

## **National Consultative Assembly, 20<sup>th</sup> Term**

The 20<sup>th</sup> National Consultative Assembly took office after a 9-month interval, but it barely survived a year. It was in rule from February 21, 1961 to March 10, 1962.

A parameter that influenced the legislative vote for the 20<sup>th</sup> Assembly was the presidential election in the United States and the victory of John F. Kennedy, who envisaged social reforms in Third World countries to prevent a revolution with a view for combating Communism. (Nejati, 1998: 139)

However, the assassination of Kennedy gave the Shah of Iran carte blanche and opportunity to suppress any dissent.

The election for the 20<sup>th</sup> Assembly was different on the grounds that two government-owned parties – Nationalists led by Prime Minister Manouchehr Eqbal and Peoples Party led by Assadollah Alam – were the main competitors. These two parties were known mockingly as "Yes sir!" and "Sure sir!" The Individualists Party joined the legislative race, but the Nationalists won 104 seats in a rigged vote. Peoples won 25 of 200 seats up for grabs in the election. The process of the election triggered protests. Under pressure from protests, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ordered MPs to resign en masse on August 27, 1960. Eqbal also stepped down and he was succeeded by Sharif Emami. Fresh elections were held. This time, older parties broke their silence and started campaigning. The National Front (comprising Iran, Iran Nation, and Iran People parties) and Resistance Party led by Mehdi Bazargan (who became Iran's first prime minister after the 1979 Islamic Revolution) and Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani, Toilers Party, Leftist Students Party, and several others took part in the election. Throughout election campaigning, the Society of Teachers took shape and called protests over low salaries. In the absence of a parliament and due to the government's failure to deal with people's livelihood, the protests led into clashes. (Shajiei, 1965: 171; Tavakoli et al, 2014: 331)

The National Front members, who had staged a strike and protest at the library of the Senate to protest crackdown on dissent, were all arrested. (Nejati, Ibid: 169)

And finally repeat vote was held on January 3, 1961. The 20<sup>th</sup> Assembly was inaugurated by the Shah's speech on February 20, 1961.

Due to growing protests, the MPs clashed with Prime Minister Sharif Emami on the floor of the legislative chamber. The premier was forced to resign.

Sharif Emami was inclined towards Britain. The US viewed the British influence on one side and giving concessions to Russia on the other as potential threats, and it pressured the Shah to choose pro-American Ali Amini as the new prime minister.

An important decision taken by Amini was the dissolution of parliament because most MPs were conservative proprietors of land. (Amini, 2007: 253-257; Abrahamian, 2004: 519)

In fact a major reason for the dissolution of parliament was that most seats (99 of 176) had been given to landowners (Azghandi, 2005: 174), who blocked any attempt for the Land Reform in the country. Consequently, the 20<sup>th</sup> Assembly was dissolved for the second time on May 8, 1961.

After coming to power, Amini embarked on reforms, but he could not win US support for his conflict with the Shah on his request for military spending cuts. Once more, the US took sides with the Shah against reforms. (Abrahamian, Ibid: 521)

The 20<sup>th</sup> Assembly must be the one with the least number of acts. The next Assembly took office after a two-year interval on October 6, 1963.

From that date onwards, relative political stability dominated the country until the flareup of unrest in 1977 in the run-up to the Islamic Revolution.

## References

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