BACKGROUND FOR PERSPOLIS

BY MARJANE SATRAPI

Introduction

- "Iran" comes from the word "Aryan"
- Aryans settled there in 1500 B.C.
- Descendants were the Medes and the Persians
- Eventually, whole territory became known as the Persian Empire
- 1935 Reza Shah changed the name from Persia to Iran

Soure: University of Texas

Ancient Iran: Dynasties and Invasions

- Though Iran has a great history of building vast empires, many groups over the years fought to seize control of the country
- During Darius' reign in 518 B.C., Persepolis was built
- Persepolis was a vast palace complex that included temples, government buildings, and a place for special ceremonies

PERSEPOLIS

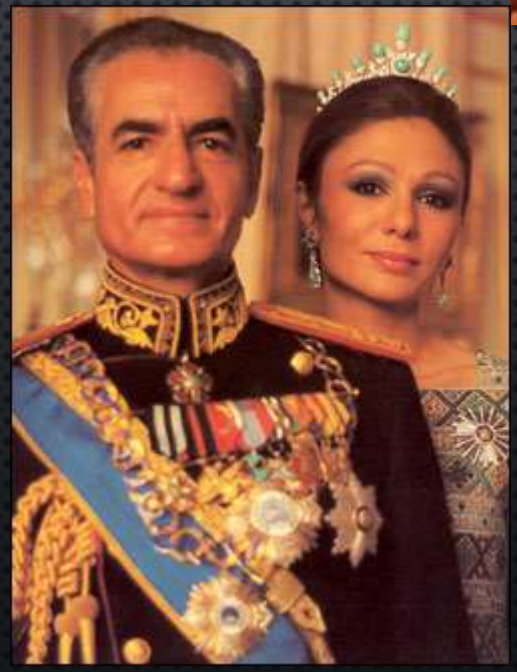
- Construction took more than 200 years and represented the Persian Empire's might
- Carvings were covered in gold, bronze, and lapis

Persepolis

- In the 4th century B.C., Alexander the Great burned the royal palace at Persepolis, and made Persia part of his Greek Empire.
- Today all that remains is the stone underneath; still, this is the most visited site in Iran.

SETTING

- Late 1970's
- Iran



Qajar Dynasty 1794-1925

- Early 1800's, Russians wanted access to Persian Gulf and the British wanted to keep their trade route to India.
- The Qajars needed the money, so they made deals with both countries.
- Both the British and Russians: banks, mining, control of Iranian industries.
- The Qajar shahs grew wealthy, but the Iranian economy declined.
- The Iranian people grew angry and, in response, the shah at the time (see picture) created a constitution.
- Thus, Iran's first elected legislature, the Majlis, was formed.

1908

- In 1908, oil was discovered in Iran
- the British took control over the oil industry, and they took most of the profits
- The people of Iran did not like this arrangement and discontent spread

Reza Shah

General in the Persian army who:

- Led coup d'etat to overthrow the last Qajar shah in 1923
- Sought to modernize Iran
- Reduced power of the clergy
- Built a national education system and opened the University of Tehran
- Gave women the right to vote for the Majlis and freed them from Islamic obligation to wear the head-to-toe chador at all times (Men began wearing suits instead of traditional Iranian clothes)
- Ordered the first railroad to cross the country to be built

WORLD WAR II

- The Allied forces, especially Britain and the Soviet Union, wanted to ensure that Iranian oil would continue to reach the front

- Both nations sent troops into Iran to prevent Nazi Germany from gaining control there

- However, Reza Shah favored Germany because 1) he resented British and Soviet intrusions and 2) many Germans were living and working in Iran at the time.

