 bombs were dropped daily with an average of 200 tons of high explosives, while 182 canisters of incendiaries were disposed of nightly. On October 15th, there were 410 planes over London, and they

---

33 One reason for this particular Berlin raid had been the understanding that the German Sixth Panzer Army was moving through Berlin on its way from the Western to the Eastern front.
dropped 538 tons of high explosives, causing more than 25,000 casualties; over 900 fires were started. From the beginning of September 1940 to mid-May 1941, German bombardiers killed nearly 40,000 people in London, Coventry, and other urban centers, and destroyed the homes of many thousands more.

Not only did Vienna's population survive with somewhat fewer casualties than those of other large cities, it also was better protected than the citizens of other Austrian cities. This can be demonstrated by comparing the ratio of victims in Vienna with those of other Austrian cities:\(^\text{36}\)

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{PER 1000 INHABITANTS KILLED} \\
\text{in Vienna:} & 5 \\
\text{Wr. Neustadt:} & 25 \\
\text{Attnang Puchheim}\(^\text{37}\) & 203
\end{array}
\]

The Nazi system of civil air raid defense contributed greatly to the citizens' survival. Although civil defense could not prevent material destruction, it did maintain order until the end and prevented chaos.

\(^{36}\) Osterreich II, p 47.

\(^{37}\) An important railroad connection point.
CHAPTER 2: AIR DEFENSE

Only stupid people will disregard air protection. Only stupid people will not understand the high goal of air protection. A recognized danger is only half a danger. Man has always overcome any danger, no matter what kind, if his will remained unshakable.

The Reich Minister of Defense and Aviation, Hermann Goering, well aware that "regardless of how large we built the German Luftwaffe, it won't be enough to provide real protection to the population and to protect them entirely from the consequences of an air attack," created, nevertheless, a most organized and effective program of air protection for the population.

The Air Defense Law

The Air Defense Law was the umbrella law, which regulated the goals and execution of air protection for both the military and the civilians. (Only the latter will be discussed here.) The law was so detailed that it provided for appropriate behavior in almost every situation and contained sublaws for even the most minor matters. Air defense was to be, according to the official definition, the sum of all means which the national government used "for the protection of Volk and Reich against enemy air attacks." In Vienna, the laws and

---

38 Note: the original German word, used in documents, is "Luftschutz," which literally means "air protection," but the word "air defense," literally meaning "Luftverteidigung" in German, is commonly used in American literature.

39 Hermann Goering, Berlin Sports Palace, 1935, according to Prologue of Luftschutz brochure, Box 1942/1, Archives of the Vienna Police Headquarters.

40 Ibid.

41 Reichsgesetzblatt - RGBl. I s.1631, September 1,1939, Box 1942/1, Police Archives.
regulations were published in a series of Reichsgesetzblätter (RGBI). They were reiterated by the highest political authority in Vienna, the Reichsstatthalter, Baldur von Schirach, and repeated, explained and interpreted in additional executive orders, directives and memos, all published in the Amtsblätter (A.BI.). Obedience to regulations was reinforced by all means of Reich propaganda. The police as the enforcer of proper procedures maintained order, even under the heaviest bombardment. Included in the Air Defense Law were extensive systems of air defense strategy as well as civilian air protection. The air defense consisted of:

(1) the flight-reporting service -- "Flugmeldedienst" (FMD),
(2) the air defense warning service -- "Luftschutzwarnsdienst" (LSD),
(3) the execution of military defense -- "Abwehr."

The civilian air protection consisted of:

(1) operation of air shelters,
(2) regulations pertaining to "rules of behavior in shelters,"
(3) relief programs.

---

46 State legal pamphlets.
47 Official pamphlets.
48 "Box 1942/1, Archives of the Police Headquarters.
49 Ibid.
Air Defense strategy

**FMD and LSD**

The FMD cooperated with the LSD by transmitting news and sightings to the LSD which in turn notified a string of official institutions as well as the civilian population by means of three warning signals: "air danger alert," "air attack alarm," "air danger over."

At "Air danger," the population was warned through the radio by the tone of a cuckoo --a sound that became infamous-- which interrupted regular programming. It meant that enemy airplanes had become airborne from their stations in Italy and could reach the city in about 20 minutes. If the planes did not approach Austria, the signal was cleared and regular programming resumed, but if the planes indeed continued on towards Austria, the next phase took place:

The signal of "Air attack alarm" was indicated through a consistent up-and-down wailing tone that emerged from the public address system, installed all over town, and summoned the population to seek shelter. At the same time, the regular radio program went off the air and wire service began to report progressively on the "air situation." Anyone interested could follow the reports on the "air situation map," a copy of which was distributed to each household. On it, the city of Vienna with its surrounding territory was divided into numbered sections, and the numbers, continually announced over the wire service, would inform the listeners of the sections over which the air planes were flying.

---

46 Hitler had advocated that every household be in possession of an uniform black box, called the "Volksempfaenger," -- "the people's radio receiver," which was mass-produced and affordable for everyone.

When the "Air danger" was over, a consistent even tone signified that the attacks had ceased and assured the population that it was safe again to leave the shelters and return to their dwellings or work.

**Military defense -- Abwehr**

By the end of January 1944, one could question the effectiveness of the German Luftwaffe, and by March 1944, the Allies considered the Germans to have lost the air war for good. In Austria, there was practically no air defense by means of air fighters. When Wiener Neustadt was heavily and surprisingly bombed, on August 13th, 1943, (the air raid warning system was then still inadequate--) there existed only two small airports, one in Voeslau, just outside of Vienna, with only one "Jagdverband" (fighter squadron) and one in Fels am Wagram. The situation of the Luftwaffe was dismal.

In addition, that same year air plane factories were hit and thus cut down on defensive capability. In Wiener Neustadt, for example, 180 completed Jaegers were totally destroyed; the Heinkel-Nachtjaeger factory in Heidfeld at Schwechat and Zwoelfaxing (a few miles southeast of Vienna) was disabled; and even substitute underground facilities such as the Goettweig monastery’s cellar and several wine cellars in Lower Austria, used for the production of airplane parts, were hit and rendered unusable. Finally, the bombing of the

---

49 *The United States and World War II*, pp 209-212. (This was at the time the opinion of the Allies.)

46 *Der Luftkrieg*, p 8.

Research Center on Flying in Vienna-Floridsdorf on June 16 and 26, 1944, saw the beginning of attacks on small and medium Vienna firms which manufactured armament products.\footnote{The Hofherr-Schrantz factory in Vienna-Floridsdorf manufactured parts for the A-4 rocket. Ruestung in Oesterreich, p 150.}

One of the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of the Luftwaffe was the Allies' realization that they could keep the enemy aircraft permanently on the ground by targeting German fuel resources. On June 8th, 1944, the Allies made destruction of German oil production officially a top-priority goal,\footnote{A Short History, p 264.} and even though the production of German aircraft actually increased during the remainder of the year, some of it could not be used. A shortage of trained pilots existed because, paradoxically, pilots in training had to conserve fuel which was in short supply because of the Luftwaffe's inability to adequately protect oil facilities.

Between the end of 1944 and March 1945, the Allies made 555 attacks on 135 Reich targets, which included every known synthetic-fuel plant and major refinery. The effect on German oil production can be seen from this chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>AVERAGE OUTPUT IN TONS PER MONTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May, 1944</td>
<td>662,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>422,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>260,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1945</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The production of aviation gasoline went down from 170,000 tons per month in mid-1944 to 52,000 in the following March. The Luftwaffe's ability to
fight attacking Allied planes in the air was therefore very limited, both in Germany proper and in Austria. At various times, Goebbels, in his diary, reports "a total of 7 aircraft" shot down out of 600 American bombers by German fighters, then "4 out of 350, "4 out of 600," and "8 out of 500." After the August 1943 attack on Wiener Neustadt, on the way back to their bases (then still in Tunis--) the Allied planes were attacked by 50-60 German Jaegers, but only 3 bombers were hit; on November 2nd, 1943, during another attack on Wiener Neustadt, 17 bombers were shot down, by Jaegers and the FLAK.

**FLAK**

The FLAK turned out to be the only available means of military air defense in Austria. It operated under the Luftgaukommando XVII as the 24th FLAK division with 32 batteries in and around Vienna, and with a manpower of 4000 Luftwaffe "helpers." The latter were comprised of specially trained civilians and 16- to 18-year-old Hitler Youth boys.

The American side viewed the FLAK as follows:

Radar was one of the outstanding technical developments of WWII. Problems though lay in the fact that not only Allied powers made use of Radar but that the Luftwaffe used it as well, as a means for their own protection, thus making the bombing operations for the Americans sometimes hazardous... Allied bombers considered flying through flak the most dangerous part of a mission: they dreaded traveling through the exploding shells sent up by guns.

---

53 Final Entries, pp 182,193, 248, 351.
54 Der Luftkrieg, p 10. FLAK = Fliegerabwehrkanone (anti-aircraft artillery).
55 Ralf Roland Ringler, Illusion einer Jugend, (Vienna-St. Poelten: Niederoesterreichisches Pressehaus, 1977), pp 117-119. In January of 1944, boys with the birth year of 1928 were called up. Also: Der Luftkrieg, p 34.
The 15th AAF, which was the target of the Austrian FLAK, report in their "Lone Wolf"—military pamphlet:

Some battle damage due to flak has been experienced over heavily defended targets by Lone Wolf aircraft. It is probable that some of our losses have been caused either directly, or at least contributed to, by enemy ground fire. . . . Single-aircraft operations allow for an increase in bombing altitude not possible on normal operations when formations must be flown. This allows Lone Wolves to bomb from a height where enemy flak is less effective . . . . In view of the ineffectiveness of the fighter opposition put forth by the enemy, it is believed that this practice has been proved sound.57

Despite great efforts and extensive organization, aside from occasional hits, the FLAK was not very effective, even by the Austrians' own accounts.58 But although its operations didn't live up to its promise, --"FLAK . . . by itself . . . downed few planes"-- it did have a function which could not be easily dismissed, a fact acknowledged by American pilots: "... [it] was annoying and caused varying damage to aircraft."59

An entrance in Joseph Goebbels' diary,60 on March 16, 1945, noting that of "some 600 American four-engined bombers . . . a total of 7 aircraft were shot down by our fighters and anti-aircraft,"61 only confirms the ineffectiveness of the FLAK as well as the Luftwaffe. Disillusioned and dissatisfied, he says:

58 Der Luftkrieg, p 35. In addition, Ulrich says: "The number of the airplanes shot down by Austrian FLAK fire cannot be determined with the available documentation."
59 The United States & World War II, p 200.
60 Reich Minister for Propaganda
61 Final Entries, p 182.
The air war has now turned into a crazy orgy. We are totally defenceless against it. The Reich will gradually be turned into a complete desert. Responsibility for this lies at the door of Goering and his Luftwaffe. It is absolutely not in any position to put up any form of defence.®

Although the military leadership on both sides found the Austrian FLAK ineffective, one particular participant in the air war got to experience its effect in a way that enabled him to perceive the air war over Vienna from a special perspective: the 15th AAF bomber pilot, Lieutenant Parker, describes his predicament at being shot out of the sky on a bomber mission rather laconically: “... B-17 was hit by flak and immediately burst into flames... bailed out.”® FLAK crews took their assignment very seriously. If a FLAK gunner managed to shoot down a plane, it became a major boost to his and his colleagues' morale.

Despite the overall ineffectiveness of the FLAK operations, the towers were manned at all times. FLAK operators used their time effectively; education was brought right to the crews of the batteries, with teachers conducting classes on the premises. Education even included readings by poets and authors, as well as musical performances by the Vienna Choir Boys.

Citizens' air raid protection

The Reich had prepared itself as early as 1939 for air defense,¹⁴ fully realizing that the cooperation of the citizens was going to be important for meeting the onslaught of aerial bombing physically as well as psychologically.

---

® Goebbels in his Final Entries, on March 1, 1945, p. 21. Note: because Goebbels did not like Goering, accusations of the latter’s ineptitude are often found in Final Entries.

¹³ Cuckoo, p. 94. (Parker then stayed until the end of the war in a Viennese hospital.)

¹⁴ See Air Defense Law, Reichsgesetzblatt - RGBI. I s.1631, from September 1, 1939, Box 1942/1, Police Archives.
The psychological part was put into practice later, when the bombings actually started, through extensive propaganda, with the goal of counteracting the enemy’s stated purpose of lowering civilian morale through bombing. Preparations for helping the citizen survive the bombing raids physically, began already in 1939 and consisted of:

- bomb shelters,
- orders and regulations, and
- relief programs.

**Bomb shelters**

Bomb shelters were operated according to the “Order for air shelters” (“Schutzraumordnung”). The shelters had to be utilized according to prescribed rules of behavior, some of which were practiced in special drills. At the sound of an alarm, all persons in buildings, apartments, offices, shops, theaters, inns, streets, e.t.c., were required to proceed to an air shelter room. The following rules had to be observed:

- They had to be in possession of a “Luftschutzkoffer”–air shelter suit case–which was to contain family documents and a gas mask. They had to observe certain prohibitions:
  - No smoking!
  - No animals, except seeing-eye dogs or other service dogs!\(^{67}\)

---

\(^{65}\) All regulations, contained in the Air Protection Law, September 1, 1939, in folder 6-8, box 82, City Archives.

\(^{66}\) 6-hour-air defense training courses with information about its organization as well as proper behavior were conducted as early as 1939. Ibid.

\(^{67}\) This was one rule that was not always enforced. No proper little old lady was expected to even conceive of leaving her lap dog behind!
The bomb shelters had to be organized in a prescribed way; some of the requirements were as follows:

- Air shelters were supposed to be in basements, tunnels, or caves.
- Each shelter was supposed to house not more than 50 persons.
- At least three cubic meters of space was required for each person.
- An emergency exit was obligatory.
- All openings were supposed to be made “gas-safe,” with a covering of cloth, felt, rubber, glue or even paper.

Before the war, most basements of buildings served as storage facilities for heating materials (wood or coal) or bulk groceries (potatoes, onions, etc). It took some adapting to turn them into makeshift shelters. In order to give every citizen maximum protection, adherence to the rules and regulations was not only expected but was also enforced by the authority of an air shelter warden.

Each apartment house had a designated “Luftschutzwart,” --air shelter warden-- whose orders were to be strictly followed. These wardens were chosen from male residents too old for military service, disabled veterans, or men designated as indispensable.²³

The duties of the warden were, like everything else, heavily regulated.²⁴ One of his responsibilities was to make certain, that all tenants of the apartment house were present in the basement and that each family or single person had brought their air shelter suitcase. He also had to admit, aside from tenants, other people who happened to be on the streets when the sirens sounded, but this particular regulation was rather ambiguous. According to paragraph 2 of the air

²³“The German word “unabköemmlich” (indispensable [from their job]) was shortened to “UK.”
²⁴“Duties of warden”: folder 6-8, box 82, City Archives.
shelter law, "pedestrians are to be admitted to shelters -- if there is sufficient room. If the air shelter rooms are not sufficient, the pedestrians are to be given protection in covered spaces against shrapnel." The phrase, "if there is sufficient room," was of course much too vague. It was easy enough for a willful warden to declare a basement filled to capacity and off-limits to strangers. In turning citizens away, a warden was in a position to flaunt his power arbitrarily, or behave in a bureaucratic manner, sticking to the letter of the regulation.

One particular incident involving a telephone meter reader, Karoline Ledinegg, illustrates the ambiguity of the particular phrasing "sufficient room." Following a schedule of planned routes, Ledinegg often found herself on the street when the sirens sounded and had to seek whatever shelter was available for her protection.

