

National Consultative Assembly, 4th Term

The shutdown of the 3rd National Consultative Assembly created the longest break in the legislative body. The 4th Assembly was inaugurated more than five and a half years after the 3rd one was shut down. World War I weakened the central government and let foreigners interfere with state affairs. This caused angry reaction from many in the country. Meantime, the October 1917 Russian Revolution bolstered communism in Iran and the country was afflicted by war damage and economic woes. Exploiting such imbroglio and complication, Britain imposed the Anglo-Persian Agreement on Iran. The treaty was a document involving Great Britain and Persia centered on drilling rights of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. It was never ratified by the Assembly. This agreement was issued by British Foreign Secretary Earl Curzon to the Persian government in August 1919. It stated a guarantee of British access to Iranian oil fields (including five northern provinces formerly under the Russian sphere of influence).

During the legislative gap, reformists in the city of Tabriz, led by Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani, rose up against the agreement. The uprising was contained after Khiabani was killed in summer 1920.

Another important event at that time was the 1920 military coup which prepared the ground for the downfall of the Qajar dynasty and installation of the Pahlavi dynasty.

The coup was led by Reza Khan Mir-Panj (founder of Pahlavi dynasty in Iran) and Seyed Zia ad-Din Tabatabaei. Reza Khan was named minister of war and Seyed Zia became prime minister. But his cabinet was unseated one month before the Assembly was inaugurated. (Abrahamian, 2004: 142-143)

Due to major problems that occurred at that time, the elections for the 4th Assembly was not held on schedule. However, the Assembly was inaugurated by Ahmad Shah Qajar on June 21, 1921.

According to documents available from that time, 134 seats had been envisaged, 10 of which were vacant because one constituency had fielded no candidates. Eight lawmakers saw their credentials disapproved and two others died. Due to a special atmosphere dominating the Assembly some lawmakers stepped down or changed jobs. Finally, the 4th Assembly was inaugurated with 114 legislators in attendance.

The lineup of the 4th Assembly showed the decline in the number and influence of the clergy. Representatives of this group had declined when compared with those who represented landowners. Civil servants, businesspeople, union leaders, self-employed groups, and national institute employees were among other groups who were elected to the Assembly. (Shajiei, 1965: 181)

This Assembly was mainly indulged in tensions and scuffle. Uprisings and riots were seen across Iran for independence and autonomy. Among them were the Kurds' uprising, led by Ismail Semitqu for the independence of Kurdistan, the Guilan uprising led by Mirza Kouchek Khan Jangali, and the Khorasan uprising led by Colonel Mohammad Taqi Khan. All these riots were suppressed by the central government. (Abrahamian, 2004: 141-142 And Avery, 2005: 286)

Meantime, lawmakers in the Assembly formed minority and majority groups. Socialists formed the minority in the legislature. They were born out of former Democrats and Moderates and favored the USSR policy. Their radical and revolutionary beliefs made clerics, merchants, and middle class to be skeptical of them. The Assembly was dominated by reformists led by Seyed Hassan Modarres who favored prudence and neutrality in the issue of supporting foreign governments. (Shajiei, 1965: 146-147 And Bahar, 1992: 1340)

Six Cabinets were nominated to the 4th Assembly. Ahmad Qavam (3 times), Mirza Hassan Khan Moshir ad-Dowleh (twice) and Hassan Mostofi al-Mamalek were heads of state. (Masoudi et al, 2014: 86)

Among decisions adopted by the 4th Assembly were the annulment of the 1919 Agreement, shutdown of foreign governments' post offices in Iran, and obligating the Iranian government to establish post and telegraph offices in southern parts and other areas where foreign governments exercised influence. Also, hiring American advisors to embark on reforms and awarding oil projects in Northern Iran to Standard Oil were other actions taken. Due to objection from Britain and Russia, the contract with Standard Oil was scrapped. (Shajiei, Ibid: 147-148)

Some important laws that were adopted by this Assembly were as follows: Law on dispatching 60 students abroad to study, Law on Documents and Title Deeds Registration, Treaty of Amity with the New Russian Government, Annulment of Contract with British Advisors, filing request for Iran to join the League of Nations. The government also submitted a bill to the Assembly for judicial proceedings against ministers. (Shajiei, Ibid: 148)

The 4th Assembly saw its mandate end on June 20, 1923. The next assembly was inaugurated 9 months after.

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