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(U) Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi

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Mohammad Reza Shāh Pahlavi, (26 October 1919, Tehran – 27 July 1980, Cairo), was the monarch of Iran from 16 September 1941, until his overthrow by the Iranian Revolution on 11 February 1979. He was the second and last monarch of the House of Pahlavi of the Iranian monarchy.

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Overview

The Shah came to power during World War II after an Anglo-Soviet invasion forced the abdication of his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi. Mohammad Reza Shah's rule oversaw the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry under the prime ministership of Mohammad Mosaddeq. During the Shah's reign, Iran celebrated 2,500 years of continuous monarchy]] since the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great. His White Revolution, a series of economic and social reforms intended to transform Iran into a global power, succeeded in modernizing the nation, nationalizing many natural resources and extending suffrage to women, among other things. However, the decline of the traditional power of the Shi'a clergy due to parts of the reforms increased opposition.

While a Muslim himself, the Shah gradually lost support from the Shi'a clergy of Iran, particularly due to his strong policy of modernization, secularization and conflict with the traditional class of merchants known as bazaaris, and recognition of Israel. Clashes with the religious right increased [communist activity and a 1953 period of political disagreements with Mohammad Mosaddeq, eventually leading to

Mosaddeq's ousting, caused an increasingly autocratic rule. In 2000, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright stated:

"In 1953 the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran's popular Prime Minister, Mohammed Massadegh. The Eisenhower Administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons; but the coup was clearly a setback for Iran's political development. And it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs."^[1]

Various controversial policies were enacted, including the banning of the Tudeh Party and a general suppression of political dissent by Iran's intelligence agency, SAVAK. Amnesty International reported that Iran had as many as 2,200 political prisoners in 1978. By 1979, political unrest had transformed into a revolution which, on 16 January forced the Shah to leave Iran after 37 years of rule. Soon thereafter, the revolutionary forces transformed the government into an Islamic republic.

Biography

Early life

Born in Tehran to Reza Pahlavi and his second wife, Mohammad Reza was the eldest son of the first Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty, and the third of his eleven children. He was born with a twin sister, Ashraf Pahlavi.

On 12 December 1925, Reza Pahlavi was declared Shah by the country's National Assembly, the Majlis of Iran. He was crowned in a ceremony on 25 April 1926; at the same time, his son Mohammad Reza was proclaimed Crown Prince of Iran.

As a child, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi attended Institut Le Rosey, a Swiss boarding school, completing his studies there in 1935. Around the same time, his father officially asked the international community to refer to Persia by its internal name, Iran". Upon Mohammad Reza's return to the country, he enrolled in the local military academy in Tehran; he remained in the academy until 1938.

Early reign

Deposition of his father

In the midst of World War II in 1941, Germany began Operation Barbarossa and invaded the Soviet Union. This had a major impact on Iran as the country had declared neutrality in the conflict.^[2]

That year British and Soviet forces invaded and occupied Iran, forcing Reza Shah to abdicate. His son, Prince Mohammad Reza Pahlavi replaced his father on the throne on 16 September 1941. It was hoped that the younger prince would be more open to influence from the pro-Allied West, which later proved to be the case.

Oil nationalization and the 1953 coup

In the early 1950s, there was a political crisis centered in Iran that commanded the focused attention of British and American intelligence agencies. In 1951 Dr. Mossadegh came to office, committed to re-

establishing democracy and constitutional monarchy, and to nationalizing the Iranian petroleum industry, which was controlled by the British. From the start he erroneously believed that the Americans, who had no interest in the Anglo-Iranian Oil company, would support his nationalization plan. He was buoyed by the American Ambassador, Henry Grady. However, during these events, the Americans supported the British, and, fearing that the Communists with the help of the Soviets were poised to overthrow the government, they decided to remove Mossadegh. Shortly before the 1952 presidential election in the US, the British government invited Kermit Roosevelt, Jr. of the CIA to London and proposed they cooperate under the code name "Operation Ajax" to bring down Mossadegh from office. [3]

In 1951, under the leadership of the nationalist movement of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh, the Iranian parliament unanimously voted to nationalize the oil industry. This shut out the immensely profitable Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which was a pillar of Britain's economy and political clout in the region. A month after that vote, Mossadegh was named Prime Minister of Iran.

Under the direction of Kermit Roosevelt, Jr., a senior Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer and grandson of former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, the American CIA and British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) funded and led a covert operation to depose Mosaddeq with the help of military forces loyal to the Shah. This plan was known as Operation Ajax. [4] The plot hinged on orders signed by the Shah to dismiss Mosaddeq as prime minister and replace him with General Fazlollah Zahedi, a choice agreed on by the British and Americans.