"That day," Karoline Ledinegg recounts, "after finishing with the last customer, I began to run down the street, trying to make it home to the second district where I lived (and still live.) I was relatively close, but when I saw the streets getting empty and heard the noise of approaching planes getting louder, I decided to seek shelter. I turned to the Philippi Hof apartment complex which was known for its basement's connection with an extensive underground tunnel system, and knocked on the house door, but a pompous warden sent me rudely away because, according to him, the basement's capacity was filled. I finally took shelter a few houses further down." Whether this warden was justified in turning her away or not is hard to say, but he very probably saved Karoline

---

70 Ibid.
71 Telephone- and telegraph services in Austria were (and still are) part of the postal services. Meter reading has since become automated.
72 Personal interview with Karoline Ledinegg.
Ledinegg's life. In one of the major tragedies of the Vienna air war, the Philippi Hof was badly hit only minutes later, and several hundred people in the basement and the connecting tunnels were killed or reported missing. The bombs penetrated so deeply and the damage was so extensive, that many bodies were never dug out in the clearance process. Today, a modern sculpture on the location of the former Philippi Hof commemorates the terrible disaster.72

The average warden, no doubt, was cordial and cooperative, took his duties seriously and watched out for his fellow neighbors. Of course, he also had to follow bureaucratic procedures by keeping records on the fulfillment of his duties in the "Air Shelter Folder" which was stamped: "Property of the Reich Air Shelter Association."74

Bomb shelters were the most important life-saving facilities in air raids, because of the protection offered to virtually every citizen and the brainwashing by the government on using them. Most houses, especially apartment houses and apartment house complexes had built-in basements, and additional protection was provided by the government which constructed extra bunkers and tunnels. Among the latter, notable examples were the personal bunker of the Reichsstatthalter of Vienna, Baldur von Schirach,73 and the tunnel system underneath the "Philippi Hof" apartment complex.

But the shelters were only one facet of the system; in addition, rules, regulations and directives on air raids covered required equipment, various

72 Oesterreich II, p 45. The exact number of victims could never be determined.
74 Folder 6-8, box 82, City Hall Archives.
73 It was virtually bomb-proof, and its entrance was camouflaged by the forest surroundings of its location, the Vienna Woods, which lay within city limits.
situations and even specific behavior of people. Instructions were issued concerning:

- extinguishing white phosphorus bombs,
- gas attacks,
- disposal of duds,
- availability of shelters to pedestrians
- use of first aid kit,
- air shelter luggage,
- black-out times.

The regulation on first aid kits, for example, specified its contents. Besides the usual items the kit was to also include:

- rubber gloves,
- soap,
- green "smear soap" (for yellow gas accidents)
- sodium bicarbonate,
- calcium chloride.\(^2\)

The regulations on the availability of sand and water pails noted:

Sand and water pails are supposed to be not only on stairwells but in each apartment as well. A pail with water and the sand have to be placed next to the entrance. Sand can be picked up at the "sand locations" and has to be put into strong paper bags (sacks) capable of containing 5 kilos. The bags can only be half-filled, have to be tied and pressed flat to be put on top of each other.

\(^{26}\) All in: 10th Additional Order to the Air Defense Law. 9/1/1939. Also: \textit{Kleine Volkszeitung}, November 20, 1939. 
\(^{27}\) for decontamination.
The regulations on air shelter luggage stated that it had to be positioned next to the exit door and was to contain:

- important personal documents,
- coats,
- blankets and pillows,
- thermos bottle,
- toys for children,
- groceries.

The regulation on the required black-out times read:

The air command has ordered, until October 31, 1943, that the time of black-outs be as follows: from 2200 or 2300 to 0400 or 0500 (variation because of summer months).\(^8\)

A special regulation on messengers said:

When the house community cannot help itself anymore, (after bombing) it has to send a messenger who has to have the following: good clothes, good shoes, head protection, ropes, first aid kit, battery flash light, a messenger bag in a strong color, (because it can be found easy) with street and house number written on it, paper and pencil, and a bicycle. The messenger must be able to transmit the message in writing or orally (learn by heart.) The message has to be short, containing: "what," "when," "where."

The regulation on “Feuerpatsche” (asbestos glove) gave tips on how the citizens could produce it:\(^9\)

---

\(^8\) Amtsblatt S Lub I-5533, September 8, 1943, Police Archives.

\(^9\) Kleine Wiener Volkszeitung, August 30, 1939, reprinted from the Völkischer Beobachter.
The asbestos glove is a most necessary item for fighting fire. With it the base of the fire can be beaten out. Each household should have one. Because the need is so great, each citizen has to be instructed to produce such an item. The needed material can surely be found in each household. They are: a broom stick, cloth rags, wire or string . . .

The population's proper behavior was not only expected inside the shelters, but also outside of buildings. Here are some of the rules:*

In open places, lie on the ground.

In markets, protect groceries by covering them against "liquid weapons" ("fluessige Kampfstoffe.").

Stop driving vehicles and park them so that an open lane exists.

Some regulations addressed particular groups of citizens, such as "war-disabled" relatives of police officials, directing them to seek help at an installation set up only for them, or "cable-walkers," who had to report damage to cables after air raids. The "cable-walkers" had to walk the length of the underground cables and inspect them for damage after air raids so that immediate repair could be initiated. They carried an identification and wore a white arm band, imprinted with swastika and the words "Deutsche Reichspost -- "Soforthilfe" --"First aid;" and they were to be assisted and supported by the police, if necessary.

There were also directives concerning trivial subjects, such as fishing, elimination of rats, and the opening-times of shops. For example, whoever had the desire to do some fishing had to consult the "Fischerei Ordnung," which

---

* According to 10th Procedure Order of the Air Defense Law, September 1, 1939.
* For example: jellied gasoline, gases.
* Regulation P 11.05, March 14, 1944, Police Archives.
* Regulation Sn. I/Fe - 2331, December 1, 1944, Police Archives.
directed him to authorized locations such as the Donaukanal at specific times.\textsuperscript{a}

These announcements not only served to inform the population of the restoration of services that were formerly interrupted through bomb damages, but also tried to convey to the population the notion that life was proceeding normally. The latter was regarded important in keeping up the spirit and the morale of the people.

And then, there were "orders" or mere official suggestions, the intentions of which were so specific that they bordered on the ridiculous. One household item that warranted a regulation of its own was the Conformity Reich Soap ("Reicheinheitsseife")\textsuperscript{b} which described in detail the "specifications" of this cheaply made tallow soap. Anything better was considered a luxury and therefore banned. This regulation was not in too much danger of being violated, simply because of the lack of better items.

Published advice on underwear and stockings could be read in the \textit{Voelkischer Beobachter} which said, "Each person should have underwear and stockings to change, so that after 48 hours he won't look like a hobo."\textsuperscript{c} Citizens (who for the most part didn't own vehicles) were assured that "No parking" regulations did not apply during attacks. Regarding the "people's gas mask," one particular specification stated: "The gas mask is to be put on calmly. Breathe as little as possible!"\textsuperscript{d}

But trivial or not, adherence to these regulations often provided the difference between survival and non-survival. While extra care might have

\textsuperscript{a} Regulation III/87.00, May 5, 1944, Police Archives.
\textsuperscript{b} Box 82-6, folder 10, City Archives.
\textsuperscript{c} from April 8, 1941.
\textsuperscript{d} A.Bl. SLu/b I-5510, Police Archives.
seemed exaggerated to the non-bureaucratic mind, the two following incidents demonstrate its importance. In the first case, a bomb hit the house Augartenstrasse #70, next to a nursery school in the 2nd district, on March 12th, 1945 but penetrated only as far as the second floor. Because the people in the basement had proper equipment, (the legally prescribed tools,) they were able to break through the joint wall to the nursery school building (Augartenstrasse #68) with the help of a sledgehammer, escape the still falling debris, and join the terrified but unhurt children there.®

Regulations were violated in the second case and people paid with their lives. The regulation on "emergency walls" stated that each person was supposed to know which wall had been designated as the break-through wall. The top of the wall was to be marked with the words: "Connecting opening to the neighboring house" (street name, # ...) as well as with the appropriate arrows. The part to be broken was to be marked with paint; and its approach was to be kept free at all times.®

All the inhabitants of an apartment house in the 2nd district's Karmelitergasse 2, drowned, when water pipes were hit and water flooded the basement. The previous actions of the owner of a Gasthaus, located in the next house, prevented the victims' escape; he had improperly stacked the escape wall with hoarded barrels of wine. "I can still see --so many years later-- the sidewalk and adjacent street flooded with water that had come out of the basement," recalled Karoline Ledinegg, "and the front of the shoe store, also

® One of the few memories I myself have from the bombing period. Also: Christine Klusacek & Kurt Stimmer, Leopoldstadt. Eine Insel mitten in der Stadt. (Vienna: Kurt Mohl, 1978) , p 188.
®® Reprintings of paragraphs of Air Defense Order, August 20, 1942, Police Archives.
located in this building, where the helpers had laid out, in several rows, the drowned, wet bodies.

The impact of strict adherence to rules by the citizens cannot be overstressed. Compliance with regulations contributed to the survival of many citizens who might have perished under less organized conditions.

There was still another form of survival enhancement the citizen could turn to, in times of need: the Reich services in the form of various Relief programs.

People survived air attacks also because of the government relief organizations. For the citizens who had lost their home and had nothing left but the clothes on their back, shock was minimized by the immediacy and efficiency of the government relief institutions which sprang into action as soon as the planes had left. These institutions were:

- the Department E of Health Matters and National Customs,
- the NSV,
- the NSDAP itself.

People were never left homeless or without food if they followed prescribed procedures. To remind victims of bombing of the existing policy of governmental assistance, the Chief of Police issued an executive order, the "Order concerning war damages and procedures for answering claims." In it he pointed out that it was the special wish of the Fuhrer that the population hit by enemy air attacks "will be at least free from material worries."

---

* Interview, Ledinegg.
* All in RGBI. I. S. 1547, Police Archives.
* A 2 - 2896/1942, July 1942, Police Archives.
While the latter words would be considered an understatement by the most ardent believer in the Reich, it was at least true that the bombing victims were indeed provided with a great number of services:

- new living quarters for the "bombed-out;"
- recovery of salvageable household goods from the ruins,
- clean-up of the site, so traffic would not be hindered,
- removal and depositing of tons of debris and the destruction of dangerous ruins.

**Rehousing of bombing victims**

One priority after air attacks was immediate attention to the victims. Casualties had to be accounted for in a report, called "Enumeration of the wounded, taken ill [sic] or killed." The report had to be forwarded immediately, marked "fliegerbeschaedigt" --"air raid-damages" to the Central Registration Office, the District Registration Office or to the Office for Obituaries in the case of death, after which, other Reich institutions took over.

Obtaining interim living quarters for "bombed-out" persons was relegated to the Homeless Registration Office (Obdachlosenanmeldestelle or "OS," to which victims were referred, according to a special directive. The NSDAP itself directed and applied this help to the citizens and appropriated and adapted for these purposes restaurants, coffeehouses, movie theaters, schools and other larger buildings to serve as interim living quarters. A school, for example, was large enough to house about 500, a restaurant about 150 and a movie theater about 1,200 people.

---

* #3311, based on #5, Reichsleistungsgesetz, RGBI. I, 1939, S. 1645, Police Archives.
* Collection "Kleine Bestaende Gruppe VI/82-1 ("Statistics"), City Archives.
Officials followed a specified procedure to aid victims of damaged or destroyed apartment houses. Police brought citizens to an OS office where, if necessary, physicians were ready to tend to the wounded. Data was taken and the victims were counseled and immediately assigned and registered to their new living quarters. If they filled out a particular form, an official even went back to the damaged house for the purpose of retrieving household goods or vehicles. The owner could either accompany him, or the official would catalog items for later identification and put them in storage after entering everything on the appropriate list, complete with three copies.

Victims could receive clothes and other necessities; payments of rent and even of their salaries would be made for them, if their working place had been shut down as a result of bomb damage. This office also issued a very important paper, the “proof of need” document, which enabled the victim to replace all rationing cards. These procedures in turn prompted another avalanche of forms to be filled out by shop owners who had to enter their new customers on the appropriate lists for Reich egg tickets, Reich milk tickets and Reich marmelade tickets and send a report for further registration to the State Nutrition Office.

Sometimes, particularly high numbers of “bombed-out” homeless people confronted the officials. On Oct 17, 1944, for example, 6,192 people became homeless and on Nov 15, 1944, 13,402 people were rendered without a home. For the year 1944 altogether, which still saw less bombing than the beginning months of 1945, almost 64,000 people were rendered homeless. The total number of apartments lost through the air war, was 86,875. Another source

---

*8* Ibid.
*9* “Bedarfsnachweis.”
*10* Ibid.
cites 76,000 apartments destroyed and 101,000 damaged, and estimates the total Austrian war damages from the bombing (as transposed to the price level of 1991/92) to be approximately $270 billion.\footnote{Austrian Societal and Economic Museum, documentation series, "Das Museum kommt zu den Besuchern," board: "75 Jahre Republik Oesterreich," # 8 & 9}

The Department E of Health Matters and National Customs was willing to provide services for the citizens in need, if the latter followed directions:\footnote{Reichsverfuegungsblatt # 11/44, NSDAP Party Office, September 29, 1944.}

1. The homeless were to go to collection points where they were to be fed and taken care of. They were to be given a shelter (in adapted movie theaters, schools, restaurants.)

2. They were not to depart without informing officials.

3. They were to always register with the police.

4. "Certificates of departure" were necessary when moving elsewhere. It was important also for getting new ration cards and clothes-issue cards.

Other functions of the Department E were:\footnote{November 26, 1943/ RD-31/43, group VI, Box 82-5, City Archives.}

1. feeding and housing the bomb victims after air attacks,

2. rerouting of bomb victims to other cities,

3. sending children to the countryside,\footnote{This operation, the "Kinderlandverschickung," was controversial and will be explored further in chapter 6.}

4. the building of birth clinics and homes for mothers with infants,

5. providing young mothers with additional help in immediate placement of their babies in nursery schools,

6. tending to wounded soldiers who had been sent to a Vienna hospital. This service was so extensive and so prescribed that it even had a regulation about the kind of presents to be supplied to the soldiers.
Debris disposal

The destruction by the bombing created also a number of other problems, such as traffic hinderances and endangering of public health. By the end of the war, the bombing had created 800,000 cubic meters of debris (about a million tons), the disposal of which required vehicles, gasoline, and an especially large work force.

A separate problem was the re-use of the debris. The bombing victims tried to retrieve as much as they could and put it to new use. There was even a kind of systematic recycling, organized by a private company with the help of the city government. Metal was shredded, glass melted, bricks cleaned and reused. All these activities continued for some time, even after the war was over.

A shortage of vehicles made debris disposal difficult. Most vehicles of the city garbage disposal department were damaged and destroyed. In all, 121 trucks, 85 trailers, 232 specialty vehicles and 800 hand-buggies were lost. There was a lack of an adequate work force to repair the vehicles; and on top of it, the main city repair shop in the 20th district was hit in a bombing attack and rendered unusable.

Clearing of the streets was a priority of the city government in order that traffic and daily activities could resume as soon as possible. At the end of the "all-clear" alarm, the population left their basements to survey the damage. If buildings in their neighborhood had been hit, they were confronted with piles of bricks, roof tiles, roof troughs, torn electrical wires, broken street car high wires, broken light poles and shattered glass. The view was traumatic, but besides a vision of destruction there could also be hidden time bombs or unexploded...

