

[MUSIC PLAYING] A separate universe with laws of its own. The Holocaust defies every final solution to the problems it engenders. Roadmaps have been prepared by historians, poets, theologians, philosophers, and novelists to unravel its mysteries. But the maps are faulty.

Passports to the Holocaust universe are only one-way tickets. To enter its borders, one is never free of its power to leave. One is different forever. So no source can remain untapped. Meet Harry Burger, who entered that universe, survived the trip, and will help us with our roadmaps so that we can understand.

Harry, let's begin when Germany took over Austria. How old were you? What do you remember happening?

OK, I was 14 years old. I remember, just prior to Germany taking over, Austria wanted to stay independent. And Chancellor Schuschnigg at the time had free elections going. Of course, Hitler didn't like that, because he knew he was going to lose.

So the pressure was put on the government. And the story was, we do not want to shed brotherly blood. So step down. And Schuschnigg finally heeded that advice and gave the government over to a man named Miklas, which nobody really knew. And he lasted during the Anschluss, which was the German occupation.

What year is this?

This was in March 13 of 1938. German troops marched into Austria. And I must say that Austria had about three soldiers and four cannons at the time. And they were all in the mountains. There was no real resistance possibility.

But for the world, that's the way it was done. Germans marched in. And if you have ever seen a German army march into anything, it was awesome. It really was awesome. This was before wars, and they looked awesome.

Government was given over to a man named Seyss-Inquart, who was Hitler's chosen Nazi. Austria became the Ostmark, part of Germany, and he was now the leader of that area.

On the 12th of March, you could see nothing but red, white, and red flags all over the city of Vienna, very patriotic. On the morning of March 13, there was nothing but swastikas. The police force pulled them out of their pockets, put them on their arms. Every building in the city had flags.

It sounds as though they were prepared.

Totally prepared. There was a big clandestine Nazi movement in Austria for the-- ever since Nazism was in Germany. And now it was legal. Of course, everything came out.

Jewish people were taken by surprise. Everybody thought we're going to have elections, and this is going to be whipped, and there's no more. Unfortunately, as you know, it didn't work that way.

You were 13 or 14.

14.

You were in middle school at the time.

Right.

What was your family like? Who was in there? Parents, brothers, sisters? What was your family-- what was your family composition, and what do you remember about the actual occupation? How did it affect your family?

It affected me not immediately. I have a sister who now lives in New Jersey. And she wasn't there at the time. She was

married and lived in Italy. So she had no problem with that.

What I remember of the Anschluss was nothing disturbing. The school friends used to walk in the street and saw Hitler's picture in every window, store window. And what I remember is they saying to me, isn't he beautiful? And I thought he was an ugly man, really. What was beautiful about Him but I wouldn't say anything, of course.

A little later, some of my so-called school friends started throwing rocks at our windows and breaking them. And nobody made nothing of it either.

Was there antisemitism that was prevalent in Austria at the time?

Always. Always.

Did you suffer from it? Did you have fights about it?

No.

Were you segregated out?

No.

Did you live in a segregated area?

We lived in a very nice area because my father was doing very well. There was a segregated so-called area in Vienna, which was the second district, which they called the Jew Island. It was between the Danube and the Danube Canal. Jews chose to live there. They had their own shops, and their own synagogues, and everything was their own, and very little Aryan interference.

Aryan. That's a German word. Yeah, that's clean, blond, blue-eyed, German.

What business was your father in?

My father was in textiles. And here's another turning point. He represented a French company with factories in Czechoslovakia that delivered textiles to Austria, to Vienna. Now the Germans had no real textiles for a long, long time. And when they occupied this territory, They were buying everything in sight. So my father's business bloomed. He made more money than he could ever use. And he said, this is heaven. I don't want to leave here.

So there was no thought of being in danger.

No, at that point--

No problem at all.

