

Inge Woolf
Born 18 May, 1934, Vienna, Austria

The Nazis took over Austria when I was three.

I remember seeing our neighbours hanging swastikas to welcome Hitler's troops.

We were so afraid. The fear has stayed with me.

Even today, when I speak of those days my stomach goes into a knot.

My father made a plan for us to escape.

We spent a year in Czechoslovakia while we got our papers in order.

We went through a conversion in a Lutheran church.

They knew it wasn't a real conversion. It was their effort to help Jews.

After the war my father was interned in a Czechoslovakian camp.

My mother started a campaign to get him to England.

She wrote many letters but got nowhere.

One day she said, 'We're going to the Czech embassy. When I bang on the table, start crying.'

So we went to the embassy.

My mother told them they were worse than Nazis, keeping families apart.

She banged on the table, I cried, and my father came home.

When father died, mother brought us to New Zealand. We flourished here.

After the war my grandmother left Austria and joined a boat to Palestine.

The boat was old, over-crowded, and kept breaking down.

The British created a blockade to prevent Jews from entering.

My uncle lived in Palestine and pleaded with the British to allow grandmother in.

They refused.

Eventually her boat sank off the coast of Palestine and she drowned.

My grandmother survived the Holocaust only to be denied refuge by the British.