---

133 Kleine Bestaende Gruppe VI/82-1 ("Statistics"), p. 22, City Archives.
bombs lying several meters under the ground, waiting to be dug up and disposed. Sometimes the street had been transformed into a “carpet” of bomb craters which needed to be filled in and evened with the street surface. During the bombing period, 4620 craters were counted and repaired, quite often by the neighborhood people themselves who formed brigades and assisted each other in order to create “normal” conditions again as quickly as possible. Non-involved spectators were warned not to linger in the streets so as not to hinder clean-up efforts; if the police found curiosity-seekers watching, the latter were quickly commandeered to join in on the clean-up operation.

The significance of the air defense system lay not only in its design, its attention to detail, and its nationwide application, but in its enforcement provisions which were the responsibility of each local government. The Air Defense Law which regulated behavior under bombardment was a significant factor in saving lives and providing for those who needed help. The population’s willingness to adherence to rules and regulations was in the end of great benefit.
CHAPTER 3: THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF VIENNA

... those, my Fuhrer, are the people... Their yearning is Germany! their faith is Germany! Their loyalty is Germany! Adolf Hitler, be their protector! For you are Germany! Our Germany!...  

Regardless of the seemingly overwhelming welcome Hitler had received from the population at his entrance into Vienna, on March 12, 1933, he was well aware that her integration into the Reich was not going to be easy. Hitler had a love-hate relationship with Vienna, a city that had treated him unkindly in the years from 1907 to 1914 when, at one time, he had to live in a shelter for homeless. This city was different from its German counterparts. In April 1943, he voiced his disapproval of Vienna’s population: “It was a mistake that I even received these Viennese into the Reich. I know these people. I have lived among them in my youth, they are enemies of Germany.”

“The Austrian problem” was created by the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire by the end of World War I. Previously the prominent and dominating force in a large multinational empire, Austria was reduced to a small, insignificant country whose citizens now experienced a feeling of impotence. While the population had not yet fully come to accept the situation of the country, her status was altered, once again, by the Anschluss. Despite the

---

106 Officially legalized: March 13, 1938.
jubilant welcome Hitler had received at his entrance into the city, the beginning of the war had dampened considerably the enthusiasm of the population for its new regime. Vienna was certainly officially but not mentally integrated into the German Reich, as its citizens began to look upon the Germans as intruders. As the tides of war turned, greater disillusionment set in; and the beginning of the American bombing campaign further aggravated the ambivalent feelings of the population.

While the Anschluss did not change the scope of city government nor its organizational structure, city administration now came to be controlled by the Nazi party system in a vertical as well as horizontal sense. It was difficult for the citizens to deal with the symbiotic relationship between the Nazi Party and the city government, since many party leaders were at the same time high state officials. Those higher Nazi officials who were transferred from Germany to the new Gau had to learn that they simply could not regard Vienna as a mere extension of Germany and the party, and that in order to achieve their aims in the city, it was best to make some allowances for the quirks of the Viennese mentality.

On August 2, 1940, still hoping to make real Germans out of the Viennese, he appointed Baldur von Schirach as the new Reichstatthalter and Gauleiter of Vienna, justifying his move by citing the mistakes of Schirach's

---

110 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Nazi-administered regions were divided into Gaue, headed by a Gauleiter, who was at the same time Reichsstatthalter (governor) and the head of the Party. Raphael Lemkin, Axis Rule in Occupied Europe, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), p 9.
predecessor, Buerckel. "The situation in Vienna is dismal," he said in a conversation with Schirach, "Gauleiter Buerckel has not understood how to win over the Viennese to the Reich. I cannot afford in these times, to have a rebellious city in the South Eastern corner of the Reich. Somebody has to go to Vienna who possesses psychological tact."

Hitler's worries about this southeastern outpost of the Reich seemed to confirm the general belief that Vienna was "different," that the priorities of the Viennese did not necessarily match those of the Germans, and that in Vienna cultural matters overrode other considerations. In his conversation with Schirach, Hitler blamed former Gauleiter Buerckel for having created an atmosphere "hostile to the Reich." If Buerckel's mistakes in carrying out the Aryanization project were not bad enough, Hitler said, the social faux pas he committed, were of even greater gravity: "He took off his jacket in the dining room of the Imperial Hotel and dined in suspenders. And in the Opera House, he occupied the VIP box in a business suit." 

Hitler considered Schirach not only perfect for the position in Vienna because of Schirach's devotion to him, but also because of his cosmopolitan background. (He was born in Berlin to a theater director father and a wealthy American-born mother.) Schirach came to understand that by considering the cultural wishes of the Viennese population and by appreciating their mentality he could gain their cooperation more easily in political matters. But even though the population obeyed imposed rules and regulations, Schirach was not able to prevent general disillusionment, particularly during the bombing.

114 Ich glaubte, p 264-7.
115 Ich glaubte, p 268.
campaigns. As the bombing proceeded, Schirach increasingly was forced to walk a tightrope between humoring the Viennese population whose cooperation was of utmost importance, and pleasing Hitler whose goals and philosophy he was supposed to promote. It also became obvious that there were aspects of life in Vienna that the Nazi party could not easily control. To Schirach’s chagrin, he was blamed for the lack of enthusiasm for the war effort among the Viennese by other high Nazi officials and ultimately also by the Fuehrer himself. One of the leaders who disliked Schirach was the Minister for Culture and Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, who in April 1943 had complained several times to Hitler about the Gauleiter’s “Kulturpolitik;” it did not coincide at all with Goebbels’ tastes.

On April 22, 1943, in a conversation with war Minister Albert Speer, Hitler, then prone to blaming his lieutenants for disastrous events, expressed his fears that Schirach “had lost his clear view of the interest of the Reich.”

Because of its background and tradition as the capital city of a former major multinational empire, the Viennese not only took great pride in their cultural life, especially in their music and theater which matched world standards, but also in the excellent infrastructure and public services of the city. Because ambitious people from the different nations of the former empire had gravitated to the capital city in a quest for better opportunities, their diversified skills and experiences had enhanced Vienna’s professional world. The greater competition for jobs resulted in an excellent, multilingual administration and well-organized city services, such as the police-, fire- and public transportation departments.

\[116\] Ich glaubte, p 295.
The general war situation presented more than enough problems for the city government to maintain essential day-to-day services, preserve the cultural life of the city and guarantee the smooth operation of a functioning bureaucracy. But the persistent bombing that began in 1944 confronted the city government with an added, new, and complex challenge:

Prompted by the deteriorating situation at the front and the decision of the Allies to carry out renewed bombing of German cities, this time also including Vienna, Hitler proclaimed a new phase of the war, that of a “total war effort.”

The war situation forces us to implement the full utilization of all forces of the Wehrmacht and armament; therefore I order the chairman of the Council of Ministers for the Reich defense, Reich Marshal Hermann Goering, to adjust the whole public life to the necessities of total war effort, in every regard. All public events have to view as a goal the total war effort... The whole state apparatus, including Reich railroads, post and all public institutions and organizations have to be adjusted to meet the goal of a total rational effort ["Einsatz"] of people and means... so that the highest potential of forces for the Wehrmacht and armament is available.

As a result, Viennese citizens had to confront not only the strained conditions of hazardous bombing but also the harassment of “total war” sanctions. The total war effort campaign became the Nazi government’s most intense focus. Its swift, sweeping and severe implementation engulfed all facets of daily life; its implication for the citizens involved a number of added discomforts and sacrifices as their cooperation was requested regarding:

17 Reichsgesetzblatt (RGBl.) # 34/1944, Berlin, July 27, 1944, Folder 1-123. acc. nr. 3387, Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv (City Archives).
(1) the continuation and enforcement of war production
(2) the Volkssturm (Home Guard) and Labor Services
(3) public services and aid programs
(4) the general work force
(5) the curtailing of cultural life
(6) nutrition and health matters.\textsuperscript{18}

Continuation of war production

As Adolf Hitler insisted in his proclamation of total war, the production of weapons was to be continued at all costs. To ammunition factory workers, this was nothing new as they were constantly urged on by circulated letters of the NSDAP -- Gauleitung Vienna, such as the following:

Our enemies who cannot conquer us in an open fight and in the battles on the front, are now trying to break the morale of our population and to interrupt the production of goods, important for the war, by brutal terror-attacks on the cities of our homeland. It is therefore imperative for every factory to see to it that the greatest obstacles are overcome and that armament potential is not only maintained but production is increased... Preparedness is everything. Reichsleiter and Reichsstatthalter Baldur v. Schirach has created extensive measures for protection. In maintaining production, we want to stand fully and totally on his side. However hard fate may touch us, we will be harder and will suffer through. We are protecting our city, which we love with all our heart, and we are maintaining unconditionally the production capacity of our factories in order to deliver weapons to the front and to continue production of the products important for the achievement of victory. ... The Fuehrer expects from us the highest degree of readiness and we give it willingly, because the final goal of this world war is a free Germany.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} The latter three will be explored in chapters 4 (Population) and 5 (Health).
\textsuperscript{19} Special Letter #1, \textit{Die deutsche Arbeitsfront}, March 1944.
And indeed, armament production continued in the whole Reich, and despite heavy bombing reached its maximum in the fall of 1944. In Vienna, damaged factory buildings were repaired as rapidly as possible in order to maintain the volume of war materials produced; production also was moved somewhere else, to tunnels, into forests and to the countryside. All means of transportation were kept running as long as possible. Consequently, in 1944, 450,000 people were employed as members of the German Labor Front in war production in Vienna. Conscripted reluctantly like the soldiers on the war front, they contributed to the war effort. Armament production in Austria reached its zenith in the Fall of 1944, despite the fact that transport of resources and manpower became more and more difficult.

Already in 1938, a plan was created to integrate Austria into German armament production. On March 26, 1938, Hermann Goering announced from the lobby of the Vienna North West Railway Station his “Build-up Program for Austria,” which emphasized the build-up of an armament industry and the utilization of Austrian raw materials. And Goering was not shy in reminding the Austrians that they were the ones who were supposed to do the work. “One should not think in Austria,” he said in the railway station, “that men would come from the Reich to take up the work and set the table for the Austrians.” On the contrary, he would see to it that the Austrians utilized their own workforce to capacity.

121 Ibid.
122 Ruestung in Oesterreich, p 144.
123 Ruestung in Oesterreich, p 29.
Austria's industry before the war consisted of "peace-time" factories, producing consumer goods; there was little heavy industry until the Reich, at the beginning of 1942, transferred some of its armament factories and outlets to Austria and intensified this move in 1943 and 1944; but even then factories were rather sparse. These transfers had the effect of making Austria a more important target for bombing.

The Austrian economist Ferdinand Tremel acknowledges that in addition to the few armament plants in the country, there existed small firms that were moved into apartment houses as a way of secretly continuing war production. Information about these small armament production plants in apartment houses supposedly had been transmitted to the Allies and the planning staff of the bomber raids. Camouflaged as children day care centers, scientific and social institutions, these small factories were engaged in production in the middle of housing areas. Because of the Allied intelligence's information however, the civilians became more vulnerable as their houses were bombarded. But, Tremel maintains, the small factory outlets did not have a great impact on the overall Reich war production; instead, railroads and oil facilities presented more valuable targets.

In 1943, sixty percent of the Reich oil production came already from Austrian oil fields, and the 15th AAF was able to neutralize these sources as well as oil depots early in the air war. The two first major attacks occurred on

---

124 Austro-German Relations, pp 201-8.
127 Ruestung, pp 151-2.
June 16 and June 26, 1944, with a concentration on the refineries of Moosbierbaum, but also of Korneuburg, Schwechat and, located within the city, Vienna-Kagran and Vienna-Floridsdorf. After further attacks on July 8, July 25, and August 28, 1944, the damage was severe enough to seriously hamper the Nazi war effort.

**Volkssturm (Home Guard)**

The mobilization of the Volkssturm was another means for the city government to increase the contributions of Vienna to the war effort. On August 16, 1944, the following document, stamped “classified,” and “not to be published,” was sent to party officials:  

> I order the leaders of the party-offices to prepare the necessary arrangements for the total war effort. They are authorized to close offices, partially or totally, and to use those freed (human) sources for war-essential activities or offer them to the Wehrmacht and armament.
> Fuehrerhauptquartier Munich, July 20, 1944, signed: Adolf Hitler.

“Those freed sources,” which Hitler mentioned, were to be used for “war-essential activities” by making them reluctant members of the Volkssturm. Thus, they joined other men, conscripted from those above and below draft age and those who because of a “lack of ability or other war-important employment” did not belong to a fighting force. As propaganda tried to impress on them, they were now, like their brothers at the front, “soldiers of the homeland,” defending

---

128 Reichsverfuegungsblatt 10/44, NSDAP Party Office, Munich. Oesterreichisches Staatsarchiv (State Archives), Box 383. One cannot help but notice that Hitler gave this order on the day of the assassination attempt on his life!
their home city. Later, before and during the siege of Vienna, the Volkssturm performed necessary preparatory services for resisting the Soviet invading forces, such as digging trenches and erecting barricades, as well as actual hand-to-hand fighting in the streets.

Some of the rules that applied to the status of a Volkssturm member were:

(1) Service in the Volkssturm had priority over service in all other organizations, although membership in non-job-related organizations was not affected.

(2) The Guard’s military organization and outfitting was the responsibility of the Waffen-SS Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler.

(3) Every member was required to attend a 5-day course of instruction.

Many members of the Volkssturm were reluctant draftees from the work force, since each work place had to make a certain number of people available to participate in the force. It didn’t matter much what type of work the person previously had performed. For all practical purposes, to be drafted into the Volkssturm by an employer, equaled a kind of demotion and often fell on citizens who did not openly glorify the Reich, who were looked upon suspiciously, and who did not know anybody in the hierarchy who could change their fate. It was not unusual to draft intellectuals --a case in point being Professor Dr. Liebscher, until then the director of a scientific research institute, who was
recruited to be the leader of a Volkssturm battalion, in charge of border security.\textsuperscript{133}

Propaganda glorified the Volkssturm, as it did all the other measures of the Reich. Citizens could listen to speeches coming over the radio at home or in the basement shelters, if there was a lull in the noise of the bombing, as the Party initiated the Volkssturm’s creation with the necessary pomp. In addition, the press supported and enhanced Hitler’s proclamation of the event. Under the headline “Call to the German Nation”, a Viennese newspaper reported:

In the hour when the force of the enemy sweeps over all the fronts, with the declared aim of smashing the Reich with its abundant people and material and destroying the German nation, the Fuehrer raises his voice and appeals to the whole nation to resist and fight with all possible means.--The Fuehrer orders the formation of the German Volkssturm!... I order that in the regions of the Great German Reich, the German Volkssturm, composed of all able-bodied men, aged 16-60 years, is to be organized, for the purpose of defending the home ground with all weapons and all means. The structure and the leadership of the German Volkssturm will be handled by the regional leaders, utilizing the institutions of the existing institutions of the party, the SA, the Waffen-SA and the HJ. The members of the German Volkssturm are during their deployment soldiers according to the military law.\textsuperscript{134}

Heinrich Himmler’s speech on the following day further described the Volkssturm agenda:

\textsuperscript{133} Order llib Lf- 108/45, February 19,1945, Box 147, State Archives.

