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Mario Vargas Llosa, a former candidate for the presidency of Peru, is better placed than most novelists to write about the machinations of Latin American politics. In *The Feast of the Goat* he offers a vivid re-creation of the Dominican Republic during the final days of General Rafael Trujillo's insidious and evil regime. Told from several viewpoints, the book has three distinctive, alternating strands. There is Urania Cabral, the daughter of Trujillo's disgraced secretary of state, who has returned to Santo Domingo after more than 30 years. Now a successful New York lawyer, Urania has never forgiven her aging and paralyzed father, Agustín, for literally sacrificing her to the carnal despot in the hope of regaining his political post. Flipping back to May of 1961, there is a group of assassins, all equally scarred by Trujillo, waiting to gun the Generalissimo down. Finally there is an astonishing portrait of Trujillo--the Goat--and his grotesque coterie. Llosa depicts Trujillo as a villain of Shakespearean proportions. He is a preening, macho dandy who equates his own virility with the nation's health.