

2002 Francis Boyer Award—Norman Podhoretz

Introductory Remark, Christopher DeMuth, President, AEI

February 13, 2002

"Never (that I know) has a single lifetime borne such literary and philosophical fruit," William F. Buckley Jr. has observed of Norman Podhoretz's career. Named editor of *Commentary* magazine in 1960 at the age of thirty, Mr. Podhoretz built the erudite small journal into the nation's most important organ of political, social, and literary criticism. During his thirty-five-year editorship, *Commentary* became famous for its bold, lucid essays by America's most perspicacious academics and intellectuals. Most of all, it heralded a profound intellectual shift: following an initial period of enthusiasm for radical politics, *Commentary*, in league with the *Public Interest*, led, shaped, and gave voice to the neoconservative revolution whose political consequences endure to this day.

Vivacious writing and zest for hard argument as the surest approach to truth have characterized not only Mr. Podhoretz's magazine but also his own books and essays—on literature and literary politics, American foreign policy, Jewish affairs, race relations, and much else. He is the author of eight books: *Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing* (1964); *Making It* (1968); *Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir* (1979); *The Present Danger* (1980); *Why We Were in Vietnam* (1982); *The Bloody Crossroads: Where Literature and Politics Meet* (1986); *Ex-Friends* (1999); and *My Love Affair with America* (2000).

The son of Galician Jewish immigrants, Norman Podhoretz was born in 1930 and raised in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York. He attended Columbia University on a Pulitzer scholarship and, following graduation in 1950, earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English literature from Cambridge University, where he was a Fulbright Scholar and a Kellett Fellow. He also holds a bachelor's degree in Hebrew literature from the Jewish Theological Seminary. Between 1953 and 1955, he served in the U.S. Army, mainly as an enlisted man in the Army Security Agency, and then worked as a freelance writer and in a succession of editing and publishing jobs in the late 1950s.

Following his retirement as *Commentary's* editor in chief in 1995, Mr. Podhoretz has been a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and editor at large at *Commentary*. He continues to write and lecture prolifically and has just completed his ninth book, *The Prophets: Who They Were, What They Are*, to be published by the Free Press in November 2002.

The 2002 Francis Boyer Award is inscribed:

*To Norman Podhoretz
Who has put commentary in the arena
And shown how to love truth, friends, and country
Wisely and well and all at once*