

IRANIAN REVOLUTION'S TIMELINE

It was in 1921 that Reza Khan Mirpanj, the commander of an Iranian Cossack force, overthrew the last king of Qajar Dynasty and as Reza Shah Pahlavi established the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1925. During his reign a program of Westernization of Iran was begun. Britain and the Soviet Union occupied areas of the country in 1941 to protect the Iranian valuable oil fields from German seizure. Because of this Allied position, Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had been friendly to the Axis powers, abdicated. His son, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, succeeded to the throne and adopted a pro-Allied policy. In 1945 the Iranian government requested the withdrawal of occupying troops, concerned that Soviet forces were encouraging separatist movements in the northern provinces. All troops were withdrawn by 1946.

In the 1950s, a major political crisis developed over control of the oil industry. In 1951 Dr. Muhammad Mossadegh, a nationalist, became prime minister of Iran. When parliament approved a law nationalizing the property of foreign oil companies with widespread popular support, Dr. Mossadegh pressed the Shah for extraordinary powers. The dissension between pro- and anti-Mossadegh forces reached a climax during 1953 when Muhammad Reza Shah dismissed the prime minister. Dr. Mossadegh refused to yield, and Shah fled to Rome. After three days of riots, the royalists won back control of Tehran, Shah returned, and Dr. Mossadegh was sentenced to prison. Shah then opened negotiations with an eight-company oil consortium that guaranteed Iran a margin of profit greater than anywhere else in the Middle East.

Throughout the 1960s, Muhammad Reza Shah began to exercise increasing control over the government after dissolving parliament in 1961. Programs of agricultural and economic modernization were pursued, but the shah's Plan Organization took charge of economic development, leaving very few benefits to reach the ordinary citizen.

Despite growing prosperity, opposition to the shah was widespread, fanned mainly by conservative Shiite Muslims, who wanted the nation governed by Islamic law. They were directed, from France, by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a Shiite clergyman who had been exiled in 1963.

As the Shah's regime, supported by the U.S., became increasingly repressive, riots in 1978 developed into a state of virtual civil war. In early 1979 popular opposition forced the shah to leave the country. The process of westernization of Iran was reversed.

Imam Khomeini, who had returned to Iran in triumph in February 1979, presided over the establishment of an Islamic republic.

On 4 November 1979, after the shah had been allowed entry into the United States for medical care, Iranian students took the US embassy in Teheran. The Shiite students demanded that the shah must be turned over to face trial and that billions of dollars he had took abroad be returned. Some of the hostages were soon released, but others were held until an agreement was negotiated that freed the hostages on 20 January 1981. Unable to persuade Iran to release them, President Carter ordered a military rescue mission, which failed, resulting in the deaths of eight American soldiers when their aircraft collided in the Iranian desert in Tabas.

In September 1980 Iraq took advantage of Iran's internal political disputes to seize territory in the Shatt al Arab and oil-rich Khuzestan province. The full-scale war that resulted severely reduced Iran's oil production and disrupted its economy. The war ended with a cease-fire in 1988 and cost the two nations an estimated 1 million dead and 1.7 million wounded.

In 1989, Imam Khomeini died and Ayatollah Seyed d Ali Khamenei became Iran's leader. Iran's relations with the West improved, due in part to President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's role in obtaining the release of Western hostages held in Lebanon. In 1993 Rafsanjani was reelected president.

Timeline

- 6 June 1963, martial law ordered as riots follow the arrest of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.
- 16 January 1979, shah left the country after turmoil.
- 1 February 1979, revolutionary forces under Imam Khomeini seize power after his return to the country (He had gone into exile after arrest in 1963.).
- 31 March 1979, referendum approved the establishment of an Islamic republic with Imam Khomeini as the Leader.

- 4 November 1979, Iranian students took the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held sixty-six occupants hostage, demanding the return of the shah from the U.S. After the shah's death in 1980 in Egypt, an agreement was negotiated that freed the hostages on 20 January 1981.
- 27 July 1980, shah died.
- November 1980, the First Gulf War broke out between Iran and Iraq.