

National Consultative Assembly, 5th Term

The fifth term of the National Consultative Assembly was inaugurated on February 11, 1924. The legislative election for this term was held in Tehran before the fourth assembly's term ended. In other parts of the country, the election was held after the 4th assembly came to the end of its term. Army generals and Ministry of War, held by Reza Khan (the first Pahlavi ruler) engineered the election. In April 1921, Reza Khan took over the Ministry of War. He quelled riots and demonstrated his military strength. He was named prime minister in November 1923 when the country was seeing a 9-month break between the 4th and 5th assemblies. In other words, the 5th Consultative Assembly witnessed Reza Khan rise to power and founding of the Pahlavi dynasty in the country. (Abrahamian, 2004: 163-167)

After the 5th legislative vote ended, of 138 constituencies, only one constituency failed to elect an MP and a single seat remained vacant. Therefore, 137 deputies were elected and only three credentials were rejected. The composition of the Assembly had changed. The number of clerics had declined while the number of representatives of unions and businesspeople had increased. However, landowners still dominated the Assembly. (Shajiei, 1965: 181)

In terms of political factions, there were three groups in the 5th assembly: Revival Party, Socialists, and Reformists.

By resorting to the army, Reza Khan tampered with the votes mainly in tribal constituencies in a bid to let Socialists and Revival Party members enter the 5th Assembly. Led by Soleyman Mirza, Socialists had more than 14 deputies. They forged an alliance with the Revival Party and declared support for Reza Khan.

The Revival Party comprised many young Iranians who had studied abroad. Led by Seyed Mohammad Tadayon, Ali Akbar Davar, and Abdol-Hossein Teimourtash the party had 40 members. The Revival Party was the first group to call for a competent dictator to lead the country.

The conservative members of Reformist Party numbered seven who included senior clerics, rich tradesmen, and aristocratic landowners. Seyed Hassan Modarres and Ahmad Qavam as-Saltaneh were the most prominent minority MPs in the 5th Assembly. Independent lawmakers included Malek ash-ShoaraBahar, Mohammad Mossadeq, and Hassan Taqizadeh. (Shajiei, Ibid: 149 And Bahar, 1992: 268-290)

The most important issue during the 5th Assembly was the political switch from Constitutionalism to a Republic for Iran. It was a Britain-dictated initiative and was first applied to the Ottoman Empire where Mustapha Kemal Ataturk established the Republic of Turkey.

Amid deliberations on Republicanism, MP Ehya as-SaltanehBahrami was motivated by Tadayon to slap Modarres in the face due to his opposition. This triggered protests in the country against a Republic establishment. Even inside the Assembly, a group of independent legislators expressed opposition to a Republic system. The idea was rejected and the army chief dropped his bid in a statement on April 1 1924. (Modarresi et al, 2014: 98)

However, efforts for bringing an end to the Qajar dynasty did not come to an end even after the failure of the Republican bid. Although Ahmad Shah expressed discontent with Reza Khan in the exercise of his post as prime minister, he managed to win the vote of confidence.

In fact, during the two-year term in office of the 5th Assembly, four Cabinets were formed, three of which were headed by Reza Shah and one by Mohammad-Ali Foroughi. (Ibid: 102)

Finally, in November 1925, Seyed Mohammad Tadayon, speaker of parliament, proposed a fast-track single clause to the Assembly calling for the dethroning of Ahmad Shah, termination of the Qajar dynasty, and establishment of an interim government led by Reza Khan Pahlavi. This single clause was approved with 80 votes in favor and 5 votes against. (Abrahamian, Ibid: 168)

The National Assembly called for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly before changing the ruling regime.

On December 6, 1925, Reza Khan inaugurated the first Constituent Assembly. Less than a month later, the body amended Articles 36, 37, and 38 of the Supplement to the Constitution in favor of the Pahlavi monarchy with 275 votes in favor and only 3 votes against. (Shajiei, Ibid: 150) In the wake of this amendment, Reza Khan was sworn in on December 15, 1925 as the Pahlavi king and a day later he ascended to the throne. On April 24, 1926, he was crowned at Golestan Palace. Some important laws adopted by the 5th Assembly were as follows: equalizing taxes on land across the country, Trade Law, Conscription Law, Identity Registration Law, law on changing lunar calendar to solar calendar, Penal Code. An economic commission was also established in the 5th Assembly. (Shajiei, Ibid: 151)

During the reign of the 5th Assembly, four Cabinets were formed, three of which were headed by the army chief, and the fourth one by Mohammad Ali Foroughi at the order of Reza Shah.

After the 5th Assembly ended its term on February 11, 1926, the second round of legislation started in Iran and continued until Allied forces who won World War II deposed Reza Shah (July 10, 1926 – Oct 31, 1941).

Except for the 6th Assembly which was not fully dominated by Reza Shah's dictatorship, the 7th to 12th assemblies were among the most ceremonial Constitutional assemblies. (Abrahamian, Ibid: 171)

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