

forces met in Tehran in September. Reza Shah abdicated on condition that his son Mohammad Reza would take his place as Shah, and went into exile in South Africa, where he died in 1944.

*How and why was Prime Minister Mosaddeq removed from power in 1953?*

By accident rather than design, Iran's occupation by the Allies during the Second World War fostered an intense mood of nationalism. The country was occupied by foreign troops, but within the parameters of occupation, press freedom was permitted once more—more free than in the time of Reza Shah. There was a new outpouring of journalistic and political activity, as before the revolution of 1906. As elsewhere at the time, and especially in France (a spiritual second home for many educated Iranians of this generation) much of this activity was left-leaning and pro-communist; and this was also the period of greatest growth, and greatest influence, of the leftist Tudeh party. Tudeh began as a home-grown Social Democratic party (in 1941) but quickly came under Soviet control.

In 1945 the political focus was on the delay in the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, in the northwest of the country. After Soviet forces finally withdrew at the end of 1946, the nationalists' attention turned to their other great grievance; British control of the Iranian oil industry.

Mohammad Mosaddeq belonged to an older generation of Iranian politicians. From an aristocratic family descended (like many others) from Fath Ali Shah, he had been educated in Paris and Switzerland and was a member of the first Majles under the constitution of 1906. Having been out of sympathy with Reza Shah, he returned to Iran after Reza Shah's abdication in 1941 and was elected to the

Majles again in 1944, becoming leader of the National Front coalition (Jebhe Melli).

Mosaddeq was appointed prime minister at the end of April 1951 (after his predecessor, Ali Razmara, had been assassinated) and on May 1 the Shah approved legislation framed by Mosaddeq to nationalize the oil industry (a bill approving nationalization in principle had been passed by the Majles on March 15). Nationalization of oil was wildly popular in Iran, but profoundly unwelcome to the British government—in the years after the Second World War cheap oil was more vital than ever to the floundering British economy. In Britain, Mosaddeq was depicted as an erratic and untrustworthy demagogue. Negotiations between the Iranians and the British for amicable settlement of the dispute were renewed after nationalization but ultimately proved fruitless. The British considered military action against Iran (prefiguring their action during the Suez crisis in 1956) but were dissuaded by the United States. Instead they sought redress at the UN and organized a blockade to prevent Iran exporting oil, but the British secret services also looked for ways to destabilize Mosaddeq, and if possible remove him from office. This included working through numerous Iranian politicians and others acting as proxies and persuading the US government to pursue the same objective. The main US concern was not oil but that Mosaddeq was too dependent on the Soviet-aligned Tudeh party and could be the vehicle for a Soviet takeover in Iran.

After Mosaddeq forced the British embassy in Tehran to close in October 1952, breaking off diplomatic relations, the US government became the prime mover in the efforts to remove him. Meanwhile, deprived of oil income by the British-led embargo, yet still liable for the wage and infrastructure costs of the oil industry, Mosaddeq was running into problems. Some of his previous supporters, including a key political cleric, Ayatollah Kashani, left his governing

coalition. In the summer of 1953 the US and British secret services saw their opportunity and organized a coup. The first attempt on the night of August 15–16 failed, because Mosaddeq's supporters were forewarned by Tudeh sympathizers within the army. The Shah, fearing the worst, fled the country. There is some uncertainty and controversy about what happened next, but on August 19, after more unrest (including demonstrations in favor of a republic) a further coup attempt removed Mosaddeq from power (he lived under house arrest until his death in 1967). The Shah returned on August 22, initiating a period of personal rule and repression that ended only with the revolution of 1979.

The removal of Mosaddeq was a central event in the politics of Iran in the twentieth century, and years later was still very much alive in the political memory of Iranians, but its significance was different for different Iranians, according to whether they had leftist or monarchist, or clerical sympathies, and to some extent, whether they lived in Iran or in exile. The events of 1953 were a blow to liberal and democratic politics in Iran; some Iranians, especially younger people, concluded thereafter that more extreme political solutions were necessary. The coup was also a blow to the left in Iran, from which it never really recovered. The Tudeh party was all but destroyed by the Shah's secret police (SAVAK) in the years that followed. Although the involvement of Britain and the United States in Mosaddeq's removal was not revealed for many years (the British government had still, at the time of writing, sixty years later, not formally admitted it), most Iranians soon assumed that those foreign governments had been instrumental in Mosaddeq's fall and the Shah's reinstatement, reconfirming deep-rooted resentment at foreign interference in Iran. For many Iranians, the Shah never really escaped from under the shadow of 1953; they regarded him as an American puppet. This was not entirely fair, especially in