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# The Freeman: An Eyewitness View

BY LEONARD P. LIGGIO

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**T**he *Freeman* has a long and distinguished history in the cause of liberty.

One finds its origins deep in the classical liberal movement. In 1865 William Lloyd Garrison closed his famous publication, *The Liberator*, after passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. But a number of leading figures felt that the War Between the States had created new challenges to laissez faire and founded *The Nation* with the Irish-born Edwin L. Godkin (1831–1902) as the editor (and young William Garrison, as the deputy editor). However, as financial support thinned, railroad executive Henry Villard stepped in as publisher. Villard was married to the daughter of William Lloyd Garrison. His son, Oswald Garrison Villard, succeeded him as publisher, and in his opposition to Woodrow Wilson's Great War, appointed Albert Jay Nock as editor. In 1918, the Postmaster General barred the U.S. mails to *The Nation* because of Nock's criticisms of the Wilson administration.

In 1920 Nock, joined by Francis Neilson, a Liberal Party member of the British Parliament who had opposed the war, founded *The Freeman* to express his literary as well as political ideas. Nock made *The Freeman* the magazine for advanced thinking. When the financial situation changed and Nock departed for Brussels, H. L. Mencken took up the role with *The American Mercury*. Nock kept the spirit of *The Freeman* in his heart, and it

was revived briefly in the 1930s with Frank Chodorov entering the scene.

During World War II Nock was living part-time with William F. Buckley Sr. in Sharon, Connecticut, and working with Chodorov. Nock died at the end of the war with Japan in 1945. Chodorov then launched his publication, *analysis*. Murray N. Rothbard reported that he discovered *analysis* on a newsstand near the New York

Public Library surrounded by all the communist and socialist publications of the day. He said it was a major influence on him. William F. Buckley Jr. had imbibed Nock's thought and became a disciple of Chodorov.

About 1950, two important events occurred. Felix Morley, who had left the presidency of Haverford College and joined Henry Regnery and Frank Hanighen in founding *Human Events* in 1944, resigned and was replaced by Frank Chodorov.

(Chodorov folded *analysis* into *Human Events*.) The weekly comprised a four-page newsletter on foreign and domestic policy from Capitol Hill and a four-page essay by an author such as Freda Utley, Ludwig von Mises, or Sen. William Jenner, or *Chicago Tribune* stalwarts such as George Morgenstern, Chesley Manley, or Walter Trohan.



Frank Chodorov

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Meanwhile, on October 2, 1950, with the Truman administration proposing national health insurance and going to war without congressional authorization, a new fortnightly *Freeman* was founded. The editors included Henry Hazlitt, John Chamberlain, Suzanne La Follette (who had worked on Nock's 1920s *Freeman*), and Forrest Davis.

Its launching preceded a major blow against Truman's domestic and war policies: the defeat of four senior Democratic senators in the November election, including the Majority Leader Scott Lucas, who was defeated by Everett McKinley Dirksen. Robert Alphonso Taft—"Mr. Republican"—was re-elected in Ohio, defeating "Jumping Joe" Ferguson, who, because of the Taft-Hartley Act, was financed by organized labor.


*The Freeman* contributed to the growing climate of free-market and constitutional ideas. Its editors created a core around which challenges to the dominant left ideology were formed. Authors included: Mises, F. A. Hayek, Wilhelm Röpke, John Dos Passos, Roscoe Pound, George Sokolsky, John T. Flynn, and William Henry Chamberlain, author of *America's Second Crusade*. But by 1954 differences of emphasis emerged among the editors, and *The Freeman* was purchased by Leonard E. Read, founder of FEE. The magazine was changed from a biweekly to a monthly and published by Read's Irvington Press, with Frank Chodorov as the editor. Chodorov, who had founded the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (ISI) for student activities in 1953, relocated to FEE's offices at Irvington-on-Hudson, bringing ISI with him.

I had worked with Chodorov in developing ISI when I was at Georgetown College. I had been an offi-

cer of an earlier right-wing student group and had drawn on the generosity of FEE to send monthly "In Briefs" to the members. FEE had continued this practice, sending materials to ISI students. Now FEE provided a home for ISI. Chodorov was a major influence on my thinking as I visited him at the offices of *Human Events* and after; he provided me with contacts on the staffs of Republican senators, such as Jenner of Indiana and Molly Malone of Nevada, who became speakers at events I organized at Georgetown.

According to George H. Nash, author of *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*, "Devin A. Garrity [of Devin-Adair, publisher of Chodorov's four books] recalls Chodorov's delight in saying that no one was further right than he. . . . The importance of Chodorov's influence and the quiet way in which it spread are both evident in an anecdote told by M. Stanton Evans. . . . While an undergraduate at Yale in the 1950s, Evans discovered *One Is a Crowd*. It was the first libertarian book he had ever read, and it 'opened up more intellectual perspectives to me than did the whole Yale curriculum.' Evans came to believe that Chodorov 'probably had more to do with the conscious shaping of my

political philosophy than any other person.'" In 1954 Devin-Adair published Chodorov's *The Income Tax: Root of All Evil*.

In 1955 Read chose to change the format and style of *The Freeman*. The articles were drawn from the staff of FEE and represented their areas of research. Beginning in January 1956 *The Freeman* was directed to FEE's mission of long-range education rather than current issues. It has pursued that strategy ever since. 

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