

The 2005 Irving Kristol Lecture

Introductory Remarks by Christopher DeMuth

Guest: Mario Vargas Llosa

Christopher DeMuth

President, AEI

March 2, 2005

Vice President and Mrs. Cheney, President Aznar, distinguished guests, welcome to the American Enterprise Institute's 2005 Annual Dinner and Irving Kristol Lecture. My AEI colleagues and I are gratified that such a large and accomplished congregation should be gathered here this evening. We are especially grateful for the generous support of our good friends at Pfizer and of the esteemed ladies and gentlemen of our Dinner Committee.

President Bush's bold recasting of American foreign policy, and stirring recent developments in Iraq, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and now throughout the Middle East, maybe more this afternoon, maybe Iran is next, have given us what Michael Novak wrote of in a 2004 book--"some faint reason to believe that the narrative of liberty will not be finished until it has suffused every society on Earth." Of course Michael and the rest of us at AEI are hard-boiled realists when it comes to foreign policy. We hold that the facts of human aspiration are what they are and must be faced without illusion, and that only the most woolly headed ideologue could ignore them.

The past two years have been harsh and brutal for the people of Iraq and for the men and women of the American and coalition military forces. Many good people have been killed and many have suffered, among them several guests here this evening. Our hearts have been seared and broken many times but our resolve has not been broken--quite the contrary. Now, with the dramatic events of the past two months, dare we hope that we have arrived at the end of the beginning? Can freedom turn the tide against such maniacal cruelty? In the Cold War, it was not only our military might but also our personal and political freedoms that gave us the strength that prevailed in the end. For the duration those freedoms had often appeared to be softness, handicaps in a mortal struggle. But freedom is not soft. It is hard to win and hard to practice, and the institutions it gives rise to--those of liberal democracy and competitive enterprise--are correspondingly adamant and resilient. Now Islamist and secular tyrants and terrorists hold freedom in the same contempt that the Soviets once did; now the Soviets await them in the ash heap.

This year's Irving Kristol Award is being bestowed on a man whose wondrous literary achievements are more than deserving of that recognition. But Mario Vargas Llosa is also a man of deeply considered political judgments, and the careful student of his fiction and his essays will see the connections. We are honored that he has accepted our award and look forward to his Kristol Lecture with great anticipation.

The Kristol Award will be presented by James Q. Wilson, chairman of the AEI [Council of Academic Advisers](#) and Ronald Reagan Professor of Public Policy at Pepperdine University. Mr. Vargas Llosa will then be introduced by his friend Jose Maria Aznar, two-term President of Spain from 1996 through 2004 and currently President of the Foundation for Analysis and Social Studies in Madrid. Please hold your applause for now, but when the time comes let us also recognize President Aznar for his brilliant leadership of his nation, which produced the largest gains in economic welfare in all of Spanish history; for his courageous friendship with the United States of America; and for his continuing adamant devotion to the cause of liberty.

The 2005 Irving Kristol Award for Mario Vargas Llosa is inscribed:

*To Mario Vargas Llosa
Whose narrative art and political thought
Illumine the universal quest for freedom—
Which the virtues love and the follies require*