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ALLIED FORCES SWEEP ON IN IRAN

Expect Senate Battle On Proposed Tax Bill

MANY OPPOSE REDUCED TAX EXEMPTIONS

Child Falls From Moving Auto, Dies

BEAVERBROOK SAYS U. S. IN FULL SWING

EXPECT F. R.'S VETO TO STAND

Little Resistance Is Encountered In Persian Invasion

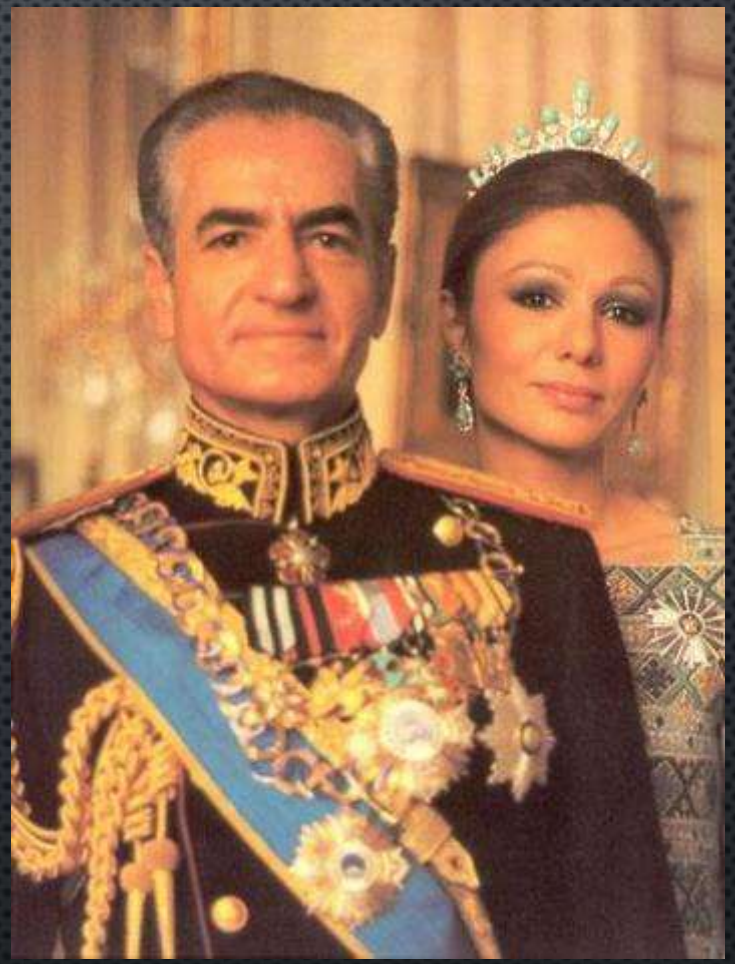
The War Today---

Occupation of Iran a Master Stroke of Strategy

By DEWITT MACKENZIE

Mohammad Reza Shah

- In 1941, the British and the Soviets forced Reza Shah Pahlavi out of power
- His twenty-one year old son, Mohammad Reza, replaced him as shah
- Early on, he was heavily influenced by the British, who still controlled the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
- Most of the money produced by Iran's oil industry went to the British



Battle over Iran's Oil

- In 1951, after Iran's Prime Minister complained about British influence, the Iranian government nationalized the oil industry
- In 1953, the British began a boycott of Iranian oil, and as a result, people lost jobs and the nation's oil industry suffered
- Supporters of Iran's Prime Minister fought supporters of the shah, and the shah fled the country
- The British convinced the U.S. to help remove the Prime Minister from office; he was forced out, and the Shah returned
- The oil industry was denationalized, but now the British did not control it all. The U.S. now had 40% control

Modernization and Corruption

- Like his father, Reza Shah wanted to modernize the country—schools, hospitals, roads, etc. Women could now hold public office
- He also grew more and more dictatorial
- The shah outlawed all political parties but his own. Freedom of speech was limited—those who spoke out against him were imprisoned, while some were killed
- the economy suffered

Opposition to the Shah's Rule

- Huge protests against the Shah became common
- Opposition grew in the 1970s, especially among two groups:
  1) Communist-inspired students and intellectuals who wanted genuine and democratic reform
  2) Muslim fundamentalists, or believers in the strictest possible interpretation of Islamic doctrine. Many religious leaders felt his changes were a threat to Islam