Despite the high-level coordination and planning, the coup initially failed, causing the Shah to flee to Baghdad, then Rome. After a brief exile in Italy, the Shah returned to Iran, this time through a successful second attempt at the coup. The deposed Mosaddeq was arrested, given a show trial, and sentenced to solitary confinement for three years in a military prison, followed by house arrest for life. Zahedi was installed to succeed Prime Minister Mosaddeq. [5]

The American Embassy in Tehran reported that Mosaddeq had near total support from the nation and was unlikely to fall. The Prime Minister asked the Majles to give him direct control of the army. Given the situation, alongside the strong personal support of Eden and Churchill for covert action, the American government gave the go ahead to a committee, attended by the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles, Kermit Roosevelt, Ambassador Henderson, and Secretary of Defense Charles Erwin Wilson. Kermit Roosevelt returned to Iran on 13 July and on 1 August in his first meeting with the Shah. A car picked him up at midnight and drove him to the palace. He lay down on the seat and covered himself with a blanket as guards waved his driver through the gates. The Shah got into the car and Roosevelt explained the mission. The CIA provided \$1 million in Iranian currency, which Roosevelt had stored in a large safe, a bulky cache given the exchange rate of 1000 rial = 15 dollars at the time. [6]

The Communists staged massive demonstrations to hijack the Prime Minister's initiatives. The United States had announced its total lack of confidence in him; and his followers were drifting into indifference. On 16 August 1953, the right wing of the Army reacted. Armed with an order by the Shah, it appointed General Fazlollah Zahedi as prime minister. A coalition of mobs and retired officers close to the Palace, attempted what could be described as a coup d'etat. The plan failed. The Shah fled the country in humiliating haste. Even the nation's largest daily newspaper, and its pro-Shah publisher printed commentaries on him. [7]

During the following two days, the Communists turned against Mosaddeq. They roamed Tehran raising red flags and pulling down statues of Reza Shah. This frightened the conservative clergies like Kashani and National Front leaders like Makki, who sided with the Shah. On August 18, Mosaddeq hit back.^[8]

According to the CIA plot, Zahedi appealed to the military, and claimed to be the legitimate prime minister and charged Mossadegh with staging a coup by ignoring the Shah's decree. Zahedi's son Ardeshir acted as the contact between the CIA and his father. On August 19, pro-Shah partisans, organized with \$100,000 in CIA funds, finally appeared, marched out of south Tehran into the city center, where others joined in. Gangs with clubs, knives, and rocks controlled the streets, overturning Tudeh trucks and beating up anti-Shah activists. As Roosevelt was congratulating Zahedi in the basement of his hiding place, the new Prime Minister's mobs burst in and carried him upstairs on their shoulders. That evening, Ambassador Henderson suggested to Ardashir that Mosaddeq not be harmed. Roosevelt gave Zahedi \$900,000 left from Operation Ajax funds.

The Shah returned to power, but never extended the elite status of the court to the technocrats and intellectuals who emerged from Iranian and Western universities. Indeed, his system irritated the new classes, for they were barred from partaking in real power.^[9]

Later years

Modernization and autocracy

With Iran's great oil wealth, Mohammad Reza Shah became the pre-eminent leader of the Middle East, and self-styled "Guardian" of the Persian Gulf. He became increasingly despotic during the last years of his regime. In the words of a US Embassy dispatch, "The Shah's picture is everywhere. The beginning of all film showings in public theaters presents the Shah in various regal poses accompanied by the strains of the National anthem... The monarch also actively extends his influence to all phases of social affairs...there is hardly any activity or vocation which the Shah or members of his family or his closest friends do not have a direct or at least a symbolic involvement. In the past, he had claimed to take a two party-system seriously and declared "If I were a dictator rather than a constitutional monarch, then I might be tempted to sponsor a single dominant party such as Hitler organized".^[10]

However, by 1975, he abolished the multi-party system of government so that he could rule through a one-party state under the *Rastakhiz* Party in autocratic fashion. Iranians were pressured to join. The Shah's own words on its justification was; "We must straighten out Iranians' ranks. To do so, we divide them into two categories: those who believe in Monarchy, the constitution and the Six Bahman Revolution and those who don't.... A person who does not enter the new political party and does not believe in the three cardinal principles will have only two choices. He is either an individual who belongs to an illegal organization, or is related to the outlawed Tudeh Party, or in other words a traitor. Such an individual belongs to an Iranian prison, or if he desires he can leave the country tomorrow, without even paying exit fees; he can go anywhere he likes, because he is not Iranian, he has no nation, and his activities are illegal and punishable according to the law".^[11] In addition, the Shah had decreed that all Iranian citizens and the few remaining political parties must become part of *Rastakhiz*.^[12]

Criticism of reign and causes of his overthrow

Explanations advanced for why the Shah was overthrown include the perception that he was beholden to

— if not a puppet of — a non-Muslim Western power, (the United States),^{[13][14]} whose alien culture was contaminating that of Iran's. Perceptions of oppression, brutality,^{[15][16]} corruption, and extravagance.^{[15][17]} Basic functional failures of the regime have also been blamed — economic bottlenecks, shortages and inflation; the regime's overly-ambitious economic program;^[18] the failure of its security forces to deal with protest and demonstration;^[19] the overly centralized royal power structure.^[20]

