

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

You are holding in your hands issues 3–4/2015 of the journal *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Studia Territorialia*.

While originally not conceived monothematic, this double issue of our journal features, *inter alia*, three topically and thematically intertwined articles covering American Studies and modern U.S. history.

The volume opens with a study of the life and intellectual world of Thomas Paine. This contribution, by Ryan Hoselton, traces the origins of Paine's vision of a democratic religion for the early American Republic. The article seeks to reconceptualize Paine's religious thinking from a post-secular perspective. Building upon an analysis of Paine's political writings, most notably *The Age of Reason*, it provides a reassessment of the relationship between the Enlightenment and religious forces that shaped the democratic foundations of modern America.

Marcin Gajek, for his part, examines the presidency of the United States' second president, John Adams. Whereas Adams' prominent place in American history, as a founding father, is beyond question, he is considered rather unsuccessful as a practicing politician. Using the concept of the "politics of disjunction," Gajek succinctly shows that Adams' leadership style was heavily influenced by his earlier theoretical studies on politics. He argues that Adams' increasingly old-fashioned political views and particularly his strong attachment to the ideal of an "aristocratic republic" proved incompatible with the predominant progressive moods among the American public and political elites; consequently, this led to his failed bid for re-election and the ensuing decline of the Federalist Party.

Finally, Kristýna Onderková, in her study of the status of the Aboriginal peoples, discusses the recent controversies in Canada concerning the Indian Act. This act, adopted in 1876, has provided for a special status of the First Nations in Canada. Moreover, the act has set forth guarantees of preservation and free

development of their distinctiveness, including through the rights of self-determination and self-government. Still, it has largely failed to reduce the existing substantial differences in the living standards between Native and Non-Native Canadians and address specific socio-economic problems many Aboriginal communities have faced. The author explores the latest attempts by the Conservative Harper government to reform this act of legislation, which encountered resistance from some native groups invoking their constitutionally enshrined collective rights. She exemplifies their emancipation efforts through an analysis of the grass-roots protest movement Idle No More.

We hope you will take as much pleasure reading this volume as we have enjoyed preparing it for print.

On behalf of the editorial team,

Jan Šír