

National Consultative Assembly; 16th Term

The 16th term of National Consultative Assembly was inaugurated on February 9, 1950 by Shah Mohammad Reza who stated to want to focus on strengthening friendly ties with neighbors based on mutual respect, fighting corruption, and making efforts for excellence and progress. (Akhgar Magazine, 1950: 181)

The 16th Assembly was one of the most important terms of legislature in Iran's history.

The election for this legislative term, which had been organized by the Saed administration, was not tension-free. The most significant challenge was renewed deliberations on the Gass-Golshaieian contract which was a legacy of the previous assembly. The government wanted pro-contract MPs elected into the Assembly. The government's meddling with the election process triggered protests and sit-in in Tehran, leading to the annulment of the vote. Three months after, a repeat vote was held in Tehran on February 8 (Movahed, 1999: 100), letting Mossadeq and seven members of National Front win seats.

A total of 131 MPs were elected into the 16th Assembly and four constituencies failed to have any representative. Five including Mohammad Mossadeq joined the government and two died. (Farhang Qahremani, 1977: 211-217)

Eighty-three percent of MPs were rich merchants or high-ranking civil servants. (Abrahamian, 1998: 235)

The share of clerics was again on the decline, this time down to two percent (Shajiei, 1965: 181) and Reza Hekmat was again elected speaker.

Thanks to political openness before the imposition of a permanent dictatorship, new groups took shape and most of them were short-lived. The Toilers Party of the Iranian Nation was formed after coalition between Dr Baqaei and Khalil Maleki. It was later known as the Society of Freedom Seekers. The National Front was the most influential political party in Iran. (Loloei, 1999: 340)

The pan-Iranist Iran Nation party was led by Darioush Forouhar. Other political groups that were active at that time were the Assembly of Combatant Muslims, Tudeh Party, pro-Nazi Iran's National Socialist Workers Party, Executives Congress and Labor Front. (Modir Shanechi, 1996: 80)

Four factions dominated the 16th Assembly: National Front minority, pro-Britain Conservative Lords, 40 independents, and majority monarchists. (Abrahamian, Ibid: 321)

The 16th Assembly was faced with several challenges. One of them was oil, examined by the most active committee led by Mossadeq. The Gass-Golshaieian agreement was declared harmful to Iran and the proposal for the nationalization of petroleum industry was submitted to the Assembly. Amid debates over sensitive issues, Haj Ali Razm-Ara, the third one to have won vote of confidence for prime ministership after Saed and Mansour, was assassinated by the Fadaian-e Islam group. On March 15, the Assembly voted in favor of nationalization of petroleum industry. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company protested the decision and took the issue to The Hague for arbitration. All consulates of the British government were closed in Iran. (Shajiei, 1965: 166)

The Ala administration that had won vote of confidence after Razm-Ara's assassination was forced by the British government to resign. Mohammad Mossadeq succeeded him on April 29, 1951. (Mossadeq, 1996: 178)

Among important events that happened during the Mossadeq prime ministership and drew protests was a demonstration by around 20,000 members of the Tudeh Party against the arrival of a US diplomat. Some 20 were killed after clashes broke out between Tudeh and Toilers. That along with other street clashes led some MPs to protest against the Mossadeq administration. (Khedrizadeh, 2008: 52)

Amid heated debate about oil, the 16th Assembly approved a total 113 laws. Granting authority to the government to examine establishment of administrative organs, annulment of Press Law, making decisions about women's membership in the Board of Directors of National Iranian Oil Company, Law on Employment of Nurses and National Debt bill were among them. (Ministry of Interior Election Office, 1989: 74)

February 18, 1952 marked the end of one of the most important and the most sensitive terms of National Consultative Assembly. However, that was the start of one of the most vital terms of national assembly, the 17th.

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