--his so-called friends and all the Austrians would come up to him and say, you have nothing to worry about. You're one of the good guys. We're not after you. We want the Hasidic Jews that came and immigrated from Russia and Poland and disturbed our way of life. And nobody thought nothing of it, because they were in a segregated area anyhow. So it was lullaby land. Everybody told you you have nothing to worry about.

But the change came gradually. And how did it come about? No more movies for Jews. No theaters. No nightclubs. No public places to speak of. They went so far as to mark the benches in the parks, "not for Jews."

They had little games going. And at night, they used to paint, with chalk, the streets with anti-Nazi slogans. And in the morning they would catch Jews going to work, and gave them brushes, and a pail of water, and says you clean it up.

So the big topic at the time was who got caught to clean the streets. And that's as far as it went, until Crystal Night.

Kristallnacht.

The 10th of November. I think it was the 9th of November, a German diplomat was shot at the steps of the embassy in Paris by a Jewish man named Grynszpan. And that was the occasion now to declare Crystal Night.

That means on the whole day of November 10, every Jew could be persecuted openly in the streets without any repercussions. You could kill them. You could beat them. You could rape them. You could put him in concentration camps. And nobody would say anything about it. And as it came about, that's how it stopped.

We survived it due to a very humorous incident again. I have a cousin, Fred Burger, who now lives in Washington, who at the time was in the army, Austrian army. Now Fred's blond and blue-eyed, looks like a Nazi. And when the Germans took over, they incorporated them in the Wehrmacht, put a swastika on his chest, and he was now a German soldier.

Of course, he came back to Vienna. And that day he was with us, in uniform. And when the Nazis came to the door to see if there were any Jews there, he opened the door scared stiff. And they gave him a Heil Hitler and left, because he was a German soldier.

And it was only by accident that he happened to be--

A total accident. He was as scared as anybody else. He came hiding with us because if they found out he was a Jew in the army, they would have executed him.

Oh, they didn't know that. I was about to ask, were there Jews in the Austrian army?

No, of course not. Never. He just looked so totally German, like the master race, that there was no doubt about it in their minds.

So one kept it a secret if one wanted to get on in that society, that you were Jewish.

Well, it wasn't a secret, because every non-Jew wore swastika on the lapel. And the Jew was not allowed to do this. Now when you saw a man walking down the street without a swastika, you know either he was an enemy of the regime or he was Jewish.

But I'm talking about before Hitler. The swastika is with Hitler.

No, before Hitler, everybody knew who was who, because in Austria, you had to go to the police station when you wanted to move and give them your new address. It was not like here, where you just pick up and go. It was a registration state. Everybody knew the whereabouts of everybody at all times.

And what their religious affiliation was--

Absolutely.

--what their nationality was. How did life change for the Jews after Kristallnacht?

At that point, the Jews realized that they had to get out to survive, because now everything became radical my father was arrested and was put into a local jail in Vienna, and was told, if you don't sign over your business, we send you to Dachau. And they let him stew for six weeks. And after six weeks, he was good and ready to sign anything.

He went to Dachau? No, he was in the jail. Excuse me.

In the jail. They let him out for the signature. A administrator took over the business. And he now made preparations to

get out. We had an affidavit in with the American consulate.

The waiting list was very long. My father was born in Poland, which means maybe seven, 10 years of waiting, which everybody knew is not going to work. So the decision was made. We have to try to get away through Italy, which was an allied country-- you didn't need a visa-- and then illegally into France.

I remember procuring a passport at the Gestapo. That means total testing of background. If you owed any money, taxes, or whatever. They finally issued a passport with a big red J in it for "Jude"-- it's "Jew"-- so you should be marked for life. And they allowed us to take out 20 Marks per person, which at the time was the equivalent of \$5.

I want to back up a minute, Harry. Did you hear a conversation? Were other people in the Jewish community talking about leaving, trying to get away?

Everybody was trying to get away. They went so far as to buy visas to Shanghai in China just to get out.

And many of them got that.

