

...Paine and the Declaration, from page 4

in the hands of both Adams and Franklin before becoming Sherman's copy.

What of other drafts? Copies of the Declaration were created during the Carpenters' Hall meetings (June 18 to 25, 1776), but few have survived or been recovered. The "original first draft" has been lost; it was presumably what Jefferson used in penning his "Rough Draft". So what now exist are: the John Adams copy held at the Massachusetts Historical Society; the Jefferson copy which is the text for the Rough Draft; and the Sherman copy.

Berton believes that Paine didn't receive public credit for a role in drafting the Declaration because he was not a member of the Continental Congress. "[Paine] should not have been there, which adds even more weight to his involvement." "He probably acted as Franklin's representative." Berton claims the third draft was circulated to Franklin, who was ill at that time; he initialed the copy as his, and thereafter transferred it to Sherman. (From email interview with *The Ionian*.)

Later events, as Berton recounts, are as follows. Sherman gave the copy to Colonel Alexander Lowery, who passed it on to his relatives. It was later discovered in a box of papers by an elderly man in Bowden, Georgia. It was in an Estate Auction booklet of General Hugh White, a brigadier general in the War of 1812. The current owner, who is anonymous, purchased these items in 2009 from the elderly finder. Col. Lowery had been a member of the Committee of Correspondence (of Lancaster County, PA), an organization that challenged colonial rule prior to the American Revolution. He was present in Carpenters' Hall on June 24, 1776 when discussions concerning the Declaration took place.

According to Berton, "It has been commonly accepted that his *Common Sense* led to the Declaration in content and language,

but now we see him an active, even leading, organizer."

[The document] has been entered into the Declaration Resources Project at Harvard University, which focuses on "creating innovative and informative resources about the Declaration of Independence," according to the Project's website. The Project finds that the only T.P. in Philadelphia political circles then was Thomas Paine, so "T.P." on the Sherman document must refer to him.

A major part of the Berton Freethought Society article lays out some of the politics in America of 1776 (and later), with Paine, Thomas Young, Timothy Matlack, among many more, as leaders of a revolutionary-democratic-declaration group in opposition with the conservatives--separatist but hardly democratic--such as Benjamin Rush, John Adams, John Jay, and others. In large part, the opposing poles can be represented by Paine and Adams, although Adams yielded eventually on the Declaration, possibly due to the influence in the drafting committee of Franklin, a powerful leader in the policymaking and strategies of the Congress. Berton submits that another reason for the absence of Paine's name in the Declaration process was due to his radical positions; he had many political enemies and his name would not aid in bringing around the timid members in support of a Declaration.

*Ed: So far, we have not found a publication of the ITPS conference available, nor is there any new information at the Declaration Resources Project at Harvard University. Obviously, the document is of major interest to scholars, historical societies and Paine societies, so stay tuned, particularly at these websites,*

[iona.edu/microsites/institute-for-thomas-paine-studies.aspx](http://iona.edu/microsites/institute-for-thomas-paine-studies.aspx) and [declaration.fas.harvard.edu/resources](http://declaration.fas.harvard.edu/resources)

—by Martha Spiegelman

**"WHO WROTE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE?"**

So asked Klara Rukshina in her paper of that provocative title

At the time of her death in January 2010, Klara Rukshina had several nearly complete manuscripts to comprise her monograph, *The Origin of Modern Democracies*. She was a highly regarded historian and Paine authority, and was a member of the TPF Board of Directors. TPF is working on the publication of the full book, *The Origin of Modern Democracies*.



Klara Rukshina's paper, *Who Wrote the Declaration of Independence?*, is a meticulously well-documented presentation. Here, I offer a small sample of her extensive, detailed paper because it relates to the revelation, noted above, of a document placing Paine as a writer of the *Declaration*.

First reviewing thoroughly the arguments in *Common Sense*, the political landscape in 1776 America, the content of the *Declaration*, and the positions and activities of the five members of the committee assigned to draft a declaration, she then posits three possibilities:

- "So, we have three versions regarding the authorship of the *Declaration of Independence*:
  - the first* one is most generally recognized: the author is Thomas Jefferson;
  - the second* one is at least not disputed and presents authorship as collective work;
  - the third* is invariably neglected: the author is Thomas Paine.
- We will examine them in this order."

Covering several pages, Rukshina shows that Jefferson, by his own letters to individuals, was too busy, not interested, not informed sufficiently, not convinced for independence, to fulfill the task of writing a declaration. She quotes Pauline Maier [Professor of American History, Harvard], in doubt of Jefferson as the author:

[the Committee] "left no minutes of its proceedings, and the account of its work written nearest the event, Thomas Jefferson's 'Notes of Proceedings in the Continental

Congress' is succinct to a fault ... Both Jefferson and John Adams later helped flesh out that bare-bones story. However, most of their testimony on the drafting process was written between a quarter and a half century later, which even at that time raised questions about its accuracy, and, it turns out, for good reason. What they said *contains one mistake after another.*" (*Italics by KR*)

Rukshina asks: "What do the authors (John Adams and Thomas Jefferson) try to hide and why are they doing it?! Would not it be much simpler and unequivocal to declare earlier: "It is I, Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the *Declaration of Independence*." Or, "I am Thomas Jefferson, the author of the *Declaration of Independence*."

