**Biography: Rafael Trujillo**

**QUOTE:**

“He who does not know how to deceive, does not know how to rule.” —Rafael Trujillo

**QUICK FACTS:**

**NAME**

****Rafael Trujillo

**OCCUPATION**

[War Crimes](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/war-criminals), [Dictator](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/dictators), [President (Dominican](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/world-leaders) Republic)

**BIRTH DATE**

[October 24](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/born-on-october-24), [1891](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/born-1891)

**DEATH DATE**

[May 30](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/died-on-may-30), [1961](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/died-1961)

**PLACE OF BIRTH**

[San Cristóbal](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/birth-city-san-crist-xc3-xb3bal), [Dominican Republic](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/born-in-dominican-republic)

**PLACE OF DEATH**

[Cuidad Trujillo](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/death-city-cuidad-trujillo), [Dominican Republic](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/died-in-dominican-republic)

**FULL NAME**

Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina

**NICKNAME**

Generalissimo / El Jefe

**Synopsis**

Dictator Rafael Trujillo was born on October 24, 1891 in San Cristóbal, Dominican Republic. He became president of the Dominican Republic in 1930 through political maneuvering and torture. He officially held the office until 1938, when he chose a puppet successor. He resumed his official position from 1942 to 1952, but continued to rule by force until his assassination on May 30, 1961.

**Early Life**

Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo was born Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina to a middle-class family on October 24, 1891 in San Cristóbal, Dominican Republic. He and his 10 siblings were raised in a small rural town by parents of Spanish, Haitian and Dominican descent. As a child, Trujillo attended informal schools held in various villagers’ homes. His education took place in fits and starts and was rudimentary at best. Because Trujillo hired someone to rewrite his family history once he came into power, the true facts of his background remain uncertain.

When Trujillo was 16 years old, he took a job as a telegraph operator. After joining a gang and committing a string of crimes, Trujillo was arrested for forging a check and subsequently lost his job. In 1916, Trujillo married his first wife, Aminta Ledesima, who would give him two daughters. In light of becoming a family man, Trujillo traded in his life of crime for a steady day job. At the end of 1916, he took a weigher position on a sugar plantation. Displaying leadership qualities, Trujillo was later promoted to private policeman on the plantation.

**Military Career**

By 1919, Trujillo was restless and eager to escape the monotony of his rural life. When the U.S. Marines, then occupying the Dominican Republic, offered him the opportunity to train as an officer for the country's first municipal police force, the Constabulary Guard, Trujillo jumped at the chance.

After completing his training, Trujillo quickly rose up the ranks. In 1924 he was made second-in-command of the guard and in June of 1925, he was promoted to commander-in-chief.

**Dictatorship**

In early 1930, after Dominican President Horacio Vasquez faced revolts and a provisional government had been established, Trujillo named himself a candidate in the new presidential elections.

During Trujillo's campaign, he organized a secret police force to torture and murder supporters of the opposing candidate. Not surprisingly, Trujillo won the election by a landslide.

Shortly into Trujillo's first term, Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital, was devastated by a hurricane. Trujillo used the disaster as an excuse to impose martial law *(military government involving the suspension of ordinary law)* on all citizens. He also imposed "emergency taxes" and even seized the bank accounts of his opposition.

Trujillo spent the next six years renovating the city and building several monuments in his own honor. Upon completing renovations, Trujillo renamed Santo Domingo "Ciudad Trujillo."

During his additional years in office, Trujillo continued to use his power for personal profit. He took total control of all major industries and financial institutions. The country saw some improvements to its economy, but those were mainly limited to the capital city. Meanwhile, in more rural areas, entire peasant communities were uprooted to clear the way for Trujillo’s new sugar plantation.

Trujillo himself candidly defended his reign with the assertion that, "He who does not know how to deceive does not know how to rule."

Trujillo was known to treat the Dominican Republic's Haitian migrants with particularly severity and a deliberate disregard for their civil liberties. In 1937, he went so far as to orchestrate the massacre of thousands of Haitian immigrants.

Trujillo officially held the office of president until 1938, when he chose a puppet successor. He resumed his official position from 1942 until 1952 but subsequently continued to rule by force until his death in 1961. Toward the end of his life, he faced growing opposition from Dominican citizens as well as foreign pressure to relax his rule. He also started losing military support from the army, with the CIA maneuvering to have him removed from power.

Source: http://www.biography.com/people/rafael-trujillo-39891