You had to have a visa.

So anyhow, we went-- finally went to Italy, got into San Remo. My sister at the time had left from Italy and went and lived in Nice. And they arranged for us to cross the border illegally, which was quite frequently done at that time by a lot of people.

What it was, they went to Ventimiglia, which was the border. And there was a big piece of property owned by a Russian scientist who experimented with monkeys on the youth serum. I remember that quite clearly. And half his property was in Italy and half was in France. So they got you into his half in Italy, and you walked right through, and you wound up in France.

But of course, instead of having a taxi waiting for you on the other side, there was absolutely nothing, because you paid your money. You're it.

But there were buses. Nobody spoke the language. My family-- my father and mother were with me and myself and some other fella, a lawyer that was in prison with my father at the time. And we just took a bus to Nice, and arrived in the middle of the night, and nowhere to go. We didn't know where we were.

So we went to a hotel. Didn't need any papers. We didn't know what was happening. It was so different.

Did not need papers.

No, it was a free country.

You weren't stopped at borders, nothing.

Nobody wanted anything from us. If you had the bus fare, you were in business.

This is '38.

1939.

1939.

And what happened there is we finally, in the morning, got my sister and my brother-in-law out. We went to the local police station. They gave us a temporary permit.

Not a problem.

Not a problem. Just has to be renewed every month. And you had no right to work. You could not take a job.

How were you to live?

Well, let me say--

Where were you trying to go?

We were trying to go to America.

OK. Now how were you supposed to live under these conditions?

They didn't care. You're supposed to be rich. You're an immigrant. You have your own money. A lot of people got a lot of stuff out-- my father got stuff out, I know. My father had a Swiss bank account-- I know that-- at the time. So there was no big problem in living.

And we all, we're waiting for our visas. Didn't come. Quota closed down. The war was declared finally in 1939, on September the 3rd. At that point, the French were yelling, we're going to teach these Germans a lesson. In three weeks, we're going to be in Berlin. And we dopes believed. We believed all this, this big propaganda. The French had no army. The Fifth Column was eating them up.

And they dug in the Ligne Maginot, the big ligne, the line that they built to defend against Germany. German built one. It was called the Ligne Siegfried. It was right opposite of it. The cannons were pointed at each other. And that was supposed to last forever. Except for one thing. They did not protect the Belgian border.

So when, in 1939, as I said, on September the 3rd, when Hitler invaded Poland, the Allied declared war, we were still in a free country, and we were waiting for the victory. On the 10th of May, on my birthday, the Germans started the Western Front invasion. Circled around all the defense lines, went into Belgium, and got into France from the north.

And in record time-- by that, I mean, June 21, a little over a month, they were in Paris. The cannons in the Ligne Maginot couldn't be turned around. The army was totally disbanded. The tanks had no carburetors. Everything was in great shape.

On the 25th, the armistice went in force. It was unconditional. It was signed in the old railroad car that they signed the 1918 armistice. Hitler had that.

Now we were living in non-occupied France. France thought that they were Allied of Germany now, and Germany took it for granted. They needed the troops. They couldn't occupy the whole country successfully. So they occupied the north into Paris, a little bit further down. And Vichy became the capital of Free France.

It was governed by a man of Pierre Laval, who was a total Nazi. On September the 13th of 1940, he declared that he wanted to see Germany victorious because the future of the world lies with Germany. That's what we had to face now. We had no German troops, no Gestapo, but we had the French. And they made sure that they got enough manpower to Germany-- and all the Jews they could catch.

Something happened to your father.

Later on.

Ah.

I'll get to that.

Now what happened here was that the French didn't go and pick up Jews like the Germans did. But every month you had to go back to the police station to renew your permit. And one month out of three or four or so, they would pick up everybody that came and send them to a holding camp, to Gurs. And we didn't know at the time that the Germans would pick up from there.

