

## **National Consultative Assembly; 12<sup>th</sup> Term**

The 12<sup>th</sup> National Consultative Assembly started its work on October 26, 1939. The 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly coincided with the occupation of Iran by Allies, Reza Shah's abdication from power and succession by his son Mohammad Reza.

Like in the previous six rounds held under Reza Shah, MPs were pre-elected into the Assembly. Of 137 members of the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly, 4 died. Furthermore, Tehran MP Ali Vakili was stripped of immunity, but Bandar Pahlavi (Bandar Anzali) MP Reza Rafi' whose immunity had been stripped was reinstated after Reza Shah was down. (Aqeli, 2007: 757)

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 3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly saw their share drop to 6%. Like the previous assemblies under Reza Shah, this Assembly was dominated by landowners. (Shajiei, 1965: 181)

The Germans' advance during the first two years of World War II caused Reza Shah to make a strategic but inevitable mistake with regard to regulating international relations. Based on Reza Shah's words and deeds amid WWII one can understand his fear of future dominance of Soviet Union and Britain in Iran. His anxieties came true. Although Iran declared neutrality, Allies stepped into Iran's soil on August 24, 1941 under the pretext of the German government's meddling with Iran's affairs and existence of German nationals and spies in Iran. After the occupation of Iran, the Assembly called an urgent meeting and Prime Minister Foroughi presented a report on the Allies' invasion of Iran. Foroughi called on the Iranian nation to exercise restraint and to stay calm in this situation. However, Allies issued the Iranian government an ultimatum on September 10, 1941, demanding that Iran hand over German nationals within 48 hours and shut down the embassies of Germany, Italy, Romania, and Hungary or face the capital's occupation by Allies.

In addition to this ultimatum, media in Allied countries embarked on a campaign against Reza Shah. Since Reza Shah did not respond expressly to the ultimatum, Russian and British forces moved to Iran from the North and South on September 16. Reza Shah had to abdicate in favor of Crown Prince Mohammad Reza. (Abrahamian, 1998, 202)

During an extraordinary session of the Assembly on September 14, Foroughi read out Reza Shah's letter of resignation which also named his son Mohammad Reza as to succeed him.

On September 15, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi took the oath of office to safeguard Iran's independence and Constitution. After Reza Shah was forced to leave, Mohammad Reza sought to correct his father's mistakes and create political openness. The day after being sworn in, the new Shah ordered general amnesty citing article 55 of Public Penal Code. Under this order, all prisoners of conscience were fully pardoned and other prisoners who had served out one-fourth of their term were released. Within a year after, the Assembly adopted a bill which cleared all those who had been convicted of action against monarchy. (Shajiei, Ibid: 158)

As long as the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly was in office, prime ministers were appointed against the backdrop of conflict conditions as WWII was under way. Ahmad Matin Daftari won the vote of confidence for prime ministership on October 28, 1939 in order to curry favor with the Germans. Alas, his

Cabinet did not live longer than eight months due to the Germans' defeat in the war. Frustrated with the Germans, the Assembly endorsed pro-Britain Ali Mansour as prime minister on June 29, 1940. Mansour stepped down on August 26, 1941 to be succeeded immediately by Foroughi. After Reza Shah quit monarch on September 15, 1941, Foroughi stepped down the following day, but he received the vote of confidence anew. (Aqeli, 2001, vol. 2: 1108; vol. 3: 1552)

The 12<sup>th</sup> National Consultative Assembly was in power for 45 days after Reza Shah's abdication. During these final days, debates were under way about the seizure of Reza Shah's assets and royal jewelries. A piece of legislation on raising salaries of civil servants and military staff, a bill on pardoning prisoners of conscience and prosecuting highwaymen in courts of common pleas instead of court martials were approved during the final days of the Assembly. (Masoudi, Fatemeh, et al, 2014: 171)

The 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly adopted 60 laws, the most important of which were as follows: Iran-Japan amity treaty on December 17, 1939, Army Criminal Law, Iran-USSR Trading and Maritime Agreement, Amendments to National Registry Law, Authorization of endowed farmlands and aquifers for six months, Amendments to Commercial Monopoly Law, Marriage Law (Shajiei, Ibid: 158; Masoudi, Fatemeh, et al, Ibid: 172-173)

The 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly ended its term on October 30, 1941.

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