\textsuperscript{134} Kleine Wiener Kriegszeitung. October 14,1944, p 1, c 1-3, and October 19, 1944, p 1, c 1-3. Four former Vienna newspapers were merged and officially published as the Kleine Wiener Kriegszeitung, beginning with September 1, 1944. This paper was the only official and sanctioned source of news for the Viennese population aside from the NSDAP-published Der Volkskische Beobachter. The Kleine Wiener Kriegszeitung was discontinued in April 1945 and the other papers installed again.
Voikssturmmaenner!
Today, on the . . . 131st anniversary of the “Battle of Nations in Leipzig,” our Fuehrer and highest “war lord” has called all able-bodied German men between the ages of 16 and 60, still at home, to be deployed to the German Volkssturm in order to defend the home ground. . . In soldier-like calmness, so typical for our faithful and brave German nation, shall we, men and women, having withstood courageously and unshakably, five war years on the front and in the homeland, . . .help the Wehrmacht in endangered regions . . . Outwardly and inwardly we will prepare ourselves for this duty. We swear that, like our fathers, we will be faithful; faithful to the Fuehrer, sent to us by Our Lord, faithful to the Reich, which has united all German tribes after centuries, representing the power of order of the European continent, now and in the future, faithful to the nation and therefore to ourselves, and . . . [we will] defend our nation.16

Labor Services16

Already in 1935, the Compulsory Labor Service Law was enacted, which obligated each young German citizen to serve, in the public interest, for six months in one of the Labor Services, which contained further specified branches, such as:
the Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD) -- Reich employment service,
the Kriegshilfsdienst -- war effort aid service, and
the Erntehilfe --harvest aid.

These particular services had not only an economic impact but often served to provide the essentials for survival.

Women played a special role in the Reich Labor Services where, in addition to regular duties, they displayed their resilience, as well as their physical and emotional strength by performing work that had formerly been

16  Klein Wemer Kriegeszeitung, October 19,1944, p 1, c 2-3, and p 2-4, c 1-3.
done by men. Never before had women, though active, been that visible in the work force, except in traditionally feminine professions, such as nurses, teachers, seamstresses, maids, etc. Recruited for these services, most often to their chagrin, they were called "Kriegsdienstmaiden," -"war service maids" and worked in the country outside of Vienna as well as in municipal jobs, such as driving street cars or punching tickets. Many young, unmarried women were drafted to do housework in farm homes in the country. Adhering to the 60-hour week prescribed in the Kriegseinsatz order, the hours were as grueling as the circumstances were difficult.

Numerous orders and memos to various Reich offices were sent daily by high officials, both German and Austrian, such as the Reichsstatthalter of Vienna himself, to remind bureau heads of utilizing work forces to the fullest, in both the private economy as well as the public. A typical letter was sent to "the highest Reich institutions" on August 19, 1944:

The work force is our most precious resource! Its full utilization is therefore the goal of the total war effort. Our motive has to be based on the principle that the largest possible effort has to be attempted with the least possible work forces. Heil Hitler! Signed: Dr. Goebbels."135

**Public services and aid programs**

To keep the city functioning properly during the bombardment, great efforts were required. Adherence to rules and regulations was often only possible by the utilization of practical sense, imagination and presence of mind in carrying them out.

---

137 Oesterreich II, p 49.
138 Carton 124 "Totaler Kriegseinsatz", State Archives.
Public transportation

Vienna's well-organized public transportation system of a wide network of streetcars, buses and subways, came to a standstill as soon as the cuckoo call (the warning signal of the air defense system) was heard. Everybody, including streetcar employees, had to seek shelter, abandoning the streetcars on the tracks. It took a while before service could be reinstated because tracks had to be cleared and electrical lines sorted out and repaired.

"If you had to perform work in various parts of the city, as I did," Karoline Ledinegg recalls, 139 "you relied, like a lot of other citizens, on your own two feet. Because not many people owned a telephone at that time, my route was spread over the whole city and I found myself sometimes on its outskirts when the bombing attack was over. Rather than waiting, I would start walking home."

As gasoline-powered trucks, city and commercial vehicles, were gradually put out of action through successful bombing and fuel shortages, the streetcar system turned out to be the most resilient means of transportation and came to handle various utilitarian functions. 140 It served as the vehicle for "Just married" couples, --unless they were walking--, as well as -- ironically-- for transporting the dead to the cemeteries. As bombing attacks became more frequent, the latter function prevailed over the former. Streetcars were also used for commercial purposes, such as the transport of general commodities. When there were trucks available, but without the necessary fuel, trucks were hitched to and pulled by streetcars. The shortage of fuel inspired citizens who still possessed a private vehicle, to come up with their own method of fuel

---

139 Interview, Ledinegg.
140 Oesterreich II, pp 39 and 56.
production. A wood burning stove, attached to the end of the car, was sometimes utilized to power these vehicles.

**Clean up activities**

The devastation after an air attack had to be followed by intensive clean-up activities by city workers before regular services could be reinstated. Even if there was no major bomb damage, there were almost always minor effects, such as damages caused by the air pressure of a bomb’s detonation and the impact of objects of all kinds flying through the air. Cracked furniture and blown-out windows were common occurrences, although considered less inconvenient than damages to the water canals, water system, gas pipes and electrical lines.

**Canal network and water supply**

One of the worst side effects of the bombings was damage to the water canal system. Damage also caused sewage water to overflow into the streets and sometimes to flood the basements which were used as shelters. Even though about 400 workers from 14 contracting firms were continuously employed to repair the canals, new breaks occurred as fast as the old ones were taken care of. Breaks in canals, including the ones which became apparent only after the war, amounted to more than 1600. The water supply was constantly in danger. Since Vienna received its water from high altitude sources in the Lower Austrian mountains of the Schneeberg, Rax and Hochschwab, there were numerous targets which could be bombed by the enemy planes. Major arteries leading to Vienna, were hit many times but were always repaired as quickly as possible. Often, when a major pipe or a large

---

*Statistics compiled by Statistics Director, Karl Pospischil, box 82-85, City Archives.*
water container was hit, whole brooks gushed through the streets until the water could be contained.

On February 21, 1945, 70% of Vienna’s water supply was interrupted, as 160 single incidences of damage were counted. Even though workers worked day and night to repair the damage, the next day Vienna was still without water. As in similar incidents before, a few old-fashioned water wells still located in the inner courts of some apartment buildings provided relief, but getting the water home was a major task. Karoline Ledinegg recalls many a day when she went to the well of the Grosse Stadtgutgasse, a few blocks away from her home:

“People were standing in a long line, with pails of all sizes, sometimes for hours. It took so long to let a pail down and get it up again; for some reason the windlass worked only very slowly; there wasn’t a thing one could do. I remember one woman whose pail leaked, but it was all she had. I wondered whether she would have anything left in the pail, by the time she reached home. But one couldn’t buy simple household items; there weren’t any in the stores. And of course, hauling a full water pail back to my place, then up five flights of stairs, was not pleasant either; but I was young and strong; the older, weaker people were the ones who found themselves in dire straits.”

Aid programs

Aside from the regular services the city government provided during the bombing period, there were numerous programs which aided the citizen in emergency situations. The ones which dealt specifically with bomb victims have

---

142 Ibid.
143 Interview, Ledinegg.
been already discussed in a previous chapter. There were also social services, dealing with the effects of bombing which were run by city officials under the auspices of the NSV, a party organization. The NSV addressed particularly women and children and ran various programs, such as the

**Transportation of children to the countryside.**

Not every citizen was in favor of this rather controversial program, which was not obligatory. While it was meant to protect children from the air raids by sending them to the countryside which was generally spared the attacks, the children were taken from their home by NSV social workers and thus separated from their mothers. As most men were fighting in the field, mothers held responsibility for their offspring and resented a separation from their children. Many also feared unwanted Nazi indoctrination of their children. Those who entered the program were taken to the country where they lived in camps run by the social workers of the NSV who watched over the childrens’ everyday activities such as learning and playing in a strictly regulated and prescribed manner, enhanced by frequent singing of Nazi hymns and songs.

There was no question though about the government’s promptness, efficiency and thoroughness in general. Although considered “routine” in peace times, these attributes served now as an indication to the citizens that despite the mayhem caused by the bombing, life could go on as “normally” as possible and that citizens could always rely on their government to make life bearable. If they only filled out the right forms, all would be well. In the midst of bombs

---

53

---

144 National Sozialistische Volks Wohlfahrt = National Socialist Citizens’ Welfare.
145 “Kinderlandverschickung,” Box 23, National Archives; also: NSV regulation sheet, 11/26/1943/ RD-31/43, group VI, Box 82-5, City Archives.
146 also: Interview, Ledinegg.
raining down on the city, there was a certain security in holding on to the things that people were used to, even if it was only that of traditional bureaucracy. Thus, the regime had its constituents firmly in its hands.

Was there anything left to the citizens? Yes, there was. The population of Vienna rose to its challenge in many ways and responded to the bombing period as best as it could; it was a matter of survival.
CHAPTER 4: THE POPULATION:
DUTY, DEPENDENCY, DETERMINATION

German men and women!
The homeland knows no greater duty and prouder obligation
than to serve the front! It is the invincible source of strength and
the gigantic arsenal for the Army.  

Whether the citizens agreed with this official propaganda or not, their
lives had become a day-to-day struggle to survive. By necessity, as the war in
the air dragged on, the Viennese found themselves caught in a pattern of
fulfilling duties, dependent on services provided by the government, and
forced, at the same time, to rely more and more on their own determination and
skills to survive. These elements of duty, dependency and determination came
to govern the lives of the citizens in the years of bombardment, as inescapable
as the war itself.

With the implementation of the declaration on total war effort, on July 26,
1944, everyday life became harder. A new age-segment of the population was
sent to the front and the “UK” status was abolished; men with the birth year of
1906 as well as the ones categorized “indispensable,” were conscripted. By
August 8, 1944, even men with a birth year of 1884 were drafted. At the same
time, young males, born in 1928, rather than --as before--1926, were required
to join the Volkssturm. The rest of the population, while remaining at home, was

---

147 Excerpt of speech of Hermann Goering, Propaganda Minister, Kleine Wiener Volkszeitung, November 20, 1939.
148 UK = “unabkömmlich” -- indispensable.
expected to “sacrifice” more than ever before, and was asked to scale down life to the barest necessities. It was all in the interest of the war, and it hit the men and women of the work force the hardest.

Working conditions for employees and employers changed drastically, in accordance with the Decree on Total War Effort: The minimum work week was now, instead of the former forty-eight and a half hours, sixty hours per week. If more was required at a particular work place, work took place also on Sundays. If employers didn’t fully utilize their work force, they were to be severely punished. If, for any reason, a person could not work the long hours, he or she could petition the Reichsstatthalter for relief. If somebody was hindered because of a health condition, he or she had to submit a doctor’s confirmation. Many desk-officials of state offices, such as the forestry and wood-working bureau, the state nutrition office, and others, were now reassigned to work in ammunition factories and other war-related firms; personnel directors were constantly inundated with directives to free their employees for more important war duties.

“Our work force is our most precious resource and its full utilization is the goal of our total war,” was a phrase employers and employees could read in the letter of Reich spokesperson Dr. Stuckart, dated August, 23, 1944. Citizens were drafted for “emergency obligations,” which could involve work in ordinance or transportation factories, like “Simmering-Graz-Pauker,” or in “Schanzarbeiten,” --digging trenches, which was preparational work for the final defense of the city.\(^{150}\)

\(^{148}\) Akt 5463t /44, box 174, National Archives.

\(^{150}\) Akt 5463t /44, box 174, National Archives.
Some citizens felt the control of the government more than others. If they were not lucky enough to already have and be retained in a decent job, they did not have any more freedom in choosing their work than they had in avoiding the bombing. An important device of this control by the government was the "Arbeitsbuch," the "Work Book," which each worker had to possess. The book served as a statistical account of the labor supply for the government; and each employee was under obligation to have it instantly ready for inspection of data relevant to his job. Often it documented arbitrary removal of citizens, particularly intellectuals, from their regular position to one of war-related work. One such case concerns a Vienna priest and music professor who was commandeered to South Styria in order to dig trenches. If anybody dared to object to such an order, he put himself in jeopardy. Any citizen, who was found working against any clause of the "total war effort," would be swiftly punished. If it was perceived that the perpetrator caused particular danger or endangered the security of the Reich, he could be even punished with a life sentence or with death. Nowhere was the inhumanity of punishment for political reasons revealed more horribly than in the words of Reichsfuehrer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler who, in cold bureaucratic lingo, informed Party officials of one of their colleagues' execution who "got his just punishment for his defeatist remarks," and then signed his name with strokes as hard and ominous as the cut of an ax.

151 Behemoth, p 281.
152 Interview, Ledinegg. She also mentioned that one could only get a work book if one first produced an "Aryan's Proof."
153 Akt 5649/44, Box 174, National Archives.
154 Article I of order, August, 25, 1944, ibid.
155 Letter Ilia 518944, June 2, 1944, # 2998/44, "Miscellaneous," Box 383, National Archives.
In addition to the citizens' duty as a member of the workforce, they also had the duty to protect themselves, as prescribed by law. Whether they were at home or at the work place, as soon as they heard the air raid alarm, they were obliged to trudge obediently to a shelter; a few months into the bombing, this "duty of self protection" turned into a kind of conditioned behavior.

"It became routine to do certain things when the air raid alarm sounded," Karoline Ledinegg says, like grabbing the little suitcase with the important papers and documents, as well as shutting off gas pilots, and leaving a window cracked. It just made sense." And so it went.

It was drilled into the citizens' minds that following the rules was advantageous not only for their own survival but also would help them avoid punishment in the case of negligence; failure to act as required could result in serious consequences. A Willi Havel was sentenced to three months of prison, for violating paragraph 81 of the Code of Law and paragraph 9 of the Air Defense Law, for refusing to seek protection in a shelter. Apparently, he could not prove that he fell under the exemption rules, which applied to those on their way to important work. Negligence of one's citizenship "duties" could even be considered as sabotage of the Reich. There existed a set of penalties and fines for the citizen who disobeyed the air defense laws. Police could arrest people on the street if they were found there during an air raid; violators of the blackout rules were not only punished with a monetary fine, but were threatened with a cut-off of their electricity.

156 Interview, Ledinegg.
157 A.Bl. S Lu/b I- 5510, Police Archives.
158 Box 151: folder "Miscellaneous" IX, 1945, National Archives.
159 Ibid.
Since a strong work ethic existed among the population by tradition, the duty to work was hardly ever questioned. It did not occur to people not to go to work because of unsafe conditions. Up until the end of the war, they went to their places of employment where they continued to perform badly needed work. Whether it was the repair of streetcars or tracks which were restored as fast as they were again destroyed, or the delivery of mail or a public service, tended to by thousands of postal workers, city employees, and people like the telephone meter reader, Karoline Ledinegg, or duties performed by office workers and other professionals, they stuck it out. Some turned to other types of work, when their own place was destroyed; but all in all, they did it because of their traditional work ethic, their respect for authority and their desperate attempt to hold on to something "normal", and the hope that it all would end eventually.

Added to the citizens' obligations of work under the trying circumstances of the bombing was the regimentation of leisure time.\textsuperscript{160} The Nazi regime prescribed entertainment and enlightenment in the form of radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines and sport, all under the control of the propaganda machine, and infiltrated work places with their social organisations. The German Labor Front\textsuperscript{161} created the slogan "Strength through Joy," and staged efficiency competitions. The infamous "Arbeit macht Freude," -- Work gives pleasure," ended up as a motto atop the entrance of concentration camps, and carried this propaganda ad absurdum.

\textsuperscript{160} Behemoth, p 349-51.

