**Life in Siberia as a deportee**

This is a story told by my close relative Māra Kalēja, 76.

''My family and I were deported on March 25th, 1949 from our house called ''Upenieki'' near Grobiņa. I was only 8 years old when this took place. In the morning of March 25th a truck with four strangers drove in our backyard. We had nothing to take with us, but I remember that my brother ran to our neighbours to ask for some bread and money. The soldiers were nice enough to let my father take care of our 2 horses before leaving. At this time my eldest brother was in Liepāja and my mother was very concerned about what would happen to him. The sodliers said that my brother would be with us later and that turned out to be about 7 years later. We got our belongings and got in to the truck. On the way to Grobiņa we collected more of our neighbours and we were all taken to Tores train station.

A few days later we arrived in Omsk, Siberia where we were taken to a collective farm ''Krasnij Vostok''. My father worked as a blacksmith, my mother worked in gardening and my brother Valdis guarded bulls while I took care of my little sister Maija. We did not start school right away. The first year of living in Siberia my siblings and I learned russian language. Even though it was not easy, I graduated school with very good grades.

There was only a one well for the whole village and our house was distant from it. Siberians used to dispel their cows to the well and made them drink freezing cold water, on the other hand latvians gave cows warm water to drink. Our cows gave milk all winter long and the siberians could not understand how and why. Latvians thought siberians many things, for example how to grow potatoes and take care of cows.

My grandmother lived in Liepāja. She wrote a request to help my family and I get back to Latvia. The request was accepted, our familly were declared as innocent and we were allowed to go back to our motherland in 1956.

Arriving in Latvia was hard because our house ''Upenieki'' was in a poor condition and I could not nor write nor speak very good latvian, but it was not and obstacle for our family as we always found ways to make everything work.''

Izabella Ozola