

History Scholarship Exam 2018 : Sources Booklet

The Fall of the Shah and the Iranian Revolution

Study the introduction and the sources carefully, and then answer **all** the questions.

Introduction

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ruled Iran between 1941 and 1979. His title was Shah, an Iranian word which means king. In the mid-1970s there was widespread opposition to the rule of the Shah from within Iran and there were many different reasons for this opposition. Some Iranians perceived the Shah as being too pro-western and felt that he was an America “puppet”. Others saw his rule as undemocratic, oppressive and disliked the activities of his secret police, the Savak. A number of Iranians opposed the Shah on the grounds of corruption; many of the Shah’s followers were very wealthy and seemed to have enriched themselves at the expense of the Iranian people. Whilst there were different strands of opposition, the most prominent centred around Ayatollah Khomeini, an Iranian Islamic religious leader, who was in exile in France in the 1970s. By 1979 opposition to the Shah was so widespread that he felt unable to control the country and went into exile. Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran and took power, thus completing the Iranian revolution. The Shah died in America shortly after the revolution. The Islamic system that Ayatollah Khomeini created in Iran has survived until this day.

Source A

“Although Iran, also called Persia, was the world's oldest empire, dating back 2,500 years, by 1900 it was floundering. Bandits dominated the land; literacy was one percent; and women, under archaic Islamic dictates, had no rights.

The Shah changed all this. Primarily by using oil-generated wealth, he modernized the nation. He built rural roads, postal services, libraries, and electrical installations. He constructed dams to irrigate Iran's arid land, making the country 90-percent self-sufficient in food production. He established colleges and universities, and at his own expense, set up an educational foundation to train students for Iran's future.

To encourage independent cultivation, the Shah donated 500,000 Crown acres to 25,000 farmers. In 1978, his last full year in power, the average Iranian earned \$2,540, compared to \$160 25 years earlier. Iran had full employment, requiring foreign workers. The national currency was stable for 15 years, inspiring French economist André Piettre to call Iran a country of "growth without inflation". Although Iran was the world's second largest oil exporter, the Shah planned construction of 18 nuclear power plants.”

(James Perloff, writing in an American magazine, “The New American.” 2009)

Source B

“In 1953 the Shah had gained the support of the USA to help him crush opposition. After this, his rule was always associated with the British and Americans. The Shah became increasingly ruthless in the 1960s and opposition to his rule was rooted out by a new intelligence service, the SAVAK, to root out opposition. Its task was to act as the eyes and ears of the Shah, to impose censorship... The SAVAK became known for its brutal actions including torture, forced confessions and summary executions.”

(British History textbook, 2015)

Source C



(A photograph of a poster in Iran published in an Iranian newspaper in 1979, just after the Shah had fled Iran)

Source D

“I must tell you that Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, that evil traitor, has gone. He fled and plundered everything. He destroyed our country and filled our cemeteries. He ruined our country's economy. Even the projects he carried out in the name of progress, pushed the country towards decadence. He suppressed our culture, annihilated people and destroyed all our manpower resources. We are saying this man and his government are all illegal. If they were to continue to stay in power, we would treat them as criminals and would try them as criminals. I shall appoint my own government. I shall slap this government in the mouth. I shall determine the government with the backing of this nation, because this nation accepts me.”

(Ayatollah Khomeini speaking in 1979 after he had returned to Iran)