\textsuperscript{161} DAF = Deutsche Arbeits Front.
While the government received cooperation from its citizens, it also made sure that the young were properly prepared and made them subject to various state programs. All German and Austrian schools were placed under the domination of the Nazi party.\textsuperscript{162} The Party, by controlling the educational system, could indoctrinate children at an early age. Since, traditionally, education played an important part in Austria, steps were taken to continue classes during the bombing phase of the war.\textsuperscript{163} When the air raid sirens sounded, children under the tutelage of their teachers proceeded in an orderly fashion to the shelter. Some schools, for all practical purposes, were moved underground, as was the University of Vienna. For a time, children were taught wherever it was safe in shelters, but as fear and chaotic conditions increased, in the last months of the war, sessions of regular classes were no longer possible. By Christmas 1944, the daily alarms, frequent attacks and the especially low temperatures of a harsh winter prompted the authorities to declare a “cold-vacation,” which came to an end only in April 1945 when the war ended. In addition to their schooling, children were incorporated into the “Hitler Youth.” By executive order of March 25, 1939, a Youth Service Duty for German youth between the ages of ten and eighteen was introduced, and by 1943, was made as compulsory as school attendance.\textsuperscript{164} The law said that parents who encouraged their children to abstain from this service duty were punishable, and their children might be taken away from their homes and put into orphanages or with other families. All organized youth activities, “duties” as

\textsuperscript{162}William Ebenstein, “Education under Hitler”, in Hitler and Nazi Germany, p 78.

\textsuperscript{163}Group V/83, “Report of private persons,” statistics director Pospischil, City Archives.

\textsuperscript{164}The Youth services were separate for boys and girls, the HJ and the BDM (Bund Deutscher Maedchen).
well as "pleasures", such as sport and music, were in fact carried out throughout the whole bombing period.

**Dependency**

As the citizen obeyed orders and participated in government-instituted services, he became more and more dependent on the regime which had put him into this situation in the first place. If he was lucky, he never needed services like rehousing or access to a birth clinic for his pregnant wife, but he was totally dependent upon the rationing system for food and clothing.

Ironically, the bombing kept citizens dependent on a regime that the air attacks were trying to destroy; and the bombing only fortified the population's dependency on the government. Allied military strategists speculated at one time that bombing could lead to such demoralization of citizens that they would turn on their government and sabotage it to the point where the Allies could easily subdue and conquer the country, thus ending the war. But if the Allies ever hoped that the citizens would rise against their government, how could this be done under conditions created by the bombing when the population needed the government the most?

**Determination**

Determination was perhaps the strongest motivation of the population. This determination was not restricted to mere physical survival but included inventive ways to overcome hardships in the following areas:

- the lack of basic household items and food,
- the drab every-day life, curtailed from any kind of frills or cultural life,
- the often long time spent in shelters during bombing.

---

Citizens embraced every opportunity to cut corners and scrounge around for the most basic items needed for existence. Once household items were destroyed, they usually could not be replaced. Because of the previous five years' emphasis on an armament-oriented industry, "peace-items" were practically non-existent in Austria. There was a shortage of wood, glass, nails, and most other every-day items, but the improvisations of citizens struggling to survive were almost limitless. Karoline Ledinegg remembers, "I shared some thumbtacks with a colleague of mine so she could put up the big sheet of brown packing paper she had found at a bombing site to replace her shattered window glass. And if one of us could get an extra half pint of milk for the children, the only glass bottle to pick it up with was carefully washed out and then used by several other mothers in turn."

Despite the food rationing system, the goal of which was to prevent later starvation, survival on the extremely small ration portions was almost impossible and it was no secret that just about all citizens tried with more or less success to add to their rations through other sources. Those were:

1. farming, on the outskirts of the city;
2. small gardening; about 35,000 people owned diminutive garden plots, separate from their apartment, somewhere in Vienna, all in all about ten million square meters. "Amateur farmers" grew fruits and vegetables, and also raised chickens and rabbits;
3. "collecting;" citizens would go into the country after the harvest and collect whatever they could still find on the ground. There were grain

---

155 "Report of private persons," Pospischil, p15, group VI/83, City Archives.
156 Interview, Ledinegg
seekers who, after gathering wheat, barley, or other grains, would thresh it themselves or grind the seeds with coffee grinders, and potato seekers. "They always carried their booty in a 'Rucksack,' an item as treasured as the potatoes themselves," says Karoline Ledinegg, "but I did one better: I got potatoes from a farmer in a small bag, placed it, flattened out, on an old stroller and spread a blanket over the bag. I then had my small daughter ride on it, while I pushed the buggy home, over a distance of about 25 kilometers." Finally, there were berry-, mushroom- and herb seekers.

(4) vacation-work; people used their vacation time to work at a farm, where their salary would be paid in food. This method was legal;
(5) buying of groceries in addition to rations. This took place, of course, on the black market, which was illegal;
(6) bartering; this was also illegal but despite of that, everything that could be moved was exchanged for food. Clothes, sewing machines, even pianos were hauled to the country;
(7) food packages; if one had an acquaintance on a farm, he would try to obtain little extras. Says Karoline Ledinegg: "I don’t know what I would have done without my foster brothers in Styria; they sent me ham, lard, even eggs, by mail, which always arrived whole; only rarely, one or two would be cracked."

As if the daily struggle for the basics was not enough, the implementation of the total war effort brought yet another hardship with major implications on

---

169 Interview, Ledinegg.
170 Interview, Ledinegg.
the people: the curtailing of cultural life. Even though a war brings with it shortages, sacrifices and losses, the American bombing only served to reinforce Hitler's notion on citizens of the need for a total war effort. According to this notion, by sacrificing even the last amenity left, the citizens could show the aggressors that they could carry on with their lives, and that every sacrifice they made in terms of material and human resources would only enhance means to conquer the enemy.

That was the theory. Reality for the citizens looked slightly different: a little entertainment went a long way to sustain people's spirit. To give up that and other elements of their lives which were ingrained with culture was one of the worst blows citizens suffered. Many blamed these conditions on the Americans and their bombing: "There was a marked difference in our lives, once the bombing started regularly," Karoline Ledinegg remembers. "Before the bombing, despite the usual wartime shortages, life pretty much resembled peacetime, but the bombing put everybody and everything under its spell."

In 1944, the measure which ordered the closing of theaters, concert halls and places of entertainment was presented to the mayor of Vienna, Herr Blaschke, in the form of a letter from a party official, a Dr. Benecke from Berlin:

Dear friend,
Reductions in cultural life have been decided upon by the Fuehrer personally. Suggested by Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels, the Fuehrer has ordered the closing of all theaters. In old friendship, Heil Hitler! Your Otto Benecke.  

---

171 A collection of letters and orders pertaining to the curtailing of cultural life, in box 341, National Archives.
172 Interview, Ledinegg.
173 Box 341, National Archives.
This was a move looked upon with alarm by many citizens, who had always considered cultural activities an important aspect of their lives. But the sacrifice and disappointment was not entirely theirs; those who actively provided for the cultural activities, felt harrassed as well. An official executive order proclaimed that all men and women belonging to the Reich Culture Chambers or associations and all other persons who were now free from their professional obligations after the closing of theaters were required to report to the unemployment office by Sept 15, 1944. Many Burg Theater actors or Vienna State Opera stars found themselves following an invitation to the unemployment office and pondering the directions of yet another form to be filled out in accordance with the above directive, which reassured them that "unemployed citizens can declare for which employment they consider themselves particularly able." Those refusing could be "forcibly brought" to the unemployment office and punished by prison and a monetary fine.

The second level of "cultural" closings involved some simple restaurants and coffee houses. Following this, the mayor of Vienna suggested self service and a simplification of menu items in the remaining establishments, ironically so, it seems, because there wasn't much variety of food to begin with. By October, 1944, all entertainment establishments were closed; public dancing ("Tanzlustbarkeiten") was to cease "until further notice," as proclaimed by Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsfuehrer of the SS, and finally, even the use of libraries was ordered reduced ("lending necessities" were permitted.)

---

174 # 40 (part I), 4th order, Berlin, 8/31/1944, box 341, National Archives.
176 Order, October 3, 1944, and order O-VuR. R. II 1749/39, box 341, National Archives.
was one exception: cinemas were still allowed to remain open. They served propaganda, as movies produced under Nazi supervision were cleverly used in an attempt to brainwash citizens into becoming followers.

With no “entertainment” left to possibly interfere with the war effort, the people had to oblige with more work; what else could they do? They might have been only vaguely aware that even the Fuehrer himself got to taste the fruits of equal suffering. At an invitation to tea in the house of Josef Goebbels and his wife, he presented Frau Goebbels with “a modest bunch” of lilies-of-the-valley, and explained that it was “the best that could be found, because Doctor Goebbels had closed all the flower shops in Berlin.”

Again and again, officials repeatedly hammered into citizens’ heads that if they would only sacrifice everything mundane and focus their energies toward one goal only, namely the promotion of the war effort, the war would be eventually won. Furthermore, the citizens would survive to see it happen. The population’s determination to cope with the bombing brought forth human survival traits. People often took their own initiatives, using what the government could not give them -- hope, faith and love for their fellow neighbors. Tenants of apartment houses became aware that they were a community and could overcome obstacles more easily with everybody’s cooperation; as the bombings increased and the shelters were frequented with greater regularity, the inhabitants took steps to make basements more “livable.” Regulations aside, many people thought of ways to make living in basements easier. An empty coal box, for example, was perfect for storing

---

177 Struggle of Europe, pp 174-5.
178 “Survivors’ accounts,” group VI, box 82-5, City Archives.
emergency items in the form of cans and bottles or jugs with water. One very practical container which was stuffed with survival items was the "German Rucksack," made of strong tent material, which could be easily picked up and carried around, in case of a quick flight.

As the war neared the end and bombardments increased from day to day, more and more meals had to be taken in basements. To prepare them, tenants brought small wood-burning ovens or petroleum cookers with them. By contributing whatever food items they could scratch up, they created in the process "culinary war-time delights," which became known as the "community goulash," the "war cake," and the "potato cake." Even Mrs. Goebbels herself, in a radio broadcast, revealed her recipe for a soup, made from potato peels.\textsuperscript{172}

Karoline Ledinegg remembers another "fine specialty" from the final phase of the war when the system of rationing cards went astray. At the beginning of April 1945, when the Soviets were already in Vienna, bombs and artillery fire made the people hover in their cellars continuously for the second straight week, and food was getting frightfully scarce. Two tenants who had restlessly strayed outside in the neighboring streets brought back some unexpected "booty:" sticking out of pails were the raw parts of a horse, its blood still dripping and forming a puddle on the ground. The dead animal had been left on the street, after fierce street battles with the Soviets.\textsuperscript{180}

There were countless other occasions during which the citizens had to make quick and important decisions and rely on their own instincts, based on their determination to survive. Many episodes of cooperation among total

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Interview, Ledinegg.
strangers and displays of loyalty to neighbors as well as their home city occurred. When the Opera House was destroyed, famous opera stars were seen cleaning up and scratching through the debris in order to retrieve and preserve notes, instruments and precious costumes. Against all odds, the Viennese opera singer Ernst Majkut, together with two other employees of the House, dragged a grand piano down the main staircase in order to save it.181

In their struggle to overcome the hardship of the bombing, the Viennese population resigned themselves to the fact that it was after all war; but while the targeting of industrial sites and even housing areas could be considered justified to a certain degree, the destruction of cultural institutions, as well as schools, churches and hospitals, was much harder to digest. If the damages of homes as well as industrial and transportation sites, --all existing railway stations were either damaged or destroyed by the end of the war--182 were tragic and disturbing, the Viennese population was shocked by the destruction of some of the great cultural institutions of the city.183

To see the magnificent royal castles of Schoenbrunn and Belvedere, the precious palaces of Schwarzenberg, Kaunitz and Harrach, and great monuments, such as the Kunsthistorische Museum and the Burg Theater, destroyed and mutilated, filled the people with rage, sadness and disbelief. Aside from their own personal losses, that was what they questioned the most. Who was served by the obliteration of treasures which provided enjoyment and elevation for the whole world? What could be the motive for such a thing?

181 “Reports of private persons,” “Personal accounts,” box 82-5, City Archives.
182 Report of Chief of Statistical Office, p. 10, box 82-5, City Archives.
183 as expressed by the Chief of Statistical Office, ibid. Also: Finale p 169, Oesterreich II, pp 44-5, and “Reports of private persons,” “Personal accounts,” box 82-5, City Archives.
One early heavy air attack, on September 10, 1944, directed mostly towards the center of the city, was described by the (Nazi controlled) press as the result of the "attacker's desire to hit culturally precious buildings and thus transform the most beautiful squares of Vienna into a crater landscape and to create in the city as much mayhem as possible." Even though this diction was, of course, motivated in part by the hatreds engendered by Nazi propaganda, there was no other explanation for the population. In the center of the city, there were no factories or railroads, only monumental buildings which were well known to the world. "The Americans probably do not fully realize what they have done," the paper concluded its article on that day. However, American accounts described bombing attacks only in terms of material and numbers; the fact that cultural monuments were being hit was not mentioned. Indeed, on that day, whole street blocks were heavily damaged, making the faces of many old houses under preservation protection disappear. The Viennese mourned the loss of some of their beautiful palaces, like the Harrach, which received a full hit, the Pasqualatti House, in which Beethoven had lived, and the "Dreimaederl Haus," scene of Schubert's activities. In addition, beautiful baroque churches were destroyed, some located in the suburbs which were equally hit. To see artifacts and altar pictures scattered around on the streets and throughout the ruins, was a horrible sight.

As on every other day after air attacks, the citizens attended to their clean-up work. "The population copes with the disaster," the same paper observed, "as if it is something unavoidable... a senseless crime, committed to

---

184 Neues Wiener Tagesblatt, # 251, September 11, 1944, p. 3, c 2,3.
185 From September 10, 1944, Combat Chronology, p 447.
a city which has resisted the Turks and many other menaces." The bombings resumed the next day, again on Vienna's "cultural estate," and the press reported, "Never have the terror attacks displayed their atrocious senselessness more than here."\textsuperscript{186}

The most infamous of all attacks on Vienna's cultural heritage took place on March 12, 1945 when the Vienna State Opera, famed and treasured all over the world, took a bad hit.\textsuperscript{167} The seven-story high ceiling collapsed, the auditorium and stage burned, with flames shooting high into the sky. Word spread quickly of the disaster, and citizens hurried to the site in disbelief. Karoline Ledinegg had sat close-by in a shelter, after having been denied entrance to the Philippi Hof, which lay now in ruins, and hurried back up the street when the "all-clear" sign came. "Some people tried to help the fire brigade, some were just standing in front of the blazing flames, in shock and with tears running down their faces," she said. "I cried too; and I had never even been inside the Opera House."\textsuperscript{188}

The Viennese opera singer, Ernst Majkut, describes vividly the disaster of the stricken opera house in his diary. After actively participating in saving what could be saved from the burning house, such as the red and gold plush seats from the auditorium, precious costumes, about 250 pieces of sheet music, and the grand piano, which he helped push down the front stair case, he went home and cried in the arms of his wife. "I have lost all faith in the beautiful," he wrote in his diary, "through this bottomless barbarism."\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{185} Neues Wiener Tagesblatt. September 12, 1944, p 3, c 2,3.
\textsuperscript{187} Oesterreich II, pp 44-5.
\textsuperscript{188} Interview, Ledinegg.
\textsuperscript{189} Letter 830-74/56 to "Reports of private persons," group VI, Box 82-5, City Archives.
Whether it was barbarism, ignorance, indifference, or even indolence, as the bombing of the Opera House has been called, or a combination of all of that, the precise reason why the Opera House was bombed cannot be pinpointed. One rumor had it that the House had been mistaken for the South Railway Station because of its long stretched metallic roof. The American sources are mum with regard to the destruction of the opera house; neither the 15th Army-Air Force, throughout its Directive, accounts for the bombing of any other than industrial objects, nor does the Combat Chronology mention the famous building hit on that particular day. "Whatever the reasons were," says Karoline Ledinegg, "it was an inexcusable deed."