So they did it their own way. I, fortunately, had a lot of friends. I was young. And they told me when to go and when not to go. And we peeled through this thing until, I would say, in early 1942 it became serious. It became to the point where if you were caught in the streets, they would send you away anyhow.

So we were hiding at the time with a French family. And I couldn't understand why, but they were Nazis anyhow-- French Nazis. And they were hiding us, maybe for future reference, to say, well, I had-- I helped a Jew, in case it doesn't go so good.

And this went on until 1942. On November the 27th, the French scuttled their fleet in Toulon. They sank 89 crafts. And at that point, the Germans had to occupy. So the 2nd Panzer division, SS Panzer division, came through and occupied the Free French zone. But they left the small piece for the Italians, which were Allies. And again, fortunately enough, living in Nice, I was on the Italian occupation.

Now let me say something about Italians. They were just great people. They didn't know about the Jewish problem. They didn't care about the Jewish problem. They did not want to make war. They wanted to make love. And it's true.

And they were protecting whoever they could. The synagogue was allowed to operate again, and the Italians were cooperating with the synagogue in Nice.

Were there Italian soldiers there?

Yeah, but now, see, the French government was still in charge. And we still had to go to the police station, to come and say hello there. So that one time, again, it came very dangerous, and the synagogue said, look, there are 40 Jews here, including a few Hasidics, that are in danger.

And the Italian commander said, we'll take him into a civilian prisoner of war camp in a town called Sospel. It's in the Alps. Keep them for four or five days. Then we'll transfer them into a forced residence next to Rome, where they have nothing to do but come twice a day to the commando and say, here I am, presented. And they live out the war like that. No problem.

The town was called Sospel.

Sospel. That's where the camp was.

So they brought us in with-- it was two Italian army trucks with 40 shivering Jews. We didn't know what the hell was going on. And they brought us into this camp. And now we saw what this was all about.

It was a camp for British and American civilians that lived in the area, which were supposed to be aliens, not desirable. And they put them in this camp.

And they lived like kings. They had all the food in the world. How bad can it be, with spaghetti and meatballs every day, when everybody else is starving? The soldiers made your beds. It was a paradise.

And the reason they treated them so well is because the Italian prisoners in America were treated equivalently well. So it was a balance sheet here.

It was neutral.

But instead of letting us out in five days and go to Rome, they forgot about us. The Italians were very smooth about that. They had a little dog in their that we call Domani. That means "tomorrow." Because whatever you ask the Italians, they said, tomorrow.

So we stayed in that camp for 40-- four months. I'm sorry. Four months. During that time, something very frightening happened. A German truck of soldiers came to the camp and wanted them to deliver all the Jews with arms out, and the Germans defended it and didn't let them in. I mean, the Italians. Wouldn't let them in. Germans left.

And they saved us that way, because they came specifically for the Jewish population in this camp. Wouldn't give them up.

At some point, though, the Italians did leave.

Well, here it comes now. After four months, they said, we don't have any business with these people. We're going to have to put them in a forced residence. Now it came to them.

But instead of Rome, it became a town in France on the Italian border, close to the Italian border, in the Alps. It was Saint-Martin-V^osubie. And there were 700 or so Jews that were living there. And all they had to do is twice a day go and present themselves. And this was really a terrific deal, because the whole world was at war except us.

And this lasted until September 29 of 1943. Badoglio, who had, at that point, became the chief of Italy, because Mussolini was arrested and he was taken out, he and Eisenhower met in Malta and signed an independent armistice. Now the Italians decided the war is over. Let's go home. Now our protectors now decided to leave.

As they packed up, they realized they couldn't go down the roads with their gear. They had to go into the mountains. The Germans were already coming in.

And at that point, as the troops left, almost 700 Jews followed them, not knowing where they were going.

Into the mountains.

Were going to Italy. They didn't realize that they were going into Alps of 3,200 meters high. That's about 12,000 feet.

Were you clothed?

Nobody knew what was going on. We had regular clothes on. It was September. It was fall.