KHOMEINI

- A Muslim leader named Ayatollah Khomeini was one of the Shah's most vocal opponents

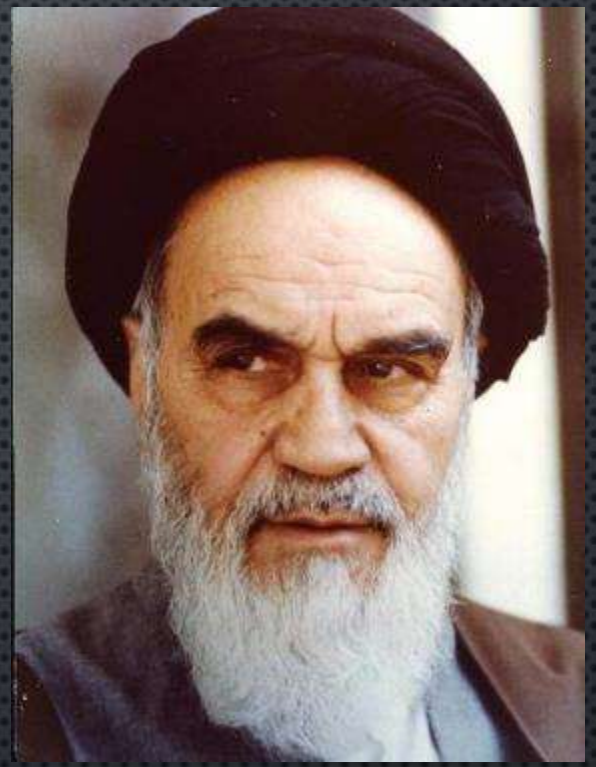
- He condemned the shah for being corrupt and in the pocket of the United States

The Islamic Revolution

- The most significant event to have ever taken place in the Iranian history
- Sparked by a group of Islamic fundamentalists who were disgusted by the modernized culture that the previous ruler. This capitalistic lifestyle was seen as sacrilegious in the name of Islam and needed to be overthrown by a new government that would reinforce the word and doctrine of Allah
- The Shah fled in 1979 because of political pressure and protests

THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

- AN ISLAMIC REGIME TOOK OVER, WHICH CONTINUES TO THIS DAY.
- THE NEW GOVERNMENT RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION
- AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI BECAME THE "REAL" LEADER
  1. DECLARED IRAN AN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC—THE CLERICS MUST RULE
  2. MADE IRAN A TRUE THEOCRACY: THE OFFICIAL RELIGION IS ALSO THE SUPREME GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY



The Islamic Revolution

- violent due to the aggressive nature of Khomeini's ruling, which was to follow the rules of Allah as stated in the Quran
- This new theocracy had many followers, who were mostly Shia Muslims
- a large number of people opposed the stringent regulations put into order by Khomeini and began to revolt against the new governing system
- Satrapi's parents began protesting against the new government and witnessed harsh treatment and full-scale riots taking place in the streets

Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution

Khomeini ruled with an iron fist:

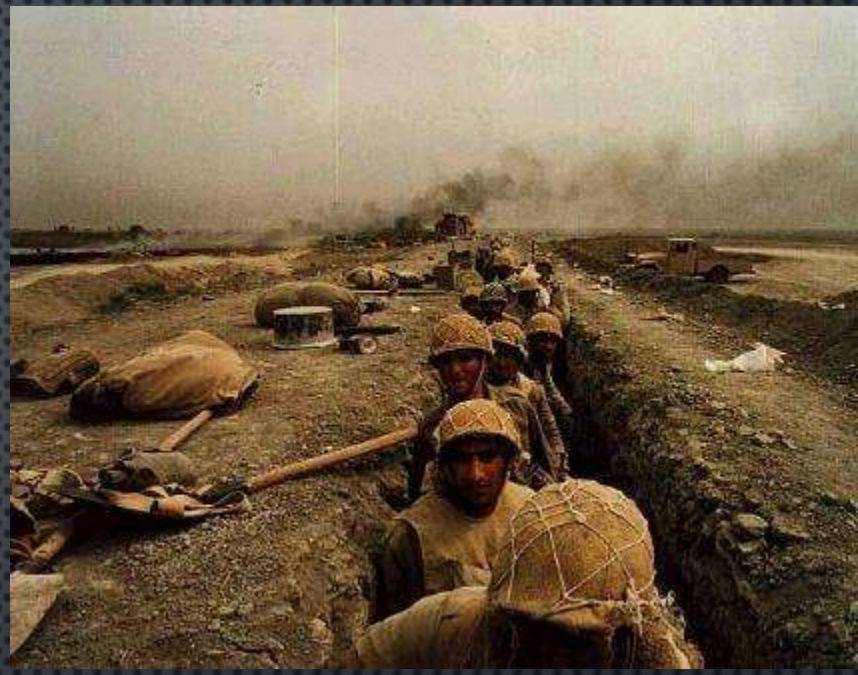
- -Death to those who supported/worked with the Shah
- -Women forced to wear chador and walk only with male relative in public
- -The University of Tehran closed for two years
- -Newspapers shut down
- -History books re-written
- -Schools divided by sex
- -Many Iranians fled (Westernized intellectuals, those associated with the Shah, or those who simply had grown accustomed to the Western style)

Iran Hostage Crisis

- In 1979, The U.S. allowed Reza Shah allowed to enter the country
- Iranian students went to U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 50 people hostage
- They demanded that the U.S. send the Shah back to Iran to stand trial, but the U.S. refused
- The hostages were held for more than a year

Iran-Iraq War

- In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran
- the Sunni Muslim-dominated regime of Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in an attempt to take advantage of chaos and destroy the revolution in its infancy
- War lasted eight years and affected cities, oil facilities, people
- In *Persepolis*, Satrapi describes the excessive power exercised by government officers during the war, in order to keep the citizens oppressed



IRAN-IRAQ WAR

- Each country maintained an army of 600,000
- To keep forces staffed, both sides enlisted boys as young as 11 or 12 years old
- Each side claimed this as a "holy war"
- Cease-fire was declared in 1988

After Khomeini

- Khomeini died in 1989 and millions of people mourned in the streets
- Sayyid Ali Khamenei took over as spiritual and political leader of Iran, and he still holds title of "supreme leader"
- A moderate cleric named Ayatollah Muahmmad Khatami became president in 1997
- Hoping to improve the status of women and give more people a voice, he was also friendlier to the West. He was unable to accomplish much due to resistance from more conservative and powerful government leaders

Today

- In 2005, Moahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former mayor of Tehran, won the presidency
- He turned Iran in a more conservative direction
- Iran continues to have strained relations with the West, especially the United States
- In 2009, he won re-election, though many feel electoral fraud took place

THE BOOK

Persepolis is Marjane Satrapi's memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In black-and-white comic strip images, she tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen. In those years she saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq.

Unique Elements of the Novel

- It's a graphic novel with panels of pictures and text.
- The Perspective is told through Marianne- a young girl growing up in an age of chaos and trying to find herself.
- The child's view brings both sympathy and doubt to events. It's an unusual perspective in that it's both innocent and unreliable.

REMEMBER…

- The title Persepolis was used in reference to the Persian empire's ancient capital city
- Persepolis, which is now Iran's Takht-i Jamshīd, was the center of the Persian Empire until Alexander the Great conquered the area, burning and demolishing Persepolis to ruins.
- it may remind Iranians of a time when mass destruction occurred in the capital city. During the Islamic Revolution, the destruction of Tehran, Iran's capital city, led to a rise in civilian deaths, stranding citizens without any true knowledge of why these lives were being cut short.

MORE VIDEO RESOURCES!

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kY0ixG94cHE

Pictures of Iran before 1979

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dF47rrHd7wo

Iran 1970
Iran 2009