As the citizens were inundated more and more not only with the bombing but also with the propaganda against its "barbarism," they came to appreciate the precautions the city government had taken to protect as many monuments and historical treasures as possible. Statues and monuments were enclosed in cement cases, glass mosaic windows were removed from churches, and valuable treasures from museums and castles were transported to secret hiding places in the country. One such location was the salt mines of Bad Aussee in the Salzkammergut. An area of 40,000 square meters, it was efficiently used to accommodate precious loads containing church figurines, altars, furniture, pictures and whole art collections, even complete libraries and archives. Everything was carefully covered with blankets and transported by

---

190 Oesterreich II pp 44-5. Also: Finale, p 169.
191 Combat Chronology, p 597.
192 Interview, Ledinegg.
193 Oesterreich II, p 40.
194 Erich Poechmueller, Welt-Kunstschätze in Gefahr, (Salzburg: Pallas Verlag, 1948), pp 5-49. Poechmueller was the director of the Bad Aussee mine and overlooked personally storage activities as well as communicated with directors of various art institutions.
means of trains, trucks and sleighs. Various caves were chosen because of their ideal security as well as climatic conditions (steady temperature and humidity.) The accommodation of such delicate artifacts was not an easy undertaking. Because of continuous daytime bombing, transport took place mostly in the night, and an alert crew had to overcome the obstacles of destroyed tracks and railway stations. The storage of sometimes odd-sized items into low-height spaces required imagination as well as practical sense.

But at the end of the war, none of the stored articles had been lost. Thanks to their conscientious city government, the Viennese could retrieve all their treasures, complete with XVII-century furniture, jewelry collections and the legacies of Rubens, Vermeer, Van Dyck, Rembrandt and Velasquez, as well as treasures saved from other countries, (some confiscated from Italy by retreating German troops) such as the artifacts of Monte Cassino, and the Naples Museum's "The Blind," by Peter Brueghel.

The extraordinary dimensions of the Austrian treasure-saving operation in the face of American bombing are truly mind-boggling: All in all, eighty wagons of art treasures with a value of $3-1/2 billion (1946) were put in storage; and what was more it was all saved despite the Nazis' wish in the last minute to blow everything up in the wake of their downfall. Even though the American bombardment destroyed countless treasures in the city of Vienna itself, it could not touch the Austrian emperor's crown, Van Eyck's Ghent altar painting and the Mona Lisa.

196 appropriated by the Germans on their retreat from Italy.
If the Viennese appeared to fret too much over their art treasures, palaces and Opera House, it must be pointed out that they were just as outraged over the bombing of kindergartens, hospitals and churches. Towards the last months of the war, when Vienna was subjected to almost daily bombing attacks, the second district, adjacent to the inner city (the first district) took heavy blows. They resulted, in addition to an almost total wipe-out of whole blocks, in the damaging of the Kindergarten on Obere Augartenstrasse and the oldest hospital, not only of the district but the whole city, as well as the historic St. Leopold Church.\footnote{Leopoldstadt, p 189. The church's chronicle mentions the hit of a 1000-kilo bomb which, although sparing the 300 people hovering in the basement, destroyed the building and with it the beautiful altar painting of Altomonte.}

The helpless, bewildered children of the stricken Augartenstrasse Kindergarten were not any better off than patients in hospitals who, already bogged down with adversities had to be collected in beds, gurneys and wheelchairs to be taken down to the basement, where intravenous devices, heart monitors and operation room equipment had to be accommodated. The downed bomber pilot Parker, himself recuperating in the Vienna Robert Koch Hospital and empathizing with his fellow patients --"five stories of bed-ridden humanity,"--\footnote{Cuckoo, p 122.} gave an account of such an attack:

\begin{quote}
Sixty-nine bombs landed in the hospital complex, killing many people, including eleven Catholic sisters who were nurses... Our hospital was located about one quarter mile from the Suedbahnhof rail yard... One 500 pounder hit our five story building with the debris completely blocking the one exit from the air raid cellar, trapping two hundred people for hours until they could dig us out.\footnote{Cuckoo, p 131.}
\end{quote}
If the bombardiers mistook the Opera House's roof for that of a railway station, they couldn't claim the same mistake here. Hospitals had a large cross painted on their roofs, complying with rules of the Geneva Convention. "Birth clinic as bomb target," was the caption of a picture appearing in the newspaper, showing the complete destruction of what was once a hospital. And it went on to say, "The bombs of the American air gangsters have hit a birth clinic. The ruins, together with all the other destroyed hospitals and schools, cultural premises and churches, serve as an accusation for the enemy's bomb terror." Even if the phrasing can be attributed to the typical rhetoric of Nazi propaganda, the photograph of the destruction of the hospital was realistic enough to play on the resentment of the Viennese population.

There is no evidence that cultural and medical institutions were hit out of barbarism or revenge, but instead, most Viennese assumed that many of these targets were hit by mistake. While the bombers aimed at armament factories, oil refineries and railroad tracks, some bombs missed their targets and fell on housing areas, "whole bomb-carpets of it." Reasons for this were either navigational errors, technical malfunctions, weather conditions, insufficient information, and/or a combination of some of these factors. When "Lone Wolves" bomber pilots followed their standing orders, requiring them to return to base when certain visual conditions were encountered, they often dropped their load indiscriminately before going home, or if a target could not

---

200 Kleine Wiener Kriegszeitung, June 12, 1944, p 1, c 1-2.
201 Oesterreich II, p 44. Also: "Statistical reports," City Archives.
202 Oesterreich II, p 44.
be approached, bombs were dropped because the crew did not want to take the load back to the base.\textsuperscript{231}

"They didn't always know what they were hitting" said Larry Babits,\textsuperscript{24} reading from his 15th AAF pilot father's entrances into a war journal which described day-to-day missions. "Often, in Austria," he said, "weather conditions were such that targets were not always visible." And, says Karl Pospischil, "Particularly towards the end of the war, it didn't seem to matter much anymore, one way or the other."\textsuperscript{256}

The weather in Austria was known to be unstable, particularly over the Alps. On the infamous day that the Opera was hit, however, conditions were described as "good weather."\textsuperscript{256}

The statistics about the damage to cultural buildings\textsuperscript{257} show that in 1944/1945, all concert halls and theaters, as well as libraries and book stores, museums, exhibition halls and art institutes, were damaged. In addition, of 421 schoolhouses 67 were totally destroyed, and 119 heavily and 235 slightly damaged. Of 220 cinemas, only 120 could be used again after the war; of 400 city gyms, only 75 survived, as did 50 of the 100 athletic fields; of 60 public baths 23 were heavily, 20 slightly damaged.

In their daily struggle of survival citizens learned to observe duties which gave them aid and sometimes comfort. In many instances they had no choice but to depend on their government. They also knew when to depend on

\textsuperscript{231} Monograph # 95824, p 1.
\textsuperscript{244} Personal interview, Dr. Lawrence Babits, December 16, 1993.
\textsuperscript{255} "Kleine Bestaende Gruppe" VI/83--1-3, City Archives.
\textsuperscript{256} "Reports of private persons, part 1, folder 1, "Statistical reports," City Archives.
\textsuperscript{257} \textit{Finale}, pp 226-7.
each other and use their own initiatives, thus overcoming many obstacles that in their pragmatism they recognized as inherent. They could understand war, but the destruction of cultural monuments distressed them particularly because they could not understand the reasons for it. Determination to overcome obstacles helped many citizens in the end to survive.
Chapter 5: NUTRITION AND HEALTH

It is of utmost importance that every person in Germany should realize that . . . Germany is a defeated nation. I do not want them to starve to death, but . . . The Fact that they are a defeated nation, collectively and individually, must be so impressed upon them that they will hesitate to start any new war . . . 208

While the rationing of food is a common war measure as an early means to prevent famine, the start of regular bombing of Vienna brought a significant urgency to the government's programs.

The waning military successes of the Axis and the renewed bombing of German cities had contributed to Hitler's declaration of a total war effort. This new phase had an impact also on the question of nutrition and other health matters. In Vienna, due to the continuous interruption of the transportation network, the supply and distribution of goods became more and more difficult. As the American bombing put out of action more and more roadways, railway tracks and vehicles, all rationing was severely affected.

The rationing system for food supplies. 209

The rationing program went into effect for the whole Reich at the beginning of the war, September 1, 1939; the food-loving Viennese population deemed it inadequate almost from the beginning. 210 After only two months into

---

208 President Roosevelt to Secretary of Defense Stimson, Wings of Judgment, p 88.
the war, shortages of rationed amounts required citizens to stand in long lines in
front of grocery stores. On October 13, 1939, housewives lining up in front of a
fish store on the Mariahilferstrasse were hauled away in police cars, under
protest, for violating a law against standing in line. Nazi officials had only
recently created this law in an attempt to deny unfavorable conditions.

According to a report by the Sicherheitsdienst (SD)211 from November 6,
1939, there was a shortage of fruits and vegetables causing Viennese citizens
to suspect that the goods were distributed to the German homeland only. And
again, in December, 1939, housewives complained that the six supplementary
eggs that were authorized for Christmas were withheld from the previous
week's regular ration.

These initial problems were only an indication of what was still to come
once the bombing started. Obviously, the American bombing phase made it
more acute because of the vulnerability of industries and the transportation
system. How much the prolonged and successful Allied bombing affected the
nutrition of the population as a whole is shown by a statement of Goebbels, of
March 1, 1945:

"We are already forced to make extraordinarily severe reductions
in the food rations and shall soon be compelled to make even
more. . . . We shall very soon be forced to reduce by 35-50 % the
ration of the most important items, fat and bread.212"

Though the Nazis' extensive rationing system barely met the
population's needs, in the end it justified itself as chaos and famine were

211 = Security Service of the SS.
212 = Final Entries, p 21.
avoided. The bureaucratic organization and the ingrained discipline of the population, once again, were the means which helped the population survive.

**Operation**

The highest authority in charge of food supply was the Reichsministerium fuer Ernaehrung und Landwirtschaft (Reich Ministry of Food and Agriculture) and the Reichsnaehrstand (Reich Food Estate,) the former having control over policy and administration and the latter over executing agrarian policy. During the war the Reichsnaehrstand operated under the supervision of the Ministry which in turn was subordinated to the Ministerial Council for the defense of the Reich. These two organizations were in charge of enforcing regulations on production, sales and distribution of agricultural products, including price controls.

The Food Estate whose director was also the Minister of Food and Agriculture, was subdivided into provincial, district and local farmers associations; the latter were in charge of deliveries of agricultural produce from the peasants. Also under the Food Estate were Central Marketing Associations at the national level, the purpose of which was to regulate and tax the movement of agricultural goods. There were Central Marketing Associations for grain and fodder, milk and fats, eggs, livestock, potatoes, sugar, garden products, vineyard products, fish, and the brewery and confectionary industries. The Associations dealt in domestic trade only. Imported food was controlled by Reich offices which took care of tariffs, storage and marketing.

Germany, including Austria, provided 83 percent of its food needs at the beginning of the war. The average citizen consumed 2200-2400 calories per

---

*213 The Effects of Strategic Bombing*, pp 264-90.
day, according to the State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Food & Agriculture, but the production possibilities had reached their limit and any decrease had a noticeable effect on the nutritional status of the population. Large industrial cities depend on supplies from rural areas and a good transportation system. Therefore, the bombing of rail- and waterways and other transportation facilities had important negative consequences. Aerial bombing made the operation of food processing industries more difficult. The only measures that could be taken were the rerouting of loads to other, still operational facilities and the construction of new plants.

**Storage**

The air war also damaged storage facilities, another important link in the chain of food supply. Reserve food stocks and certain foods in short supply were destroyed as was the necessary power for refrigeration. An incident in Germany provides an illustration: the “Linde Kuehlhaus” refrigerated plant of Munich was hit by an incendiary bomb which destroyed approximately 2,000,000 eggs, 400,000 kg of butter and 100,000 kg of meat. To counteract occurrences like this, the Ministry of Food ordered greater decentralization of facilities, but the proper functioning of facilities was still very dependent on transportation and on power supply. Official American assessment later concluded that the damage to the bombarded citizens’ food supply and distribution system, was “extensive, but not alone sufficient to upset the food economy structure.”

---

214 *The Effects of Strategic Bombing*, p. 271.
215 *The Effects of Strategic Bombing* pp. 271-2. Even though this statement derived from both American and German estimates, it appears to be rather a matter of doubt, considering the further described circumstances of the food situation.
Distribution

A major task of the Ministry of Food was to direct the distribution of food staples (flour, sugar, fat, etc.) uniformly and to ensure an adequate food supply to each consumer, allowing the rationing system to provide allowances of the principal foods at intervals of four weeks. Each consumer received rationing cards with designated stubs which were given to the grocer in return for the portions.

The destruction of railroads, bridges and terminal facilities, was the biggest single factor in the disruption of the food distribution and prompted a shift from water- and railways to road transportation, but the size of loads was of course cut down. In 1942, at Goebbels' order, an Interministerial Air War Damage Committee (Interministerieller Luftkriegsschadenausschuss, or LKA) was formed to consolidate calls by cities for assistance after air raids. The LKA was to make available emergency food supplies for communal feeding in the case of a city's inability to take care of its citizens. An elaborate chain of command was to come into operation: the food ministry representative on the committee advised the Central Marketing Association to give orders to the appropriate Provincial Marketing association. The liaison official in the Ministry of Food then asked the rail and transportation authorities for the necessary shipment of food to bombed cities. Similarly, the NSV transferred extra food supplies to Municipal Food Offices after an air attack and would try to restore the normal food supply within three days after the raid. But by February, 1945, the transport situation had become so severe that the Ministry could only send food to a bombed city from the surrounding province.

\(^{216}\) The Effects of Strategic Bombing, pp 272-4.
The Ministry operated the Food Rationing System by basing its calculations on a food balance sheet from month to month.\(^{217}\) For the purpose of establishing needs the civilian population was divided into several consumer groups, according to age and occupation. But allowances were decreased as the war went on and towards the end hit starvation levels. Children, nursing and pregnant women got extra rations, on the basis of “standards laid down by the national health organization.”\(^{218}\) The rations were based on general availability and on national dietary habits rather than on nutritional values. While calories, protein and fat content were periodically calculated, mineral and vitamin contents were never considered.

Continuing diminution of the available food resulted in gradual reduction of rations until in November 1944, when reductions reached a critical stage, particularly for the “normal consumer” group. By the beginning of 1945, with the even higher frequency of bombing, the basic principles of rationing had to be abandoned altogether and a reduced version of the ration cards was introduced in April of that year. At the end of the war the average Austrian citizen consumed only 1200 calories per day.\(^{219}\)

In Vienna, the NSV was an important organization in the distribution of food to bombed-out citizens. Shortly after an air attack, members of this organization would distribute “Eintopf,” a single dish meal, bread and hot substitute coffee at central locations, or directly at the bombing location. As the surviving population spent an increasing number of hours in air raid bunkers, especially during the last few months of the war, they found it necessary to

\(^{217}\) The Effects of Strategic Bombing, p. 273.

\(^{218}\) Ibid.

