

THE PERFECT DICTATORSHIP

The skyline of the Monster continued to spiral upward. The city's modern Medical Center, the largest in the Americas with 23 specialty hospitals, opened for business in 1963.

On November 20 that year, the day **consecrated** to the Mexican Revolution and just 10 days before he was to be sworn in as López Mateos's successor, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz inaugurated the PRI's new national bunker, 12-story twin towers that glared down on the city from behind tinted windows, plus the truly monstrous Plutarco Elías Calles auditorium—a gilded Calles stands guard at the gate. The complex continues to occupy an entire block on North Insurgentes, walled off from the rest of the world by a formidable 10-foot-tall stainless steel and recently electrified fence.

In keeping with the imperial nature of the enterprise whose initials it bears, The PRI's new digs were designed by an architect who claimed lineal descent from Mocuhtezuma. Then as now, the PRI headquarters dominated the flat (but lively) Colonia Guerrero much as the party dominated Mexico's political landscape.

By 1964, the Institutional Revolutionary Party owned 200 percent of Mexico. The PRI owned the Mexican flag (the party's colors) and it owned all its national symbols—the Eagle and the Serpent and the Nopal Bush. It owned Mexico's history from Cuauhtémoc to Cortez to Calles and Carranza and Lázaro Cárdenas. It owned its workers (the CTM) and it owned its farmers (the CNC) and it owned the land they farmed—the *ejido* was PRI government property. The PRI owned the government, both houses of Congress, every governor, and the Federal District, AKA El Monstruo. It owned the state apparatus, the government bureaucracy, the electoral machinery, the press and the radio and the TV. It owned the culture (Bellas Artes, the Ballet Folklórico) and it owned the budget and it owned the oil.

Mexico was a one-party state, and that party would outlive even the Soviet Communist Party—both had about 3 million members in 1960—to become the longest-ruling political dynasty in the known universe. Whoever crossed the PRI was crushed or co-opted or worse, ignored. Carlos Madrazo sought to reform the PRI and Díaz Ordaz fired him forthwith, and the next thing you knew, he was dead in a mysterious plane crash up in Monterrey.

For those who went along with the game, the PRI provided protection from cradle to grave, but if you doubted, you couldn't get a birth certificate or a job or even permission to be buried in the municipal boneyard.

In 1964, the PRI was at the apogee of its powers and behaved with all the blind arrogance that height implies. Mind you, this was a

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couple of decades before the snobby Hispanoid novelist Mario Vargas Llosa branded the PRI "the Perfect Dictatorship."

Today, although the Perfect Dictatorship has been out of power for eight years, the twin PRI towers at Insurgentes North #59 still inspire dread for all those who dare to pass that way.