

Joseph II Plows a Field near Slavikovice on August 19, 1769 (Late 18th Century)

Abstract

The Habsburg Emperor Joseph II (r. 1765-90) was one of the main representatives of “enlightened absolutism.” He was responsible for many reforms, including the abolition of juridical serfdom in 1781. (It should be noted, however, that the introduction of this reform left questions of land tenure and landlordly rent unresolved.) Agriculture was among Joseph II’s major interests. He viewed it from a social perspective but was also interested in the practical angle: for instance, he wanted to see methods developed to increase crop yields. This engraving depicts a visit paid by Joseph II to Bohemian farmer Andreas Trnka on August 19, 1766. It shows that the emperor did not shrink from personally plowing a few furrows in Trnka’s field, located near Slavikovice (west of Brno). The caption on the left indicates that Prince Joseph Wenzel von Liechtenstein (1696-1772) had a column built to commemorate the emperor’s visit.

Source



Source: Engraving by an unknown artist, late 18th century.

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