\(^{219}\) Statistics of Pospischil,”Kleine Bestaende Gruppe,” VI/83--1-3, City Archives.
provide for their own makeshift kitchen facilities. In the final phase of the war, during the siege of Vienna, when the population spent almost two consecutive weeks in shelters, people had to use their own initiatives to procure and process food. Tenants brought their petroleum burners or even started small wood fires on the floor of the basement; and by pooling together food ingredients they could still come up with, they continued to cook "community meals."  

**Quality of the national diet**

A ration was determined by weight rather than nutritional value, but there was a list in the Ministry citing reduced human nutritional requirements for calories, protein, fat and carbohydrates, which could be approximated under war conditions. According to the American survey, no firm conclusion can be drawn on the total effect of strategic bombing concerning food supplies in an enemy country. The bombing of food processing and storage locations, as well as transportation, certainly curtailed the German and Austrian people's diet even though it cannot be stated in exact terms to what extent the destruction of these particular targets contributed to the final defeat of the enemy. What can be definitely established is that the bombing contributed to the shortage of food.

**Supplements**

There also existed an elaborate list of special supplements which consisted of a few additional foods and vitamin concentrates for sick citizens or pregnant women. For example, pregnant and nursing women could receive a

---

221 The Effects of Strategic Bombing, pp 284-290.
222 The Effects of Strategic Bombing, p 290.
half a liter of milk (about a pint) per day, plus 125 grams (about 4oz) of butter per week. Interestingly, the Reich Midwife Association was allowed by the Ministry of Food to distribute 20 grams (about 3/4 oz) of roasted coffee for each woman in labor, “as a stimulant.” Another supplement program was the “Vitamin Aktion” of the Ministry of the Interior, which issued Vitamin C in the form of lemon flavored sugar tablets containing 50mg, later in 1943, 30mg, of synthetic ascorbic acid, to school children for 3 consecutive months. Interestingly, the importance of vitamins was considered greatly overrated and potatoes were seen as sufficient sources of vitamin C. General vegetables were to provide vitamin A. Vitamins, by the way, were never rationed.

The system of rationing cards was designed in such a way that the average citizen was expected to be adequately nourished. But it was no secret in Vienna that just about everyone tried with more or less success to augment his rations through other sources; in addition, the government provided supplementary programs, such as

“Erntelandaktion” -- harvest garden program

Participants of this state-run program planted vegetables and potatoes on small garden plots which the city provided --all in all, 10 million square meters. From one square meter one could harvest about two kilos of vegetables or potatoes.

Public vegetable gardens

The city of Vienna even planted vegetable gardens in some public parks which were regularly tended to by city employees. One of the better known ones was on the Heldenplatz, a very large square, which displayed rows and

---

214 The Effects of Strategic Bombing, p. 282.
rows of potato plants. It was also the square from which Hitler, a few years earlier, had entered the Hofburg’s Office of the Chancellor.  

“Lebensmittelzusatzkarten” -- Grocery supplement tickets

All during the war and the bombing period, about 900,000 “Zusatzkarten” were used in addition to the regular ones, which provided, except for the last phase of the war, extra calories for certain groups of the population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS OF THE POPULATION</th>
<th>EXTRA CALORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Heavy” Laborers</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Regular” employees</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant and nursing mothers</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick (under doctors’ care)</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rations for special assignment workers

People with special assignments such as in the “Ernteeinsatz” --harvest assignment-- received rations according to a special order from the Reich Minister for Nutrition and Agriculture, who termed the harvest assignment as “very important for the securement of nutrition for the German nation,” and “necessary for the success of the ‘battle for nutrition’ and for guaranteeing nutrition for the front as well as home.”

“There were still many people who, for various reasons, fell through the cracks,” says Karoline Ledinegg. “Older people, for example, couldn’t be as enterprising in their quest of augmenting allocated food rations; many babies

---

225 Oesterreich II, p 41.
226 A.Bl. II b2a-360, February 9, 1943, A 33/43, May 27, 1943, box 174, State Archives.
and small children lacked special nutrients and therefore suffered from malnutrition; one from our apartment house even died.\textsuperscript{227}

Supplies of food decreased as the war and the bombing dragged on. According to a Nazi official,\textsuperscript{226} a secret press conference was held in January 1945, in which a spokesman for the NS Farmer Association spoke about the acute problem of food supply. There existed a plan to mobilize all reserves and even slaughter all stock. Wheat could not be transported anymore because of total lack of fuel. "With regard to nutrition," the official reported, "the war is already lost." On March 1, 1945, Goebbels wrote in his diary:

\[ \ldots \] [the rations] will fall below the tolerable minimum subsistence level. In some cases reductions must be made straight away, in others we can allow ourselves until 9 April. One can imagine what the effect on the public will be. Even if we reconquer our eastern territories we shall not avoid severe shortages; hunger will be added to all our people's miseries. But, as we know, in this struggle there is nothing except to try to hold out bravely.\textsuperscript{228}

Interestingly, according to Karoline Ledinegg,\textsuperscript{229} there were two food items that were never rationed; they were cabbages and parsnips.

**Clothing**

**Issue cards**\textsuperscript{230}

Obtaining enough clothing was as difficult as getting enough food. Clothing was obtained legitimately only with a "Bezugschein" --"issue card,"

---

\textsuperscript{227} Interview, Ledinegg.
\textsuperscript{228} Österreich 1938, pp 405-6.
\textsuperscript{226} Final Entries, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{229} Interview, Ledinegg.
resembling the ration card for groceries. It was just as scarce, as its supply depended on bomb-beleaguered transportation and, furthermore, only war-related items were allowed to be produced. It was not unusual for a desperate citizen to resort to petition a government official for extra help. For example, in January 1943, a Dr. Reinhart from the Main Economics Office, agreed to help a Heinrich Paletz to acquire a suit.

For special situations, a “Zusatzkleiderkarte” ---"auxiliary clothes ticket" and/or a "Zusatzschuhkarte" --"auxiliary shoe ticket" could be issued with which a citizen could buy work clothes and a good pair of shoes, as was required in the Harvest Assignment.22

**Clothes collections**

The civilian population was not alone in facing a lack of clothing, the armed forces suffered from shortages also. To help, the population was encouraged to collect and donate used textiles in all forms. As everything else in the Reich, the big propaganda machine promoted this activity and coined the catch word “Volksopfer" --"national sacrifice.” Towards the end of 1944, more than 100,000 tons of raw material for clothing was needed for uniforms for the Wehrmacht and the Volkssturm, but also for the requirements of victims of the air raids, and for baby and infant clothing."

Despite the citizens' own need, the collection of yarn, underwear and clothing in 1944 resulted in 36,000 tons. According to a Party letter from December 27, 1944, a much larger donation was now needed. A new call went

---

22 Order N. 33/43, Reichsverfuegungsblatt, December 27,1944, NSDAP Party Office, Police Archives.

233 Order Nr. 462/44, Reichsverfuegungsblatt, December 27,1944, NSDAP Party Office, Police Archives. The Reichsverfuegungsblatt (R.B.I.) was an internal order, directed towards other Reichs offices, usually stamped “Classified” and “Not for publication.”
out for old spinning material, used underwear, and clothing and uniforms of all kinds. From the Fuehrer Headquarters, Martin Bormann, head of the Volkssturm, ordered on behalf of the Fuehrer the preparation and carrying out of the donation, to take place during a three-week period in January 1945, by officials of the NSDAP. He emphasized that the carrying out of the donation was of “war-decisive” importance and was expected by the Fuehrer to be ‘mastered’ by the party along with everything else.”

**Sport**

Bormann had orders from the Fuehrer to pursue another “health matter” throughout the Reich: sport. On March 9, 1943, in a special order to Nazi officials, Borman wrote:

> Concerning sporting events during the war: physical exercise is essential for the war and is to be enforced vigorously... Sporting events are to be organized in the form of competitions, but only regionally, not nationally or internationally. Signed, Martin Borman.²³

Not too many adults were interested in sport by the time bombing began. “After the bombing had already started,” Karoline Ledinegg remembers, “my boss wanted to set up a track and field team consisting of meter-reader-women, but we protested, reminding him that racing to the shelters and hunting down streetcars was enough to keep us fit.”²⁶

For the youth in schools and Nazi Youth organizations, sport was a major part of their activities. It enforced the illusion that despite the bombing, life was “normal.”

²³ R.Bl. 16/1943, Box 174, State Archives.
²⁶ Interview, Ledinegg.


Disposal of the dead²³⁶

A peculiar health problem, heavily influenced by the bombing, particularly towards the end of the war, was the disposal of the dead. Because of inadequate transportation facilities, corpses were stored in neighborhood churches, coffee houses and movie theaters, where they were then picked up by a newly adapted contraption, the "casket street car."²³⁷

Passenger seats were replaced with compartments which looked like large, open safety deposit boxes, and after the pick-up at the collection points, the caskets or -- following the complete destruction of Vienna's casket factory in the bombing attack of February 13, 1945-- the mere bodies, wrapped in paper or cardboard, could then be neatly filed into them. With its macabre load, -- carrying sometimes up to 60 corpses,--the vehicle was sent on its route in the pitch-black night. Since black-out times were in effect, and few ventured out voluntarily at this time, very few citizens ever saw the casket streetcar; it was not a feature conducive to the uplift of spirit the Nazi propaganda so urgently demanded.

When the largest city cemetery, the Zentralfriedhof in the outer district of Simmering, was hit, in March 1945, it only highlighted the difficulties of the city's burial department. This came at a time when funeral activities were at a height and transportation had been already badly interrupted. Many bodies could only be buried in mass graves. To keep this from happening to their loved ones, some citizens buried them in backyards and public parks. The Viennese actor, director and producer of Metropolitan Opera productions, Otto Schenk,

²³⁶ Oesterreich II. pp 56-7.
²³⁷ Personal interview with Heinz Riedel, the historian of the Bestattungsmuseum (Vienna Funeral Museum), on August 18, 1994.
remembers how he, then a young boy, together with his mother, buried his grandmother in the Volksgarten, a park that is now abundant with beautiful roses.\textsuperscript{28}

Because corpses could not be accommodated anymore by the government they were openly piled up inside and outside the cemetery church. During the siege of Vienna, there were 5000 dead bodies lying around.\textsuperscript{29}

During these last months of the war, some citizens tried to help themselves by acquiring a casket on the black market, building one themselves, tying the corpse to a wooden board and even wrapping it in paper. Throwing a shovel across their shoulder, they trekked to the cemetery and dug a grave themselves so that their relative or friend did not have to be buried in a mass grave. Because of the air raids, they often couldn't make it on time to the burial if one did take place. In that case, all that was left to do for them was take the little piece of paper that was handed to them, describing the row and number of the grave.

\textsuperscript{28} Oesterreich II, p 56.

\textsuperscript{29} The author of Oesterreich II interviewed a gravedigger of that time, Johann Kuessenpfennig, p 56.
All compatriots form a "community of fate"—who have to cling to each other in life and death... If everybody does the right thing, the enemy will not reach its goal which is to bring disorder to the economy and confusion to the population. A nation which carries within it an iron will for self preservation, will resist successfully the dangers from the air. Heil to the Fuehrer! Heil to Germany! Signed: Goering.  

The phrase of the "community of fate" was one of several slogans such as the catchy "soldier of the home-front," the "iron will," and speeches about Fatherland and fate, that served as links in a chain of powerful phrases intended to motivate the population to resist the enemy. Thus, trying to survive in the midst of all the problems brought on by the bombing, the population found itself with yet another head of the hydra to chop off. It could be called the bombardment from within; it was the Nazi propaganda machine.  

As it rapid-fired into the citizen’s homes and public places, it used as its ammunition spoken and written communication in radio broadcasts, the Reich-run press, and public address systems in public places. Propaganda also used fear and terror, and thus pervaded all stations of human life, invading even innermost feelings.  

When the air war in Vienna began, the propaganda machine reacted particularly sharply and began with renewed urgency to deal with the new

---

240 General Field Marshal Hermann Goering, in a written appeal, printed by Kleine Wiener Volkszeitung, September 4, 1939.  
241 from conclusion of Pospischil’s Statistics, City Archives.
The goal was to motivate the citizens to overcome the conditions created by the Allied bombing, and thus, prevent the break-down of morale, and turn psychologically against the enemy, which would strengthen support for the war effort and contribute to the ultimate victory.

By 1944, the Viennese population's reaction to Nazi propaganda was rather negative. After veiled reports of Nazi military defeats, including knowledge of the rising death toll of soldiers and civilians, the majority of the population began to realize the probability of defeat. Two important myths of the Viennese had been shattered: first, the belief in the technical superiority of German war material, and secondly, the hope for a quick victory. It was also apparent by now, that "Austro-Fascism" had lost its original appeal. As an Austrian politician pointed out later: "Austrian Fascism has always embraced only a small minority of the Austrian population. It would have never been able to grab political power based on the democratic constitution and by lawful means. That's why it violated the constitution and used violence." While this last statement can be regarded as hypothetical, the world war to fight the Nazi system with all its ramifications was more apt to turn the Austrian citizens against fascism.

An SD-report of March 10, 1944, at a time when only the sporadic beginnings of the bombing of Vienna had taken place, recorded a pessimistic
mood: “The bombing attacks contributed to the war weariness and fatalistic, destructive tendencies of citizens in Vienna’s workers districts... The belief in a final victory is present in only a very few.”

The population was more concerned by then with the bombing from above rather than the barrage from within and so mostly ignored the propaganda. Instead, people displayed the stoic cooperation of disillusioned and cautious pragmatists, as they went about their day-to-day struggle for survival. “At that point of the war,” Karoline Ledinegg says, “we were so used to this kind of ‘brainwashing,’ the endless repetition of all these slogans seemed merely rhetoric. They were considered empty phrases and could only inspire real believers.”

Regardless of the indifference of the population, the Party members were relentlessly drilled to influence the population “positively.” In a special order for the purpose of educating the leadership, titled “Discussion evenings of the NSDAP,” and signed by Martin Bormann, the Nazi members were advised:

> It is necessary for the NSDAP to spark continuously the fierce determination and cooperation of the nation... The Party has to be fanatic and enthusiastic, instinctively and politically smart, and has to influence through [the members’] personal actions even the small things and events of every-day life.

> In these sessions, party members were encouraged to counteract, --“in the hours of emotional and nervous stress”-- every utterance of weakness, of

---

244 [Oesterreich 1938-1945], pp 341.
247 Interview, Ledinegg.
248 RBI. 10/1943. 2/19/1943, box 378, State Archives.
doubt or distrust, with expression of faithful trust in the leadership. There was an interesting addendum:

It is not important whether each party member present who has anything to say, gets to speak; important for the outcome of this evening is the fiery diction of the speaker as well as the common belief in the requirements of the total war.

Propaganda certainly reverberated in the work place. Karoline Ledinegg reports that one of her bosses, a proclaimed Nazi, always used with conviction a multitude of slogans, such as:

"The front fights and wins, the homeland works and sacrifices!"
"Whoever does not follow the air protection rules is a national parasite."
"The cooperation of the woman in air protection is a national duty."
"He reminded us every day," says Karoline Ledinegg, "what women were supposed to do, for example, to collect scrap metal for making a birthday gift to the Fuehrer; but my colleagues and I mostly ignored him; we just nodded pleasantly and went about our business. But, generally, and in all public situations, people didn’t dispute phrases like these; they knew better than that."

