

Abstract

During the winter of 1783–1784, practically all European states were struck by severe floods. These natural disasters challenged the state bodies and their ability to cope with exceptional situations. At the time, administrative bodies in the Czech lands were undergoing numerous and substantial reforms designed in the spirit of enlightened absolutism to improve efficiency and thus contribute to the “greater good”. The aim of all these reforms was to bring security to the lives of people and promote its quality, because this brought advantages for the whole state. Based on an analysis of the preserved archive sources and newspapers examines present dissertation the formation of the state flood prevention in Bohemia in the late eighteenth century. From general point of view the aim of my dissertation is to help to better understand the modernisation process in the era of Enlightenment. It departs, i.a. from the findings of French philosopher Michel Foucault and his concept of biopolitics. The dissertation analyses some concrete examples of this biopolitics, such as the struggle of state bodies against every possible irregularity, contingency and risk, that could endangered the wealth of state and its inhabitants, health of people and the social order, promotion of “love for human beings” (Menschenliebe) when saving people from drowning, and the principles of hygiene. The archive sources and other literature led me to the hypothesis that the evolution of the state flood prevention owes its operation in the late 1780s Bohemia to the Enlightenment principles, shared by the majority of the then social elites, the experience of flooding in the year 1784 and the reforms of the administrative bodies and the whole system of state administrative at the same time.