But you're still all together as a family. You are still all together as a family?

No, at that point, my father was already gone. And I want to interject that now.

He tried to buy a Cuban visa for the family. And this was in 1942. And he did. Paid a lot of money for it. And when he came home, we all realized it was very phony, and it would never go over.

So he was very upset, went back to the man, and the police was there already. And they ask him what he was looking for. And he says, I want my money back. I got cheated. Says, come down to the police force and we'll straighten this all out.

And they put him in jail for six months awaiting trial-- for what, we don't know. The trial came, and he was, at the time, acquitted. It was annulled. And they wouldn't release him from prison because he was a Jew.

And they send him to Gurs. And that was the last we saw of him. And I will tell you the result later of what happened with him.

But my mother was still with me at the time. And we were able to cross the mountains. I spoke Italian at the time, and I was chosen to spearhead this thing so that I can explain what's going on with all these people.

We went over the [NON-ENGLISH], which is, as I said 3,200 meters high. And on the other side of that was an Italian fortification which was built in World War I. And the troops were in there, and they were already celebrating peace.

And I came in with about 700 people. The commando over there, they asked me, what you got here? And I says, we have 700 Jews, refugees. They're hungry and they need to sleep. And he didn't know what Jews were. But he made sure that they were all bedded down and they were fed.

And he in his office went to the phone, and he called the nearest town, which was Cuneo. And he wanted to talk to somebody in charge of the army. And he says, I have 700 Jewish refugees here. What do you want me to do with them?

And I was there, and I knew what was going on. It was a moment of silence. And then he says, hold them there, and we'll check back with you. And that to me was a sign of "forget it."

That same night, an SS dispatch came up, didn't go into the camp at all. Just checked the situation out and left. And I decided at the time, without panicking anybody, let's get out of here. We were about 5:00 in the morning. Everybody was assembled, and we went down the mountains.

You were how old at this time?

Pardon me?

You were how old at this time?

At that point I was 16, 17.

And you sensed that something was wrong.

Oh, I knew right away that he didn't talk to Allies. No American troops down there.

OK. Go ahead.

Because everybody said now that they are in peace, the Americans are going to come right in, and there's not going to be any resistance, and goodbye. Nobody knew how many German troops were in Italy. The whole Afrika Korps was in Italy at the time. They were defeated in Africa. They all came into Italy.

What happened when the Germans came in?

[CHUCKLES]

They came into-- I was in a town called Bulgari, which was in a valley. And we came down. And it was free. There was nobody there.

And I remember the Jews all assembled in the center of town, and had a couple of drinks from the fountain. And there were a couple of little grocery stores. They were able to buy things, that they didn't know how good they had it.

And I looked at this with a few other people, and I said, this cannot last. There are too many Jews in the middle of one town, and we decided to get out. There were 12 of us, including my mother.

Including your mother.

Yeah. We went away from the center of town, and there was little mountains going on, little hills. We got into the hills.

And within a very short time, the Nazi trucks came in. They surrounded this area. Loudspeakers came up. Everybody surrender or you will be shot. Now they understood.

And just about everybody surrendered except us who were already in the hills. They were carted away into a camp next to-- was a town called Cuneo, which was the biggest town they had there. And it was, again, an Italian camp, and the Italians were guarding it. And the Jews weren't maltreated yet.

But we took off. We went into the next valley. We were given shelter by farmers-- poor people. They gave us a farmhouse.

There were 12 of you, but it was not a problem to get shelter.

No, because the Italians didn't like fascists and they didn't like Germans.

What kind of 12 was it? Who was in this group?

It was a bunch of friends we had made in Saint-Martin.

Young? Old?

A couple, some kids my age, and two singles-- single guys. We were friends, playing cards together.

Your mother is still with you.

Yeah. And at that point, it became more and more frequent that the Germans came up the valley roads with their trucks, and they started branching in a little bit. And it became a little fussy. And I went into the mountains with about 30 Italian deserters, what they called deserters. They were just waiting for the war to end. They didn't want any trouble.

