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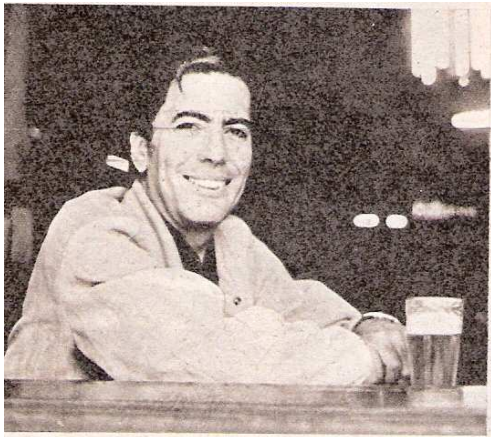
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[A Liberal Literary Hero: Mario Vargas Llosa wins the Nobel Prize for Literature](#)

October 12th, 2010 Posted in [Culture](#), [International Politics](#), [freedom](#) by [Barry Stocker](#)



Liberal Vision has already celebrated the award of the [Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo](#), and now we celebrate the award of the literature prize to the liberal Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa, whose great literary achievements have been accompanied by major contributions to politics, and to political commentary in the Americas and in Spain. For an overview of his literary achievements go to William Boyd at [The Guardian](#) and Marie Arana at [The Washington Post](#). Neither do justice to Llosa's political views though, respectively describing Llosa as 'libertarian right' and 'neo-liberal'. Llosa defines himself as a liberal and criticises the use of the term 'neo-liberal'. While 'libertarian right' is a less intrinsically insulting term than neo-liberal, why should we call an advocate of progress in general, of secularism, gay marriage, and abortion rights, 'right-wing'?

Llosa, who has Spanish citizenship, withdrew support from the centre-right Popular Party in Spain in 2007, to support the formation of Union, Progress and Democracy, which drew some of its leaders and activists from the Spanish left. In any case, Llosa himself has ever adopted a right-wing identity, and that should be respected. He clearly thinks of liberalism in the sense understood by classical liberals and libertarians, referring approvingly to [Adam Smith](#), [Tocqueville](#), and [Mises](#).

Llosa began as a Communist in politics, but publicly turned against Latin America's Communist icons Castro and Guevara, after persecution of the Cuban poet Heberto Padilla in the early seventies. In the eighties Llosa became a public advocate of liberal political and economic ideas, culminating in his 1990 campaign for the Presidency of Peru, against the forces of left populism, Marxism, and the emergent authoritarianism of Alberto Fujimori. Unfortunately Fujimori became President, but Llosa has continued to contribute to public life in Peru. His resignation, a few weeks ago, from a commission overseeing a museum to commemorate a dirty war against the insurrectionary left, forced the government to drop a law to grant effective amnesty for human rights abuses of that time.

Llosa's turn from Marxism to liberalism has earned him extraordinary enmity from leftist literati and intelligentsia, who are determined to smear him as supporting right-wing dictatorship and violent United States interventions in Latin America; and as a chauvinistic despiser of indigenous peoples in Latin America. Llosa's political writings and his literary creations clearly

contradict such claims. His novel *The Feast of the Goat* (2000) is a condemnatory portrayal of the right-wing dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. The novel many consider his best, *The War of the End of the World* (1981), shows the horror of cruelty and fanaticism from all sources, referring to real events in nineteenth century Brazil.

Not only has Mario Vargas Llosa made a major contribution to liberal thought and culture, his son Alvaro Vargas Llosa is a very notable liberal writer on economics and politics, particularly with regard to Latin America. More information can be found at [The Independent Institute](#), where his journalistic articles are regularly posted.

Sadly only a small proportion of Mario Vargas Llosa's political commentary is presently available in English. There are some quotations below taken from items available online. Names of items, with links, are listed below, followed by items discussing Llosa on leading liberal websites.

'Liberty, I believe, is the greatest contribution of the culture that created the sovereign individual, the owner of rights that other individuals and the state must respect at all times. The culture that gives liberty an unprecedented and primary role in all realms of life has attained its leading role in science and technology, and has produced an abundance of wealth' ('The Children of Columbus')

'Globalisation opens up a first-class opportunity for the democratic countries of the world—and especially for the advanced democracies of America and Europe—to contribute to expanding tolerance, pluralism, legality, and liberty' ('Global Village or Global Pillage?')

'The idea of a world united around a culture of liberty is not a utopia but a beautiful and achievable reality that justifies our efforts' ('Liberalism in the New Millennium')

'Thus, the liberal I aspire to be considers freedom a core value. Thanks to this freedom, humanity has been able to journey from the primitive cave to the stars and the information revolution, to progress from forms of collectivist and despotic association to representative democracy. The foundations of liberty are private property and the rule of law; this system guarantees the fewest possible forms of injustice, produces the greatest material and cultural progress, most effectively stems violence and provides the greatest respect for human rights. According to this concept of liberalism, freedom is a single, unified concept. Political and economic liberties are as inseparable as the two sides of a medal.' ('Confessions of a Liberal')

Links and Texts on Llosa:

- Mario Vargas Llosa (1995) Reason, 'The Children of Columbus: From Violent Conquest to Common Culture', [LINK](#)
- Mario Vargas Llosa (2001) Reason, 'Global Village or Global Pillage? Why we must create a universal culture of liberty', [LINK](#)
- A slightly different version of the above can also be found online ['Liberalism in the New Millennium'](#) in 'Global Fortune: The stumble and rise of world capitalism', edited by Ian Vasquez, Cato Institute 2000.
- Mario Vargas Llosa (2005) American Enterprise Institute, 'Confessions of a Liberal', [LINK](#)
- Michael Valdez Moses, 'Viva Mario', Reason, [LINK](#)
- Nick Gillespie, 'Mario Vargas Llosa Wins Nobel Prize in Literature' Reason, [LINK](#)
- Ian Vasquez on Llosa's Nobel Prize, Cato@Liberty, [LINK](#)
- David Boaz 'The Politics of Mario Vargas Llosa', Cato@Liberty, [LINK](#)
- Ian Vasquez (2009) on Llosa's view of Venezuela under Chavez. Cato@Liberty, [LINK](#)

Tags: [liberal](#), [Mario Vargas Llosa](#), [Nobel Prize for Literature](#)

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3 Responses to "A Liberal Literary Hero: Mario Vargas Llosa wins the Nobel Prize for Literature"

1. [Geoffrey Payne](#) Says:

[October 12th, 2010 at 1:13 pm](#)

I am curious about your opinion that "neo-liberal" is insulting. Having double check on Wikipedia, I thought it would be right up your street.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoliberalism>