

# Nexus Symposium

## The Return of the Ghosts



Thursday 11 November 2010  
1.30 — 5.45 pm  
Auditorium Tilburg University  
Warandelaan 2 — Tilburg

### Speakers

Mario Vargas Llosa — Britta Böhler — Ab Klink  
Frits Bolkestein — Paolo Flores d'Arcais — Eszter Salgó  
Paul Frissen — Mitchell Cohen — Max Blumenthal  
Fania Oz-Salzberger — Meindert Fennema

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# The Return of the Ghosts

Ghosts do not exist. Not in a secularized, rational world. And what is past, is past. We know better and think ahead. We see future, progress, possibilities. We live, fortunately, in a civilized world where we have left barbarism behind and where we can confide in the social institutions and rationality of thought which allow our society to be democratic and free.

This was thought in 1910. That which was to follow four years later, was simply unthinkable. This was thought in 1930, and the undemocratic regime which was to reach power democratically was once again unimaginable. This was thought in 1990. The lessons of the twentieth century have been learnt. No more war, no more nationalism, no more antisemitism, no more excluding people, no more politics of hatred and fear. We will forget nothing and the democratic state is inviolable. We still have our worries, about the environment, nuclear armament, social injustice — but the ghosts of the past are exactly that: ghosts — and ghosts do not exist. Not anymore.

Now, 2010: populism, nationalism, the power of public opinion, a politics of scapegoating, growing resentment and a political elite which does not seem to have the answers. In the Netherlands, in Europe, in Israel, in the United States... In many places in the Western world, we see them again: ghosts, phantoms. Why? Do we only see ghosts, or are they really there? And what will be their consequences this time? What should our response be?

On the 11th of November — the day when in 1918 the guns fell silent in Europe — the Nexus Institute holds a symposium where national and international intellectuals will place the political and social developments of today in their international and historical context, paying special attention to the current situation in the Netherlands, in an attempt to restrain the ghosts.

# Programme Nexus Symposium

Thursday 11 November 2010

- 1.00 pm Coffee and tea
- 1.30 pm Welcome by Rob Riemen and presentation of *Nexus 56*
- 2.40 pm Opening lecture by Mario Vargas Llosa
- 2.15 pm Debate with Mario Vargas Llosa, Max Blumenthal, Fania Oz-Salzberger, Mitchell Cohen, Eszter Salgó and Paolo Flores d'Arcais, moderated by Rob Riemen
- 3.45 pm Break
- 4.15 pm Debate with Britta Böhler, Frits Bolkestein, Meindert Fennema, Paul Frissen and Ab Klink, moderated by Wim Brands
- 5.45 pm End
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## *Nexus 56*

### The Return of the Ghosts

Presented during the Nexus Symposium

With essays by:

Mario Vargas Llosa, Britta Böhler, Frank Furedi,  
Richard Wolin, Fania Oz-Salzberger, Mitchell Cohen,  
Rob Hartmans, László F. Földényi, Eszter Salgó,  
Meindert Fennema, Fabio F. Rizi, Max Blumenthal  
Paolo Flores d'Arcais en Paul Frissen.

Subscribers will receive *Nexus 56* automatically. The issue —  
in Dutch — is also available during the symposium at a price of € 21,50.  
It can also be ordered through [www.nexus-instituut.nl](http://www.nexus-instituut.nl).

## How to Reserve a Ticket

The symposium *The Return of the Ghosts*, organised by the Nexus Institute, will take place in the Auditorium of Tilburg University, Warandelaan 2 in Tilburg, on Thursday 11 November 2010.

In order to attend the Nexus Symposium, reserving a ticket is required. You can do so through [www.nexus-institute.nl](http://www.nexus-institute.nl).

Students of Tilburg University may attend the symposium *for free*. Other students pay € 5, provided they send a copy of their student card to the Nexus Institute upon registration. A special rate of € 25 is charged to *Nexus* journal subscribers; other visitors pay € 35. Your entrance tickets will be sent to you by post, accompanied by an invoice or a proof of payment.

You can cancel your reservation *in writing* by returning your ticket(s) to the Nexus Institute. Cancellations received before 28 October 2010 will be free of charge; after that date, the full fee will be charged. Upon registering, you agree to the conditions stated here.

The symposium will be conducted in English. It is not permitted to make audiovisual recordings during the symposium unless permission of the Nexus Institute has been acquired in advance. Members of the press can contact [boogert@nexus-instituut.nl](mailto:boogert@nexus-instituut.nl). The content of the symposium debates will not appear in print. The opening lecture by Mario Vargas Llosa is included in Dutch translation in *Nexus* 56, the issue of the journal *Nexus* which contains essays by the symposium's speakers and which is presented during the symposium.

You can reach the Nexus Institute by calling +31 (0) 13 466 3450 during office hours or by contacting [info@nexus-instituut.nl](mailto:info@nexus-instituut.nl). For more information about the activities of the Nexus Institute, please see [www.nexus-instituut.nl](http://www.nexus-instituut.nl).

## Speakers

MAX BLUMENTHAL (United States, 1977) is an award-winning journalist whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Daily Beast*, *The Independent Film Channel*, *The Nation*, *The Huffington Post*, *Salon.com* and *Al Jazeera English*. Blumenthal studied History at the University of Pennsylvania. He is currently a writing fellow for the Nation Institute. His bestselling book *Republican Gomorrah. Inside the Movement that Shattered the Party* (2009) is inspired by the work of psychologist Erich Fromm, who asserted that the fear of freedom propels anxiety-ridden people into authoritarian settings and conformism. In his book, Blumenthal explains how a culture of personal crisis has defined the radical right in the United States, transforming the nature of the Republican Party.

BRITTA BÖHLER (Germany, 1960) was sworn in as a lawyer in 1985 in Munich. In 1991, she settled in Amsterdam. She completed a Ph.D. with honour on Husserl, the philosopher of law. In 2000, she published *De zwerftocht van een leider. Achter de schermen van de zaak Öcalan* (The Odyssey of a Leader. Behind the Screens in the Öcalan Case), which was followed in 2004 by *Crisis in de rechtsstaat. Spraakmakende zaken, verborgen processen* (Crisis in the Constitutional State. Notorious Cases, Hidden Processes). She received the prestigious Clara Meijer-Wichmann Penning, in honour of her human rights activism, in 2005. As a leading and politically engaged criminal law specialist, she works for the law firm Böhler Advocaten. She has also been a member of the Dutch senate for the environmentalist, left-wing party GroenLinks since 2007. Böhler published an essay in *Nexus* 51.

FRITS BOLKESTEIN (Netherlands, 1933) was the leader of the Dutch liberal party VVD between 1990 and 1998, after having been state secretary and minister of Defence. As the European Commissioner for the Internal Market (1999–2004), he successfully promoted the institution of one European market. In 2004, Bolkestein was made extraordinary professor at the universities of Leiden and Delft, specialising in the field of intellectual foundations of political developments. Among his publications are *De grenzen van Europa* (Europe's Borders, 2004), *De twee lampen van de staatsman* (The Statesman's Two Lamps, 2006) and *Overmoed en onverstand* (Hubris and Stupidity, 2008).

WIM BRANDS (Netherlands, 1959) is a journalist at the Dutch public television network VPRO. He presents the radio shows *De Avonden* (Evenings) and *Brands met boeken* (Brands with Books) and makes the television programme *Boeken* (Books). He recently published a collection of poetry, *Neem me mee, zeï de hond* (Take Me With You, the Dog Said).

MITCHELL COHEN (United States, 1952) is professor of Political Science at Bernard Baruch College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He co-edited the influential political-intellectual quarterly magazine *Dissent* between 1991 and 2009. His books include *The Wager of Lucien Goldmann* (1994), *Zion and State. Nation Class and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (1992), and, as a co-editor, *Princeton Readings in Political Thought* (1995). His essays appeared in numerous newspapers and journals, such as *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Les Temps Modernes*, and *Nexus* (issues 37 and 47). Cohen is also a writing fellow at the Leon Levy Center for Biography at the Graduate School of the City University of New York.

MEINDERT FENNEMA (Netherlands, 1946) is the political biographer of Geert Wilders, the leader of the Dutch anti-islam movement PVV. In *Geert Wilders. De Tvenaarsleerling* (Geert Wilders. Sorcerer's Apprentice), Fennema attempts to place the rise of Wilders in a historical and political context. Meindert Fennema is professor of Political Theory of Ethnic Relations at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) of the University of Amsterdam. He studied sociology in Utrecht and political science in Amsterdam. Fennema published extensively on anti-immigrant parties in Western Europe and on elites and democracy. He is currently working on a book on multicultural democracy and muslim radicalism.

PAOLO FLORES D'ARCAIS (Italy, 1944) is one of the most influential philosophers and writers in Italy. He is the co-founder and editor of the journal *MicroMega*, an influential platform of intellectual essay-writing. He also publishes in *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *El País* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Flores d'Arcais is researcher at the department of Philosophy at University La Sapienza in Rome. Since 2002, he has been organizing large-scale protests against the policy of the Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi. His books include *Etica senza fede* (1992), *L'individuo libertario* (1999) and *Hannah Arendt* (2006). *Dio esiste?* (2005) and *Atei o credenti?* (2007) are a polemic against Joseph Ratzinger, Michel Onfray and Gianni Vattimo, among others.

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PAUL FRISSEN (Netherlands, 1955) is professor of Public Administration at Tilburg University, dean and chairman of the board of the Netherlands School of Public Administration in The Hague, and member of the Council for Societal Development, an advisory body for the cabinet and parliament. In 1989, Frissen received a Ph.D. with honour with a thesis on bureaucratic culture and computerisation. In 2007, he published *De staat van verschil. Een kritiek van de gelijkheid* (The State of Difference. A Critique of Equality, 2007), which had its fourth edition in 2010. His latest book is *Gevaar verplicht. Over de noodzaak van aristocratische politiek* (The Obligation of Danger. On the Necessity of Aristocratic Politics, 2009).

AB KLINK (1958) was the Dutch Minister of Health, Welfare, and Sports between 2007 and 2010. From 2003 to 2007, Klink was a member of the Dutch Senate and between 1985 and 1992, he worked for the research agency of the Christian Democrat Party, CDA. He studied sociology and obtained a Ph.D. in law at Leiden University. After the elections in 2010, Klink was closely involved in forming a right-wing coalition with the liberal VVD and the populist PVV. When his moral objections against such a coalition found little support within his party, he resigned as a parliament member for the CDA.

FANIA OZ-SALZBERGER (Israël, 1960) is Professor of History at the Faculty of Law of the University of Haifa. She also holds the Leon Liberman Chair in Modern Israel Studies at Monash University in Melbourne. During the past two years, she was a professor at the Center for Human Values at Princeton University. Oz-Salzberger's publications include *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (1995) and the bestselling travel book *Israelis in Berlin* (2001). She also contributed to *Nexus* 51.

ROB RIEMEN (1962) is Founder and President of the Nexus Institute and editor of *Nexus*. His book, *Nobility of Spirit. A Forgotten Ideal* (2009), which has been translated into fourteen languages, is now in its seventh edition.

ESZTER SALGÓ (Hungary, 1978) studied International Relations at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences in 2002 and obtained a Ph.D. in European History at the Department of Political Science of the Sapienza University of Rome in 2005, where she is currently teaching psychology of conflicts and international security. She is also adjunct professor of International Relations at the American University of Rome. Salgó edited *Leggere la rivoluzione islamica iraniana a Roma* (Reading the Iranian Islamic Revolution in Rome, 2009), in which she analyses the psychological dimension of the relations between the United States and Iran.

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA (Peru, 1936), winner of the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature, is one of Latin America's greatest writers and a foremost intellectual both in his own country and abroad. In his large oeuvre, such classic novels as *The Time of the Hero* (1963), *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1969), the autobiographical *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1977), and *The Feast of the Goat* (1996) stand out. In 1990, Vargas Llosa was a candidate in the Peruvian presidential elections. About his campaign, he wrote *A fish in the water* (1994).

# Nexus Institute

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