They were mostly officer material. They were armed. And their whole purpose was to survive until the Allies came. And as you know, they didn't come.

So this group became the nucleus of a underground force. At first all they wanted to do is rob grocery stores for food. And then we'd turn around.

Really?

We'd do a little more than that. And I was part of that group.

Where did they get the munitions?

They attacked the German ammunition dumps and what have you.

And for food they sometimes stole or they were befriended by farmers?

The farmers helped.

Were you called partisans?

Yes. We were. The 1st Alpine Division was formed.

Now within May '44, which is about a year later, this group of 30 now was 20,000 strong.

Wait, before we get to 20,000, what was the scope of your operations? What did you do.

Well, the first--

What did you do and what did they do?

The first thing we had to do was sabotage, blew up railroad, electrified railroad lines, bridges. Blow up everything that rolls on wheels. That was the purpose.

Were you successful?

Absolutely. I will tell you how successful in a little while. They said, from a bicycle up to a fire engine, through baby carriages, whatever had wheels, you blow it.

Of course, that also involved contact with Germans. The battles were usually very short because we always had the mountain to go back to. As I said, we got an awful lot of volunteers, people that now wouldn't wait for the Allies because they were stuck in Monte Cassino. They were not going to bombard this monastery that was so precious to them, knowing damn well that the Germans were implanted there with all kinds of weaponry. Well, they finally decided they're going to blow it anyhow. That's when the Allies advanced, finally.

We got down from the mountains on April the 30th in '45. We didn't know that we had won the war already. You see we, never knew anything. We had no communications like we had today. We were in a local area.

It was only a local operation. You weren't part of a larger network.

The whole network, the army was a large army, but we were a small group in a small town. So this was all over the place.

All right. Now at some point, you linked up with the Allies.

Everybody linked up with each other before we saw the Allies. The Allies gave us three weeks to clean up the mess. By that, I mean, when we occupied our territory, the Germans ran like hell. And if you ever see a mighty army defeated, it was a pleasure to look at.

They were in rags. They had no wheels. Wonder why, huh? They were walking.

To show you the mentality of the German army, the mighty German mentality, the Nazi mentality, they would not surrender to the partisans because the propaganda said they would cut ears off, and they torture you, and so on. They weren't half wrong. But the problem is, it wasn't that bad.

So they walked towards Milan, which had a camp for Germans. The Allies had it. I think it was the 8th Army, British Army. And the Americans had established a big prisoner of war camp. And that's where they wanted to go.

But through their walk to Milan, they made it a death march. They burned every farmhouse on the way, shot everybody that was in the house except the smallest child. Why, we don't know. And this is after they lost the war. It just show you how great they were, and how deserving they were of their end.

Well, we were now in the position of cleaning up. We formed a tribunal, which was mainly part of the original 30, which now was the military police. We got to judge spies, traitors, all kinds of undesirables. And most of them, I must say, were put to death.

We gave them a fair trial-- one minute, just the way they did it to us.

Did you ever kill anyone, Harry?

Oh, yeah. At that time, they said that the German away keeps the doctor away. A German a day keeps the doctor away.

Were you ever frightened?

Always, because if you got shot in this kind of war, you died anyhow-- gangrene or what have you. We had no doctors, no hospitals. We were a roving force.

Did you ever come close to being caught?

Once or twice. But close, maybe 30, 40 feet away from them, and running, because sometimes they came up the mountains with Russian troops, Ukrainians, and they didn't know-- they had no fear.

So now the war is over, but you decide to stay for another month.

No, we didn't decide. I was in the army. I couldn't leave. And I was an officer by now. And they told us, you go back in the mountains and get the SS down the drain. And I says, you do it. I'm not going in the mountains. I know what it's all about. One man can hold a hundred back and win.

So I says, we wait them out. And we did. And they came down hungry and in distress.

