incursions, and attempts were made to negotiate a new treaty—this time with Soviet Russia. It was rapidly becoming clear that the shah would be overthrown, and a new government might soon take power. Great Britain saw the danger that this potential new government would be distinctly less friendly to British interests.

It seemed that only one possible solution remained: Both British and Russian military forces had to pull out of Iran, provided that a government was in place that would be strong enough to rule—and cooperate with British efforts. The shah was too weak and ineffective to offer this unifying presence, so British officials began to look around for a new ruler—one who would be acceptable to the people, not too closely connected to Great Britain or the current shah, but powerful enough to seize control and begin to pull the chaotic territory back together.

THE RISE OF REZA KHAN

The answer came from a small military division in northern Iran—the Persian Cossack Brigade. The corps had been created 40 years earlier to serve as the shah's bodyguards, but British officials had become interested in them as Great Britain made plans to pull out of Iran and looked around for a military force strong enough to maintain the peace in the absence of British soldiers.

The Persian Cossack Brigade was led by Russian officer Vladimir Platonovich Liakhov, but British officials soon ensured his dismissal, as well as the dismissal of his second-in-command. In their place, the British put the most rugged Persian soldier they could find, a man named Reza Khan. Their goal was to ensure the safe departure of British forces, as well as a strong military that could help govern Iran after they had left.

Reza Khan did not disappoint them. He was in his forties at the time that British officials first helped him rise to the head of the Persian Cossack corps, but he had made a name for himself because of his bravery in battle and through his outspoken

desire to rescue Iran from the chaos that foreign domination and weak rulers had brought. He offered his promise that his forces would not take any violent action against either the departing British military or the shah. The British, in turn, let him know that his plan to peacefully overthrow the government would not pose a problem for Great Britain.

On February 21, 1921, an army of 3,000 men marched on the capital city of Tehran and seized control of the government. Reza Khan was named the new commander in chief of the armed forces. The troops took over all ministry offices, all government buildings, and all police stations. Approval from the military became a requirement to enter or leave the city.

At first, it seemed that Reza Khan would serve as a kind of enforcer while the new prime minister, Seyyed Zia, would begin to issue edicts. But slowly, working behind the scenes, Reza Khan started gathering additional responsibilities—and additional sources of power. He was named Minister of War, and then he was given command of the police force. Gradually this unknown soldier seized control of all peacekeeping forces until it became clear that the ability to preserve order and stave off chaos was no longer in the hands of the shah or the new prime minister, but was instead in the hands of Reza Khan. It was not long before Seyyed Zia was gone, and Reza Khan took control. It seems that many misjudged the soldier from the humble peasant background. The British, who had overseen his rise to the head of the Cossack forces, would find that they had counted too heavily on his good will.

Reza Khan would oversee the beginnings of the modernization and Westernization of Iran. But he would do so without the help of Great Britain. His reign would begin and end with a struggle between British and Russian attempts to dominate his country. It would be his son's ambition to transform Iran into an international power and his son's misfortune to watch that power slip away. The shadow of foreign influences would haunt the creation of modern Iran, and they would foretell the doom of its last shah.