In October 1971, the Shah celebrated the twenty-five-hundredth anniversary of the Iranian monarchy. The New York Times reported that \$100 million was spent.^[21] Next to the ruins of Persepolis, the Shah gave orders to build a tent city, studded with three huge royal tents and fifty-nine lesser ones arranged in a star-shaped design. French chefs from Paris prepared breast of peacock for royalty and dignitaries around the world, the buildings were decorated, the guests ate off Limoges porcelain china and drank from crystal glasses. This became a major scandal as the contrast between the dazzling elegance of celebration and the misery of the nearby villages was so dramatic that no one could ignore it. Months before the festivities, university students struck in protest. Indeed, the cost was so sufficiently impressive that the Shah forbade his associates to discuss the actual figures.^{[22][23]}

However the Shah and the supporters of the Shah argue that the celebrations opened new investments in Iran, improved relationships with the other leaders and nations of the world, provided greater recognition of Iran, and kept the history of Iran alive among other different arguments.

Other actions that are thought to have contributed to his downfall include antagonizing formerly apolitical Iranians - especially merchants of the bazaars - with the creation in 1975 of a single party political monopoly, with compulsory membership and dues, and general aggressive interference in the political, economic, and religious concerns of people's lives;^[24] and the 1976 change from an Islamic calendar to an Imperial calendar, marking the birth of Cyrus as the first day, instead of the flight of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina. Overnight, the year changed from 1355 to 2535.^[25]

Revolution

The overthrow of the shah came as a surprise to many observers.^{[26][27]} The first militant anti-Shah demonstrations of a few hundred started in October 1977, after the death of Khomeini's son Mostafa.^[28] A year later strikes were paralyzing the country, and in early December a "total of 6 to 9 million" — more than 10% of the country — marched against the Shah throughout Iran.^[29]

On January 16, 1979, he and his wife left Iran at the behest of Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar (a long time opposition leader himself), who sought to calm the situation.^[30] Spontaneous attacks by members fo the public on statues of the Pahlavi's followed, and "within hours of almost every sign of the Pahlavi dynasty" was destroyed.^[31] Bakhtiar dissolved SAVAK, freed all political prisoners, and allowed the Ayatollah Khomeini to return to Iran after years in exile. He asked Khomeini to create a Vatican-like state in Qom, promised free elections and called upon the opposition to help preserve the constitution, proposing a 'national unity' government including Khomeini's followers. Khomeini fiercely rejected Dr. Bakhtiar's demands and appointed his own interim government, with Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister, demanding "since I have appointed him he must be obeyed." In February, pro-Khomeini Revolutionary guerrilla and rebel soldiers gained the upper hand in street fighting and the military announced their neutrality. On the evening of February 11 the dissolution of the monarchy was complete.

Exile and death

The Shah traveled from country to country in his second exile, seeking what he hoped would be a temporary residence. First he went to Egypt, and got an invitation and warm welcome from president El-Sadat. He later lived in Morocco, the Bahamas, and Mexico. But his pancreatic cancer began to grow worse and required immediate and sophisticated treatment. He was offered treatment in Switzerland but insisted on treatment in the United States.

On October 22, 1979, at the request of David Rockefeller, President Jimmy Carter reluctantly allowed the Shah into the United States to undergo medical treatment. This act was extremely unpopular with the revolutionary movement, which had been angered by the United States' overthrow of the democratically elected Prime Minister Mossadegh, and years of support for the Shah's rule. The Iranian government demanded the return of the Shah to Iran to stand trial; the American government did not turn him over.

This resulted in the storming of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, and the kidnapping of American diplomats, military personnel and intelligence officers, which soon became known as the Iran hostage crisis. According to the Shah's book, in the end the USA never provided the Shah any kind of health care and asked him to leave the country.^[32]

He left the United States on December 15, 1979, and lived for a short time in Panama. The new government in Iran still demanded his immediate extradition to Tehran. A short time after the Shah's arrival, an Iranian ambassador was dispatched to the Central American nation carrying a 450 page extradition request. That official appeal greatly alarmed both the Shah and his advisors. Whether the Panamanian government would have complied is a matter of speculation among historians.

After that event, the Shah again sought the support of Egyptian president Anwar El-Sadat who renewed his offer of permanent asylum in Egypt to the ailing monarch. The Shah returned to Egypt in March 1980 where he received urgent medical treatment but nevertheless died from complications of non-Hodgkin lymphoma on July 27, 1980 at the age of 60. Egyptian President Sadat gave the Shah a state funeral.^[33]

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Sincerely,



for

JOHN R. CHAPMAN
Chief, FOIA/PA Office
NSA Initial Denial Authority

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a/s