And we got orders from the Allies that every SS is to be treated-- you have carte blanche. You pick them up, you make them dig their graves, and you shoot them-- no trials, no nothing.

How do you recognize an SS man. His blood type was tattooed on his armpit. It's as simple as that.

You are now how old?

Now I'm going on 21. We did that. We exterminated every SS we could find. And it's probably most of them. Some of them probably got away. They were all executed and buried on the spot. And I was finally discharged exactly one month after the war ended.

You were an officer in the Allied army at this point?

No, we still--

What army? What army is it you're referring to?

The Italian underground, the partisan.

Ah, OK.

1st Alpine Division. I was discharged--

You went back to France.

I was discharged, the first man discharged from this group. It was me, because I wasn't Italian. They offered me to stay in Italy, become an Italian, and take over the police force in this town. And I says, you've got to be nuts. At 21 you become chief of police. It's ridiculous.

Anyhow, I went back with an Allied motorcade. And my mother was with me. And we got back to Nice. We were coming in late, and they put us into a hotel just for the night. And in the morning, we were screened by French army personnel.

And when I was asked where I was born, and I said Austria, I mean, I was in an American uniform, 101 Airborne, and the man said, I have to arrest you because you are Austrian. That means German. He did not recognize the Jewish angle

now.

And they put me in a old hotel, in the Hotel Swiss in Nice, for three weeks in internment to find out what's going on. And this was not pleasant, because there was a lot of SS in there, and a lot of Nazis and fascists. And this wasn't my place.

After three weeks, finally, they came to me, and they realized what was going on, and I was liberated. And I started a new life.

Now very poor. I think I got about \$20 discharge money.

You and your mother are together. She survived this.

She survived with me.

How old was your mother at this time?

She's dead. She died.

No--

How old was she?

Yes. How old was she then.

I think it was about 40. About 43 or 44.

Incredible. You stayed in France--

My mother knew what happened to her. She was not accepting this whole thing. She kind of lived in a dreamworld for these years. She was never hurt badly, mentally.

Interesting. She's stuck up in the mountains. She is in a--

Yeah, just lived her daily lives. Disregarded the whole thing.

Now my father was finally sent to Auschwitz at the end of 1943. He was executed.

How do you know that?

I know from a man that was a good friend of his who came back, who was a kapo, and who took my father under his wing. He loved my father.

And I broke him down. I told him, if you don't tell me, I'll kill you now. It doesn't make any difference to me. So he finally told me.

My father was burned alive. The Germans had run out of gas. And they were just taking all the weak bodies and putting them right in the oven. A lot of people do not know this, but this is the truth.

Out of the 700 that were, that surrendered in Italy when we broke away, they were all shipped to Auschwitz and all were executed. There was not one survivor. That's the story.

You've had an incredible experience. I mean, the word doesn't even cover it. Where did you find the inner resources, the strength, to deal with what you did?

It was a question of survival. Once I realized that there was no return here, that if they ever get you, you don't come home. Because they showed their brutality, finally. I decided it was much easier to pick up a gun and shoot back, and take a few with you. That was all there was, survival.

We didn't even know if the Germans are going to lose the war or not. We thought they were winning all the time. At least the armed forces looked like that.

Are you a bitter man, Harry?

Not anymore. I still wouldn't go to Germany. I still would never go back to Austria. I think they're the biggest antisemites ever, still today. As you know, the whole Jewish population of Austria has shrunk to about 50,000, and mostly transients. We have no family left. Everybody was wiped out.

This interview is coming to an end. Is there anything further that you would like to say to the viewing audience?

Just watch it. It shouldn't happen again, because it could, at any minute. Just look around you in the world and see what's going on, and the persecutions, and the killings. Even in our country.

Thank you, Harry, for helping us with our roadmap--

You're entirely welcome.

--to an unfathomable kingdom.

Thank you so much.

[MUSIC PLAYING]