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## Gotta Love Those Dictators!

Why do dictators always wear military uniforms? Why are they always bedecked with medals? Why do they always get away with...murder?

Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina (October 24, 1891 – May 30, 1961) ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930 until his assassination in 1961. Officially, he was president only from 1930 to 1938 and again from 1942 to 1952, ruling for the rest of the time as an unelected military strongman. For more than 30 years, he and his family held absolute power on the Dominican side of the island of Hispaniola. His tyranny, historically known as "The Trujillo Era" is considered one of the bloodiest of the 20th century, as well as a time of a classic personality cult, when monuments to him were in abundance.

The rebellion against the Dominican Republic's President Vázquez broke out in 1930 in Santiago, and the rebels marched toward Santo Domingo. Trujillo was ordered to subdue the rebellion, but when the mutineers arrived to the capital on February 26, they encountered no resistance. Rebel leader Rafael Estrella was proclaimed acting-president when Váz resigned. Trujillo then became the nominee of the newly-formed Dominican Party in the 1930 presidential election. He won on May 16, officially registering 95 percent of the vote — an implausibly high total that could have only been obtained by means of massive fraud. A judge actually declared the election fraudulent, but was forced to flee. On August 16, the then 38-year-old general took office, wearing a sash with the motto, "Dios y Trujillo" (God & Trujillo). He immediately assumed dictatorial powers.

Claiming, in 1937, that Haiti was harboring his former Dominican opponents, Trujillo ordered an attack on the border, and thousands of Haitians were slaughtered while trying to escape. The number of the dead is still unknown, though it is now calculated between 20,000 and 30,000. It was speculated that Trujillo was hoping for a war with Haiti, and possible control of the entire island of Hispaniola. In the end, American President Franklin Roosevelt, and Haitian President Sténio Vincent sought reparations of US\$750,000, of which only \$525,000 was ever paid: 30 dollars per victim, of which only 2 cents were given to survivors, due to corruption in the Haitian bureaucracy.

By the late 1950s, opposition to Trujillo's regime was starting to build to a fever pitch. Finally on the night of May 30, 1961, Trujillo was ambushed and shot to death in Santo Domingo. The people voted for the Trujillo family to leave the country, so his son, Ramfis Trujillo, came back to take his father's body away from the country. Trujillo was buried in Paris, in Père Lachaise Cemetery, at the request of his relatives.

The day of his death is celebrated as a national holiday in the Dominican Republic. (!!)

[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael\\_Trujillo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael_Trujillo)]

