

Foreword

by Joyce Chumbley

A remarkable group of Thomas Paine enthusiasts met at United Nations Headquarters in 1987 on December 10, fittingly, International Human Rights Day, for a colloquium. The panelists comprised a fascinating assortment of individuals: scholars, political leaders, humanitarians, international leaders, an actor, a museum library director, and historians. They assembled to speak of Thomas Paine as a 'Visionary of World Peace.'

Certainly, many people and institutions deserve credit and thanks for inspiring the event and bringing it to fruition. The Thomas Paine Colloquium was organized by the United Teilhard Trust and was presented under the generous auspices of the United Nations, specifically its Peace Studies Unit, and the University for Peace in Costa Rica. Additional support was provided by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association (TPNHA) of New Rochelle, New York, and the Thomas Paine Society of the United Kingdom.

Without doubt, though, the Colloquium was inspired in great measure by two long-time devoted members of TPNHA, Florence Stapleton and Nat Mills, both now deceased. As part of their Paine activities, Florence and Nat created an informal Thomas Paine Readers Club, wrote a modest newsletter, and became more and more determined to launch an activity that would bring the ideas of Thomas Paine to a wider audience. Florence was very well informed about Paine's life and humanitarian ideals, and she was difficult to resist. In Leo Zonneveld, she found an eager collaborator. As founder and director of the United Teilhard Trust, Leo had organized a colloquium on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin the year before at the UN in New York, and he promptly secured that venue again and the support of UN officials for a similar tribute to Thomas Paine.

When, in 1999, the TPNHA determined to stop producing a newsletter, Florence and Nat, Martha and Irwin Spiegelman, and others decided to take on that responsibility and to pursue other projects of their own, such as lobbying for a Thomas Paine Day in each of the fifty states. Meanwhile, Nat gave the Spiegelmans audiotapes of the UN Thomas Paine Colloquium and a copy of the printed program. In 2001, I became

a charter member of this new group, and we formed an official non-profit organization, Thomas Paine Friends, with the following mission: *to encourage people to learn about and from Thomas Paine, his times and philosophy so that they may be inspired to participate in public affairs reflective of the spirit of Paine's life, thought, and ideals.*

For Thomas Paine Friends, which did not even exist in 1987, the Colloquium was unfinished business. Irwin Spiegelman contacted Leo Zonneveld about publishing the proceedings from the event, picking up the torch originally lit by Florence and Nat. Leo graciously endorsed the idea. With Leo's assistance, I offered to transcribe the audiotapes, to finish editing the texts, and to prepare the manuscript for publication.

We bring this book forward, then, as a labor of love from the many people who planned and participated in the Thomas Paine Colloquium and who, now, have had a hand in the publication process – all eager to pay tribute to Thomas Paine, a true visionary of peace for all time.

The publication of this book also helps to mark the 200th Anniversary Year of Paine's death on June 8, 1809.

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