

National Consultative Assembly; 11th Term

The 11th National Consultative Assembly was inaugurated on September 10, 1937. Crown Prince Mohammad Reza was for the first time alongside Reza Shah at an official opening of the Assembly seven days later.

After Teymourtash was dismissed as minister of court, the Imperial Office took over the responsibilities of the ministry. This office was tasked with communicating Reza Shah's orders to Ministry of Interior about who would be elected into the Assembly from different constituencies. Of course the Ministry of War also interfered with the election. (Masoudi, Fatemeh, et al, 1393: 153)

A total of 137 deputies were elected into the 11th Assembly, two of whom representing Arak and Bojnourd were stripped of immunity. (Mollaei Tavani, 1390: 373-379)

With the start of the Pahlavi era and Reza Shah's meddling with the arrangement of deputies, the number of clerics was on the decline in the chamber. The clerics who constituted 31% of MPs in the 3rd Assembly saw their share drop to 6%. Like the previous assemblies under Reza Shah, the 11th Assembly was dominated by landowners. (Shajiei, 1965: 181)

Some important events that marked this period were the return of Iranian migrants from Caucasus and Soviet Union because of problems they were faced with in the wake of the October 1917 Revolution. (Bayat, 1995: 7-23)

Meantime, a variety of Communist networks were formed in Iran, but they were all suppressed. The most important of them was a group led by Taqi Arani, later known as 53-member group. It was a Left-leaning current under the Pahlavi regime. Leftists were Socialist and Marxist leaning groups that had developed theories for different aspects of social life.

The first Pahlavi government moved to ban political parties, particularly Leftists, in 1931. This policy practically prohibited social activities of Communists. The 53-member case was the largest politically-motivated crackdown of that time because Tudeh Party – as the most influential and the strongest party in the following decades – was later on established by the same people. (Abrahamian, 1998: 192-199)

In the final year of the 11th Assembly in office, World War II broke out. Iran had declared neutral in the war; however, it could not go unscathed. At that time, Iran was in a position of weakness because it had lost many of its political leaders and was more than ever dependent on Europe particularly Germany for its industrial needs. Reza Shah had no option but to abdicate in 1941, one year after the 12th Assembly took office, in a bid to save face. (Abrahamian, Ibid: 202-203)

Under the 11th Assembly, 93 laws were adopted, the most significant of which pertained to Prince Mohammad Reza's marriage with Prince Fawzia, the sister of Egypt's King Farouk. Article 37 of the Constitution required Iranian kings to have Iranian mothers. In order to remove the legal barrier to Mohammad-Reza's marriage with Fawzia, the Assembly voted a single-article law on November 29, 1938, granting Iranian citizenship to Fawzia. (Maleki, 1985: 440)

Meanwhile, a 10-article non-aggression pact that had been signed at Saadabad Palace between Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Turkey on July 7, 1937 was signed into law in the 11th Assembly. (Mahdavi, Houshang, 1994: 43-45)

Other pieces of legislation that passed the 11th Assembly were as follows:

Administrative Division Law which divided Iran into 10 provinces and 49 counties; Statutory Law was approved for Bank Melli Iran to establish a supreme council, a watchdog and a banknote saving board; Law on Sharecropping; Law on Land Sales of Tehran Suburbs; Census Law, Military Service Law

At the same time, mandatory military service for women was brought up. (Shajiei, Ibid: 157; Masoudi, Fatemeh, et al, Ibid: 162)

The 11th Assembly held its concluding ceremony on September 19, 1939 with a speech by Speaker Mirza Hassan Khan Esfandiari.

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