Still, it seems that this kind of propaganda indeed contributed to the uplifting of the bomb-weary citizens’ spirit. It gave them a certain feeling of security, which often comes with repetition, despite the sometimes grim Nazi diction, like "sacrifice," "duty," and "parasite." But there were people who had different experiences with propaganda; open non-conformity or rejection of

---

Interview Ledinegg. She says that she still remembers these slogans word for word, since her boss would acquire them by reading regularly at his desk the Kleine Wiener Kriegszzeitung, a propaganda-run paper.
slogans could result in Nazi persecution, even though sometimes nothing happened. "I never participated in any of the campaigns, Karoline Ledinegg says, "and I was never questioned about it."

But unfortunately, there were "more pernicious ways in which an ever increasing number of people were tortured or executed without trial or sentence for no worse crime than unorthodox opinions." Der Oesterreichische Freiheitskaempfer reported that after the air attacks in Vienna-Favoriten, which was according to SD-reports a particular trouble spot, machine guns were positioned against the population. "In spite of it, no actions of resistance against the 'brown pest' and its war were activated," the report states, "it was because of the paralyzing fear of Nazi terror. The citizens also feared 'small terror,' the type which punished with 'small' penalties, such as the curtailing of necessities provided by the government, and punitive assignments."

When Goebbels tried to "convince the mass of German people that their only hope of saving the Fatherland and themselves lay in giving unconditional obedience to the Fuhrer and unconditional resistance to their enemies," it only intensified their wish to survive on their own means. The fear of retaliation for nonconformity was perhaps the primary reason why there was never any open resistance to the Nazi regime. But there were other factors. Under the desperate straits of the bombardment, as destruction multiplied, people became more dependent than ever on the government for their very essentials. So, instead of rising in revolt against the authorities, as the Allies had at one time hoped, the citizens found themselves bound to support a regime which,

250 Hannah Vogt, "Life in the Third Reich," p 69 of Hitler and Nazi Germany.
251 Considered a typical workers' district.
252 From Der Oesterreichische Freiheitskaempfer, Oesterreich 1938-1945, p 342.
after all, preserved order and continued to supply them with food, clothing and other necessities. How could they sabotage the war effort without doing the same to their very own existence?\textsuperscript{253} Furthermore, amidst the hardships and severe conditions of the bombing, they felt strongly that any internal revolution at this stage would only bring chaos."\textsuperscript{254}

Finally it may be asked, how could people sabotage any kind of war effort that could be of utmost importance to the survival of their own flesh and blood (husbands and sons) fighting in the field and at the front? During the bombing period, civilian morale was a question of great concern, not only to Nazi propagandists, but also to American bombing strategists. Each side attempted to manipulate it in its favor, in opposite directions. While Nazi propaganda wanted to win the war by sustaining the people’s morale, American bombing strategists put their faith into bombing as a way of "busting" morale.

Some American strategists hoped that the bombing would make the German population feel so miserable, they would rebel against their government and overthrow it. They argued that "... if coordinated with major military defeats or mounting military losses, massive bombing might destroy German morale. If the Germans could be brought to realize that total victory would forever elude them and that they themselves would now begin to suffer, the Nazi regime could crumble from within... a sudden disintegration of the enemy always remained a distinct possibility..."\textsuperscript{255} However, military planners considered it even possible at one time in 1943 that to the contrary "bombing

\textsuperscript{253} The Struggle for Europe, pp 150-1.
\textsuperscript{254} The Struggle for Europe, p 150.
might actually strengthen the civilian fighting spirit. And even if civilian morale would be destroyed, it would not help to get rid of Nazi control."

One post-war analysis supported that prediction: "Air attacks only hardened the Germans' will to resist: German domestic morale did not crack and fighting continued longer than thought possible, " and: "Nazi and Allied victories and defeats came about through conventional -- military means rather than through political warfare." The captured American pilot Claude Parker, describing "the stark terror created by the 'cuckoo'" and how he couldn't help "seeing with his own eyes the utter confusion, the chaos, the disruption in the lives of people living in Vienna . . ." corroborates this conclusion, maintaining that despite the destructiveness and the attempt to use the bombings as the means to undermine the spirit of the population, the morale of the people was never broken.

Nazi propagandists, in the meantime, worked hard to brainwash the population and keep their spirits up by broadcasting special radio reports with emphasis on speeches of the Fuehrer, as well as of the Minister of Propaganda and other Nazi officers. Regular reports from the front painted conditions in a much better light than was warranted, and dripped of optimism and grandiose illusions, as well as derision of the enemy. For years after the war was over, Franz Liszt's "Les Preludes," which the Nazis had chosen as the musical theme for broadcasting front reports, evoked mixed emotions among the people.

257 Austria in WWII, pp 125-129. Keyserlingk calls the Allies’ "morale-busting" a form of political warfare, the importance of which was "pretty exaggerated by the [then] contemporaries." ( p 129)
258 Cuckoo, p. 118.
There were also newspapers, the public speeches in parks and squares, even peculiar reflection hours ("Feierstunden"):²⁹

A national-socialist 'Feierstunde' in the Burghof ended our Reichs meeting. Recitation, choir singing and music reflected not only the seriousness of our times but also the confidence one could read in the eyes of each of the young Fahnenjunkers, [flag boy] who will soon again stand before the enemy, with greater and more responsible functions. At the peak of the celebration hour, three "Ritterkreuz"-bearers of the army read messages of great army leaders to the youth of Grossdeutschland, conveying to them not only gratefulness, but also encouragement for renewed persistence.

Propaganda posters demonstrated particularly well "the art of Nazi manipulation."²⁶ Making reference to the American "enemy" bombardment, they were intended to encourage the suffering population to carry on. The posters were produced by the Nazi regime in cooperation with the high command of the Wehrmacht. "Life goes on and work goes on," said one, "despite the bombing terror," another showed the picture of destroyed streetcar tracks with the caption: "Streetcars will operate here again tomorrow!" A third showed a toddler in front of a destroyed apartment house, tended to by an agent of the NSV, proclaiming: "Bombed out alright, but fed nevertheless."

The propaganda theme of the "citizen as an important war effort contributor" had sometimes almost comical results. "The Vienna Symphony in the war effort,"³⁰ was the dramatic headline with which the press announced the Vienna Symphony's closure. The revered musicians were praised for

²⁹ Kleine Wiener Kriegszeitung, December 6, 1944, p 3, c 2-3.
³⁰ Exhibition items # 261, Military Museum.
³¹ Neues Wiener Tagblatt, September 22, 1944, p 3, c 1.
having exchanged their musical instruments for weapons and for offering themselves for the war effort.

Propaganda also reached into the mundane as well as the utterly private affairs of the citizens, in order to keep them focused on the war goals as well as the party ideals. What better way was there than to play on the emotions of people when they were the most vulnerable? Christmas celebrations in military hospitals were given special attention; after all, recovered soldiers were still needed at the front. Martin Borman ordered these celebrations to observe strict rules, and guidelines on the involvement of the party were to be obtained from the Main Culture Office of the Reichspropaganda Headquarters.\(^22\) The only things that were not regulated were the Christmas cookies; they were allowed to be baked, with no particular specification, in the hospital kitchen.

Invading people's lives, Nazi government regulations reached as far as death. A peculiar order addressed even wreath arrangements and eulogies for deceased officials:\(^23\)

1. A wreath with ribbon was to be provided by public money.
2. A band was to be affixed with a black swastika on white background.
3. The band was to be placed "in an efficient manner" to the lower parts of the red ribbon, so that there would be room for a dedication.
4. The dedication was to be written uniformly in silver script.
5. The cost had to be "moderate," not to exceed 20 Reichsmark in the months of May to October, and 30 Reichsmark from November to April.

As the regime became more aware of the impatience, disillusionment and ever growing disgust of the population, it attempted to direct hatred

\(^{22}\) R.Bl., Order # 416/44, NSDAP, Party Office, recalling specifics from nr. 60/43, 11/13/1943; box 151, National Archives.

\(^{23}\) Rd. Erl. d. RM d. J.- II 4781/41-6322; ibid.
towards the air attacks of the Americans, calling them in the press “air attack gangsters” and “bomb terrorists” who used churches as their “military targets.”

Common sense told the Viennese citizens that it was actually the Nazi regime that had gotten them not only into the war, but also by its refusal to surrender, into the air war. Rather than hate the Americans, despite all the mayhem, the population resigned themselves to the fact that this bombing might actually help to get rid of the regime.

Nazi propaganda motivated the non-believers to focus on the most important issue of all which was to remain alive; eventually this terrible war was going to be over. As the war progressed, particularly as the bombardment became a daily ordeal, the citizens relied more and more on their own spirituality; the distaste for the Nazi regime seemed to boost their own skills of resources and brought out their resilience and hardiness.

---

**Kleine Wiener Kriegszeitung.** November 17, 1944, December 6, 1944, October 19, 1944.
CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

The morale of the German people, both at home and at the front, is sinking ever lower . . . The people thinks [sic] that it is facing a perfectly hopeless situation in this war . . . The people will continue to do their duty and the front-line soldier will defend himself as far as he has a possibility of doing so. These possibilities are becoming increasingly limited however, primarily owing to the enemy's air superiority. The air terror which rages uninterruptedly over German home territory makes people thoroughly despondent. One feels so impotent against it that no one can now see a way out of the dilemma.  

With the final siege of Vienna in April 1945, the city came closest to chaos. This condition, the aim of the Allied air war, came about only in the final hours, when Soviet troops approached Austria from the East.

On Good Friday, March 30th, 1945, the distant booming of guns could already be heard, as Soviet troops under Marshall Tolbukhin had come close to the Austrian-Hungarian border. The next day, railroad yards were bombarded as well as all Danube bridges and important intersections. The aerial bombings, which were still continuing, --the last attack occurred on April 3, 1945-- caused extensive fires in so many places that the fire brigades could not be in all locations at the same time anymore. The Viennese population moved into cellars and began a stint of ten days of underground living. As the Soviets entered Vienna, on April 6, 1945, fiercely fighting remnants of Nazi forces in the streets, all bureaucratic and commercial life on the "outside" had

---

265 Final Entries, p. 138, entry on March 12, 1945.
266 Finale, pp. 202-6.
completely ceased. Martial law was established. The Gauleiter of Vienna, Baldur von Schirach, now also Defense Commissioner, quickly declared the city a fortress and called up the Volkssturm and the Hitler Youth for a last defense. Fourteen- and fifteen-year old boys were told to dig foxholes and defend themselves with panzerfausts. He himself finally fled the city. His wife describes the Schirach family's exit in her later memoirs: "Driving away, I looked back like Lot's wife. All I saw was burnt homes, miserable streets; and it was snowing." 

On April 7, 1945, Goebbels' entry in his diary, reads: "In the East Vienna is the critical point. The enemy has reached the city area on the south-west. . . The south-eastern section of Vienna is already largely in his hands." 

Had the American Air Force achieved its stated goals? Militarily, a number of goals were met:

- the destruction of Vienna as a railroad and transportation center,
- the destruction of Austrian oil facilities and industries,
- the final prostration of the southeast post of the German Reich.

However, the psychological part, that of breaking the morale of the people was not achieved. All sources have maintained that "German domestic morale did not crack." 

Even as Vienna lay finally prostrate on the ground, --the estimated amount of debris was 850,000 cubic meters, resulting from the destruction of

---

265 *Final Entries*, p 393.
270 *Austria in World War II*, p 125.
close to 4,000 buildings— the morale of the people, though low at times, was never broken. Their sense of respect for authority, which led them to accept a certain regimentation in order to increase their chances of survival, together with a combination of common sense, stubbornness and resilience, had helped them to survive.

By early April, the Strategic Air Command had begun to run out of suitable targets in Germany. Western German ports, especially Hamburg, and their surrounding industries had received terrific and repeated poundings. Berlin had taken an almost daily pounding, and throughout the whole Reich the Air Force had blasted industries, transportation, airfields, and port facilities along the Baltic. The German Air Force was no longer a menace, much of Germany had ceased to be enemy territory, and the need for further destruction had finally passed. On April 16, 1945, General Spaatz terminated the strategic air war against Germany.

It should not surprise anybody that the American Air Force military command felt, that they had done a good job and considered their mission accomplished; the Allied bombing, in their assessment, was a success. And it was, of course, from a military viewpoint, expressed in the United States Strategic Bombing Survey which came to this conclusion about the final chapter of the war:

Allied air power was decisive in the war in western Europe. Hindsight inevitably suggests that it might have been employed differently or better in some respects. Nevertheless, it was decisive. . . Its power

---

\(^{271}\) Finale, p 226.

and superiority made possible the success of the invasion. It brought the economy which sustained the enemy’s armed forces to virtual collapse, although the full effects of this collapse had not reached the enemy’s front lines when they were overrun by Allied forces. It brought home to the German people the full impact of modern war with all its horror and suffering. Its imprint on the German nation will be lasting.²⁷³

Even though this statement, by its nature, was meant to sound forceful and convincing, a few thoughts about its accuracy are in order. Whether the employed air power was decisive or not may be subject to various strategists and experts’ opinions; it can be argued, however, that to the contrary, “air attacks only hardened the Germans’ will to resist.”²⁷⁴

The final sentences of the Strategic Bombing Survey’s conclusion cannot be disputed: the war’s horror and suffering left a lasting imprint on the Austrians, but not only in terms of their psyche. It lasted many years before the physical damage was repaired, but the citizens’ resilience, practiced and honed in the stricken years of war, helped to build the country anew.

The author Bischof speaks of an “Austrian spirit,”²⁷⁵ which, he says, was never “extirpated,” but only grew and contributed to a surprising outcome. As a result of both the offensiveness of Nazi propaganda on one hand, and the trials of the American bombing on the other, which might have acted as a kind of catharsis, when everything was over, a new kind of nationalism emerged which, in the post-war era, helped Austrians form a new government and start anew as an independent nation. As early as April 27, 1945, only days after

²⁷⁴ Austria in World War II, p 125.
Vienna's capture by the Soviet 3rd Ukrainian Front under Tolbukhin,²⁷⁶ and before the official date of surrender,²⁷⁷ something rather surprising and extraordinary happened: a provisional Austrian government under the presidency of Karl Renner was formed. If there ever was any doubt as to the condition of the population's morale, the fact that Austria was able to establish a new, Allied-sanctioned government so quickly, even before the official end of the war, showed that spirit was high. It is proof of the premise that the city of Vienna and its population had persevered.

²⁷⁷ At midnight on May 8th-9th, 1945, The Struggle for Europe, p. 706.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

A) Archives
Archiv der Oesterreichischen Polizeidirektion, Vienna (Police Archives).
Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (City Archives).
Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna (Military Museum).
Oesterreichisches Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsmuseum, Vienna (Economics Museum).
Oesterreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna (National Archives).

B) Documents (Official and Non-Official)
U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. The Effects of Strategic Bombing on the German Economy. Overall Economic Effects Division, October 31, 1945.
C) Newspapers

*Der Voelkische Beobachter*

*Die Deutsche Arbeitsfront*

*Kleine Volkszeitung*

*Kleine Wiener Kriegszeitung*

*Neues Wiener Tagesblatt*

D) Memoirs and Diaries


Ringler, Ralf Roland. *Illusion einer Jugend*. St. Poelten-Vienna:


E) Interviews

Babits, Dr. Lawrence, Professor, Greenville, NC, on December 16, 1993.


Ledinegg, Karoline, Retiree, Vienna, on August 29, 1993.

SECONDARY SOURCES

A) Book


Keyserlingk, Robert. *Austria in World War II. An Anglo-American Dilemma.*


Luza, Radomir. *Austro-German Relations in the Anschluss Era.* Princeton:
Princeton University, 1975.


Oxford University, 1985.


B) Brochures and Magazine Articles


*Sozialistische Hefte*, # 10, SPO, Vienna, 1946.