In an emphatic point, Rukshina again turns to Maier: "Learning how the *Declaration of Independence* was written is more like assembling an immensely complex jigsaw puzzle in which some pieces are 'teases,' serving only to mislead, while others necessary to complete the picture have probably been lost forever."

Then, having rejected Jefferson, Maier makes the assumption: "...the story of how the *Declaration* was written – is reasonably clear. It includes not a single talented writer

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but a group of men working under tight time constraints to complete this one of many assignments the Continental Congress gave them"... "In the end, considering... the number of people who actively intervened in defining its text, the Declaration of Independence was the work not of one man but of many."

But clearly, at no point does Maier ever consider any role that Paine may have played. Perhaps she can be pardoned, as Paine was not a member of the Congress and was a newcomer in America. Besides, his Common Sense was still an anonymous composition. Nevertheless, as Rukshina swiftly notes, Paine was close to Benjamin Franklin, and was in fact called Franklin's "political son".

With scrupulous detail, Rukshina demonstrates the line-by-line parallels between the grievances as well as the independence and governing concepts in Common Sense and the Declaration. She introduces her case:

"...the pamphlet Common Sense (January 10, 1776), which for the first time put forward the idea and reasoned

the necessity of creating the document under the title "Declaration of Independence," contains the main items of the future document. They are presented in the official "Declaration of Independence" absolutely in the same logical sequence, literally item after item.

In some letters from Jefferson to Paine, in later years, there seems to be a secretive tone that could suggest an earlier relationship, one that might even pertain to the writing of the Declaration. Rukshina writes:

"It was to him that Jefferson wrote in 1788 from Paris: "...but you know such a correspondence between you and me cannot pass through the post, not even by the couriers of Ambassadors." And later Jefferson remarked: [Paine] "rendered useless almost everything written before on the structures of government." "

I leave Klara Rukshina's final discussion for the eventual posthumous publication of this paper. Her questions:

"It is left for us to answer the question: Why is Paine's authorship concealed? Why is the author of the "Declaration" considered to be Thomas Jefferson?"

--by Martha Spiegelman

OF NOTE, FOR A BIRTHDAY, JANUARY 29, 1737

From Sid Moss: Some quotations selected from Common Sense for Thomas Paine's Birthday

Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not YET sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor, a long habit of thinking a thing WRONG, gives it a superficial appearance of being RIGHT, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.

When men yield up the exclusive privilege of thinking, the last shadow of liberty quits the horizon.

The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested. The laying a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the natural rights of all Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling; of which Class, regardless of Party Censure, is the Author.

Who the Author of this Production is, is wholly unnecessary to the Public, as the Object for Attention is the DOCTRINE ITSELF, not the MAN. Yet it may not be unnecessary to say, That he is unconnected with any Party, and under no sort of influence public or private, but the influence of reason and principle.

From Victor Madeson's October Newsletter: "Oligarchs vs. Common Sense"

In 1802, after Paine returned to his adopted country from eventful years in France, he wrote a series of letters (see volume 10 of Daniel Wheeler's Life and Writings of Thomas Paine, 1908, NY: Vincent Parke & Company; and at, www.archive.org/details/lifewritingsofth10pain/page/n11), some of which are powerful attacks on the oligarchs of his day. Seven letters are addressed "To the People of the United States". Two letters regard the purchase of the Louisiana territory that peacefully doubled the size of the U.S. Also, in a short note from New Rochelle, NY to a newspaper publisher (E. Babcock of the American Mercury in Hartford, CT, July 2, 1805), Paine refers to an eighth letter (said to be of June 5, 1805) that "is the most important of any I have published". But there is some confusion about the provenance of that letter, its date and to whom it was addressed.

It was likely a letter that would have resembled a later one, in August 1805, "To the Citizens of Pennsylvania on the Proposal for Calling a Convention", wherein Paine notes that he has "now

presented ...."a collection of thoughts and historical references, adding a small compass that they may circulate more conveniently." In short, it is possible that the "important letter", mentioned to Babcock, was likely a version intended to be "To the Citizens of Connecticut....", because that state had not supported Jefferson in the 1804 election. (CT did not even get a Constitution until 1818, after the War of 1812 had disgraced local Federalists.) Bottom line: Paine regarded the oligarchy, represented by Federalists, as being an enemy of the democratic-republican form of government, so he probably wrote, for Connecticut, his "most important" letter, adding a Compass on "Constitutions, Governments, and Charters": The Connecticut letter and the Pennsylvania letter, therefore, would be very similar, and "most important". The vast corruption in the country could be overcome with Common Sense, which is why we should care about Thomas Paine.

From Edward Dodson, a reminder of a Paine biography

Some time ago I acquired a copy of this biography of Paine (1988), written by British philosopher Alfred J. Ayer. He offers some insight into the evolution of Paine's thinking in the context of his times.

I have scanned the book and uploaded it to a page of online books available at my School of Cooperative Individualism website. So, if you are looking for something to read that offers a unique perspective on Paine, here is the page link. The Ayer book appears near the top of the available selections. www.cooperative-individualism.org/books-online.htm.

Madeson, Moss, and Dodson are TPF members