CALL FOR PAPERS

CHILDHOOD IN TIMES OF UNFREEDOM

Date: 15–16 June 2026

Venue: National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius (NPMK), Valdštejnská 20, Prague 1

Organisers: National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius; Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences – Centre for the History of Education

Length of papers: 25 minutes

Conference languages: English, Czech

The National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius invites scholars to submit papers for the international conference ***Childhood in Times of Unfreedom*.** The event accompanies the exhibition ***Childhood under the Swastika*** (2025), commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. While the exhibition focuses on children's lives under Nazi occupation, the conference adopts a **broader chronological and geographical perspective**, exploring children's experiences under **totalitarian, authoritarian, colonial, occupying, and otherwise oppressive regimes** across the 20th century. Accordingly, the proposed thematic areas are divided into two sections: topics related to the Second World War and broader perspectives on childhood in times of unfreedom.

We welcome contributions that analyze how political power, ideology, war, persecution, and systemic violence shape childhood, education, family life, and children's identities. Special emphasis is placed on **education and schools** as key sites where regimes attempt to influence, discipline, or control children and teachers.

The conference is interdisciplinary and open to scholars in history, education, childhood studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, literary and cultural studies, memory studies, museum studies, and related fields.

The international conference ***Childhood in Times of Unfreedom*** is organised by the National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius in cooperation with the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences and its Centre for the History of Education.

Thematic areas related to the Second World War

- everyday life of children during the Second World War
- the impact of Nazi racial laws on Jewish children and other persecuted groups
- occupation policies affecting education (closure of Czech universities, restrictions on secondary and middle schools, deliberate lowering of educational standards)
- assistance to children during the war and the post-war years (e.g. the activities of Přemysl Pitter, Janusz Korczak, and others)
- child labour, youth mobilisation, and ideological education in the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s and 1940s

Broader thematic areas on childhood in times of unfreedom

- the impact of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes on childhood (political persecution, uprooting, deportations, forced population transfers)
- strategies of controlling education and childhood under unfree regimes (communist indoctrination, disciplining of youth, compulsory organisations such as the Hitler Youth, Pioneers, etc.)
- childhood in contexts of political violence and repression (internment, imprisonment of family members, collectivisation, coercive educational institutions)
- propaganda, ideological education, and the construction of the "ideal child" in totalitarian states
- the role of families, communities, and institutions in protecting children in times of oppression; forms of resistance, solidarity, and "quiet dissent"
- psychosocial consequences of life under unfreedom and intergenerational transmission of trauma
- everyday family practices – joys, coping strategies, and adaptation
- reconstruction of children's experiences in memory studies, oral history, museums, and literature
- post-conflict childcare, reintegration into society, and post-war social work
- comparative perspectives on childhood under different totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century (Nazism, communism, fascism, military dictatorships)
- comparative perspectives on parenthood, childhood, and education in different communist/state-socialist contexts; transnational circulation of knowledge and expertise between East and West
- representations of childhood in times of unfreedom in art, museums, educational programmes, and media culture
- innovations in childcare and transformations of expert discourses on parenthood and childhood

Submission guidelines

Please send proposals including a title and an abstract of up to **400 words** (in the language of the paper) to **historik@npmk.cz** by **30 April 2026**.

Authors will be notified of acceptance by **15 May 2026**.

NÁRODNÍ PEDAGOGICKÉ MUZEUM A KNIHOVNA J. A. KOMENSKÉHO

HISTORICKÝ ÚSTAV
Akademie věd České republiky

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