

# Latvian Children’s Education in Siberia

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Quotations compiled by Dzintra Geka and translated by Agnija Vaska

## **Andrej Antons, born in 1940:**

“Children started to go to school at the age of seven. After finishing the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, children had to study in another place, approximately 20 kilometers away from home and thus, they were separated from their family during the whole week. They went by foot and took food with them, carrying it on their backs. Their mothers told many stories about Latvia, their motherland, but the children couldn’t imagine, because in schools teachers taught another ideology. They taught much about Josef Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union which he ruled as a dictator from the mid-1920s until his death in 1953, and about Nikita Khrushchev, a Russian politician who led the Soviet Union during parts of the Cold War. He served as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964. From the 5<sup>th</sup> form on, other children started to call Latvians “fascists”; Latvians fought with them in order to defend themselves. Fighting was a real reason for being dismissed from school. All studies in school were in Russian language, Latvians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians were studying together. In 1950 and 1951, Ukrainians were deported as well.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Viktor Apsītis, born in 1931:**

“Some of the children didn’t attend school at all, because of their poverty. The kids didn’t have clothes and footwear, the school was more than 10 kilometers away and there was no boarding school, so many children grew up without any education.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Dagmāra Arķe, born in 1932:**

“There was a very nice teacher in school, we had to write a dictation, in my work there weren’t any lengthening marks, everyone laughed, and it hurt.”<sup>3</sup>

Source: Dzintra Geka, “Children of Siberia”, Riga 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Dzintra Geka, “Children of Siberia”, Riga 2007, pp.43.

<sup>2</sup> ibidem, pp.51.

<sup>3</sup> ibidem, pp.54.