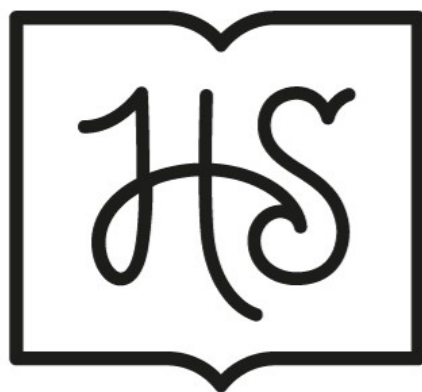


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Unlike countries in the West of our frontiers, childhood in the Czech historiography is more than a borderline topic; the period after the World War II has not yet been studied at all. Therefore it is a justifiable initiative that a group of researchers under the leadership of Jiří Knapík focused on school age children in Czechoslovakia after the overturn in February 1948, especially in the 1950s and 1960s: a period when “basic postulates of political strategy towards children and youth were formed and remained valid during the whole communist era.” The publication monitors different attitudes to children and youth in a wider context of the Central European development within the Soviet Bloc.

The group of authors determined three thematic units: overall attitude of the communist regime to school children and teenagers, the world of media and reflection of children’s world, and the institutional framework in which the young generation lived and was expected world as “the century of the child”, political ideologies such as fascism, nazism, and communism started to use the motif of a child and childhood. This part also underlines and justifies the three essential lines of current research: childhood as a private sphere lived outside the influence of public or official social structures, overall picture of childhood as a (self)representation of the communist regime and finally, subjective perception of childhood as a stage in human life. The three areas then generate a number of questions to most of which the authors found answers, leaving the unanswered ones for the near future (e.g. childhood up to six years).

In the second part of the publication, Jiří Křesťan analyzed two educational acts of 1948 and 1953. He returned to the reform effort of the First Republic and corrected certain myths

44 Published by: Ústav historických věd. Slezská univerzita v Opavě. Opava 2014. 207 s., vč. obr. příloh. ISBN 978-80-7510-057-3. (The Institute of Historic Sciences. Silesian University in Opava)

concerning the role of Zdeněk Nejedlý in changes introduced to the educational system after February 1948. The insight into the school reforms shows the gradual degradation of the current educational system and the contents of education.

Major part of the publication focuses on the relationship between the socialist school system and the out-of-school/out-of-class education (see chapters Socialist Education and the so called out-of-school education and School Leisure groups and Clubs). Jiří Knapík thoroughly analyzed a conglomerate of varied organizations starting from youth groups, full-board schools, pioneer organizations and its “jiskra” groups (preparatory groups for young children to enter pioneer groups), youth houses and clubs up to public community work. A common element of the above mentioned institutions was the effort to weaken the influence of family. The author pays attention to children journals as a platform gradually introducing a quality and interesting literature and information to children.

Martin Franc focused on the relationship between political elites and youth in the period of 1948 – 1968, when the communist party declared and promoted the cult of youth. His view does not finish in the 1960s; he also analyzes the opinions and standpoints of young generation (rather teenagers than children) in the 1980s, supporting the idea that most young people had already lost their illusions about the governing party.

Similar tone has the part written by the Slovak researcher Marína Zavadská who describes the youth in the documents of district conferences of the communist party in Slovakia in the 1950s. A highly topical character has the following chapter by Jan Jiráček and Barbora Köpplová entitled *The Offer of TV Programmes for Children in the 1960s*. The authors monitor massive influence of TV on family life rhythm in the 1950s and 1960s in a wider social and political context, paying attention also to the objectives and function of TV for children and young people.

The publication presents the results of a thorough research based on clearly asked questions. Despite the fact that it was written by several authors, the whole unit gives an impression of a compact publication with individual chapters mostly linking to each other. The only exception is Chapter 5 – it is open with an empty conference phrase “the contribution deals with problems of the youth...” (p. 97). Perhaps it would be useful to focus more on personal reflection of the contemporaries: the problem in the submitted form is viewed mostly on the basis of contemporary literature, official resources and press.

At all events, the publication opens new perspectives for the Czech historic research, which is a most welcome initiative.