

## Frank Chodorov: Journalist

By JAMES J. MARTIN

EARLY IN 1945, I became aware of a new publication, already a few months old, a four-page large format monthly titled *analysis*. It was my introduction to Frank Chodorov. A little over twenty years later, my two-volume *American Liberalism and World Politics, 1931-1941* was published, the jacket of which bore a gracious compliment from Frank. These dates bracket a memorable and influential acquaintance, mainly literary, which has now been brought to an end.

I do not expect to see again in my time a journal with such quality of insight. For almost a decade, it was all alone, though its impact is observable today in a dozen places in periodical literature of an ideological inclination. In the second half of the '40's, its appearance was awaited with a kind of anticipation which is not easy to describe. It was an audacious, point-black challenge to the Lock-Step Line which had become almost a country-wide religion between the beginning of the Depression and the end of World War Two, the collection of verbal reflexes which constituted the thin bank account of both wings of the bird of prey which was America's indigenous national socialism. *analysis* gave voice to the opposing view of the intellectual libertarian underground which never accepted the wondrous consolation prize, the "defense"-warfare State, half-baked socialism's substitution for its obvious failures in trying to create the Never-Never Land it has always promised in its promotional literature.

*analysis* was an insight into many things for me. It was not only a guide to economic sanity and a revelation of what might be achieved through the market-place, for a change, instead of jails, guns, laws, concentration camps and planetary war. It was in *analysis* that I read reviews of books I would never have known about otherwise. I became acquainted for the first time with World War Two revisionism as a result of its attention to the early

breakthroughs in brochure form by such eminents as Harry Elmer Barnes and John T. Flynn. It was in *analysis* that I first encountered the names and ideas of Ed Opitz, Murray Rothbard, Dr. F. A. "Baldy" Harper and other formidables in the circle of libertarianism. And it was in *analysis* that Chodorov brought Albert Jay Nock out of obscurity for some of us, and into view for the first time for many more. The mark of Nock was firmly pressed upon Chodorov's literary style, and there never was a time when Frank's indebtedness to AJN was not openly and grate-

fully acknowledged. Nock in turn must have been immensely pleased with the expertness and effectiveness of such a pupil.

Chodorov found time for what must have been a fantastic correspondence, if ours was any indication of what went on between him and others. He occasionally found portions of our letters worthy of publication, in a special department printed in a type font which would normally tax the eyesight of an eagle. But the main attraction was always Frank's lead essay, which took up from half to three-fourths of the total space. I can recall portions *verbatim* today of two-decades-old gems such as "All Hail the Spiv," "Don't Buy Bonds," "Plan of the Nile," and others. I don't remember a dull line in his entire output.

I never met Chodorov, though I tried to find him a couple of times in unannounced visits to his incredible office in downtown New York. His abandonment of *analysis* for a foray into the American college campus to encourage the development of individualism was in my opinion the only bad mistake he ever made. With herdism at an all time high in Academe on both sides of the desk, at the peak of the Korean War, Frank tried to launch his Intercollegiate Society of Individualists. He was not an academic man, and had only an outsider's inkling of the degree to which the academic world had been mobilized into a monolithic arm of the State in the fifty years from the beginning of the First World War. Producing in quantity individualists of the cut of Frank Chodorov will always be a dream. His effort was doomed from the start, a vessel which was bound to be boarded by an element flying Frank's colors but devoted preponderantly to goals which he had frequently flayed. Political action groups may come out of a "Society," but not the kind of individualism Frank Chodorov lived, and stood for.

Frank Chodorov was a giant. We should not forget him.

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tic concerning the chances of regaining freedom of enterprise in America. "It's hopeless," he would say. "Too many people approve of the goodies the government gives them. We'll all be good little socialists by and by." But his efforts never slackened.

What was to be his last lecture was on the subject of bureaucracy. He had given the talk once before, and it had so impressed me that unbeknownst to myself I had it virtually committed to memory.

On that tragic evening, with a graduating student body and many of their parents and friends in attendance, Frank's marvelous strength and magnificent intellectual presence failed him. I introduced him, and he took his place at the lectern, but it was at once apparent that something was wrong.

There was a pasty-white circle centered on his face, and his voice was a mere whisper, and his mind wandered. In vain, I tried to signal him to go back to his seat, and we'd improvise something else. He stood doggedly on his feet, swaying and trying to summon the articulate assurance that until that moment had never deserted him.

The audience knew. Tears and sobs filled the room when we finally prevailed upon him to desist. And I have always thought that the most difficult thing Frank ever did was in that crowning effort — actually to quit. He went down fighting.

So, to a heartbroken group of students, I delivered the speech he had planned on making. It was probably the worst situation in which I had ever found myself. No one could be a substitute for Frank Chodorov.

And so, one of the great spirits of our century has left the scene. I have learned many things from many men, but among the foremost who have left a lasting impression was this giant of a man; a brilliant writer whose voice and whose pen were never still so long as he was granted strength to use them.

Fortunately for those of us who remain, Frank put many of his ideas into books and articles that can be preserved and read and reread as long as paper and printing presses continue to serve. I miss him. He was both teacher and friend.