

# UIS History of Speleology Commission

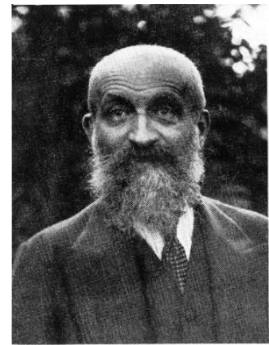
## Online Symposium

### Speleology in Authoritarian Regimes

Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup> 2025

First Circular

The UIS History of Speleology Commission, in collaboration with the German Speleological Federation (VdHK), is organizing an online symposium titled "Speleology in Authoritarian Regimes". This event will explore the intersection of speleology (the study of caves and karst) and repressive government regimes, examining how authoritarian states have influenced and, in many cases, oppressed speleological activities and researchers.



This symposium is inspired by the legacy of Dr. Benno Wolf (1871-1943), a pioneering German speleologist whose life tragically ended due to the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. Dr. Wolf's extensive work on a world cave catalogue and his significant private speleological library made him a prominent figure in the field. However, his achievements also made him a target for Nazi persecution. Arrested by the Gestapo in 1942, Wolf was deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where he died in January 1943 due to the brutal conditions. To honour Dr. Wolf's contributions and to promote the values of scientific freedom and tolerance, the VdHK established the Dr. Benno Wolf Prize 30 years ago. This prize recognizes outstanding achievements in cave protection and research while also standing as a symbol against the suppression of scientific inquiry.

The upcoming symposium will delve into the various forms of repression that speleologists have faced under authoritarian regimes, including imprisonment, surveillance, and theft of valuable research. By examining these historical contexts, the event aims to shed light on the broader implications of state interference in scientific research and offer insights into the resilience of scientific communities under duress.

Participants will have the opportunity to discuss how speleology has been targeted by authoritarian regimes in different countries and time periods, and to reflect on the lessons that can be drawn for the future of scientific research in politically challenging environments.

#### Abstracts:

Deadline for submissions is November 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, please send up to 300 words to [bennowolf@vdhk.de](mailto:bennowolf@vdhk.de)

**Online presentations:** Lectures will last 30 min + 10 min discussion

The presentations shall be sent as a powerpoint video in MP3 format until February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2025

For the recording of the symposium organizers and presenters will meet in Zoom.

**The presentations will be streamed via [VdHK YouTube Channel](#) and [UIS YouTube Channel](#).**

**For further questions please contact [bennowolf@vdhk.de](mailto:bennowolf@vdhk.de)**

**Organizers:** Friedhart Knolle, Bernard Chirol - UIS History of Speleology Commission,  
Bärbel Vogel - UIS Adjunct Secretary and VdHK president