

National Consultative Assembly; 14th Term

The 14th National Consultative Assembly was inaugurated on February 26, 1944 with the new monarch Shah Mohammad Reza's address. Iran had been occupied since two and a half years before; northern Iran occupied by the Soviet Union, southern and southwestern Iran by Britain. Furthermore, Iran was still grappling with famine and epidemics.

The 14th legislative election was one of the most competitive elections of the Constitutionalism period. The long drawn-out election was held six months before the 13th Assembly concluded its term. A total of 800 hopefuls ran for 136 seats. (Abrahamian, 1982: p. 228)

A new element was involved in the run-up to the parliamentary elections: Ministry of Food and Agriculture. This ministry could influence the election because nobody was allowed to vote without presenting his ration card.

Internal and external powers were exercising their influence as follows: Soheili, the then prime minister, Tadayon, the interior minister, and the minister of food and agriculture in Tehran, Mazandaran, and some other provinces not accountable to the military government; the Shah in Isfahan, Kerman, Fars and Kurdistan; Britain in Khuzestan, Kermanshah and some Tehran suburbs; Soviet Union in Azarbaijan, Gilan and northern Kurdistan. (Ibid, p. 229)

Despite all this interference, some political figures that had been marginalized in the previous rounds of elections were elected. One of them was Mohammad Mossadeq and the other one was Seyyed Ziauddin Tabatabaei, who had returned to Iran 22 years after orchestrating the 1920 coup. (Shajiei, 1965: p. 161)

Mossadeq and Tabatabaei were seeking the non-endorsement of each other's credentials. Ayatollah Kashani, who was held in prison by Allies, was elected in the Tehran constituency, but he was blocked by the British. The 14th Assembly had 136 seats. The credentials of five MPs were not approved, two died, two resigned and one was imprisoned for supporting Germans. (Abrahamian, 1982: footnote 245)

The second period of formation and expansion of political parties in Iran started in early 1940s and continued until 1953 when the CIA fomented a coup against the government of Mossadeq. The diversity of political parties during this period was unseen in Iran's history.

More than 60 political parties, groups and organizations had been established in Iran in 1934. (Nozari, 2001: p. 18)

After Tehran, Fars Province was home to extensive activity by parties that had been established to counter Tudeh Party. Some of these parties were as follows:

Comrades Party: It was established in November 1942 by a small group of radical intellectuals closely associated with the Tudeh party. In the run-up to legislative election, this party was operating in the Britain-occupied areas and supported ten candidates who had studied at Western universities. (Abrahamian, 1982: p. 231)

Iran Party: It quickly turned into Iran's national non-religious organization. The Iran Party, which It was the Center of Iranian Engineers, was established in 1941, but was divided in two groups –

a pro-Tudeh(communist) radical division known as Labor Movement and a pro-Mossadeq moderate division – in the lead up to the legislative race. (Ibid, p. 232)

The Justice Party: This party comprised the old generation of intellectuals who were involved in the chaos and riots in the early years of 1920s. This party, which was in fact a division of the Justice Faction in the previous assembly, had been established to counter communists. (Ibid, p. 235)

National Union Party: It was born out of a parliamentary faction and was comprised of monarchist MP's. Members of this party sought better ties with the Americans. In a bid to attract people, this party was renamed People's Party in 1944. (Ibid)

Homeland Party: It was formed in September 1933 by Seyed Ziauddin Tabatabaei immediately after his return. His objective was to mobilize merchants, scholars, and tribal groups against the Tudeh party military dictatorship and the corrupt oligarchy of landowners. This party was supporting pro-Britain hopefuls in the legislative election. Seyed Ziauddin was elected to parliament. (Ibid, pp. 235-238)

As the election ended and this party had its men elected its structure fully changed. The National Union faction (with 30 MP's) lost its dominant status and was faced with six opposing groups: Democrats (11 MP's affiliated with Tribes faction and elected from areas occupied by Britain), Homeland (26 MP's elected from areas occupied by Britain), Freedom (20 MP's elected from Soviet-occupied areas), Independent (15 MP's who were remnants of the Justice faction in the 13th Assembly), Tudeh (8 MP's representing young intellectuals and aristocrats), and Individuals (16 MP's who were pro-Mossadeq).

Furthermore, five deputies of the Iran Party and two leaders of the Comrades Party were stronger in their support for Mossadeq. Nonetheless, the ever-changing coalitions had turned the 14th Assembly into a bargaining platform, and consequently, seven prime ministers, nine Cabinets and 110 ministers took office over two years. (Ibid, pp. 244-249)

The 14th Assembly experienced tense days. Among the important events that marked history at that time was the Azarbaijan riots and the uprising led by Azarbaijan's representative Seyed Ja'far Pishevari. After his credentials were rejected, he went to Azarbaijan and established the Democrat sect. Backed by the Soviet Union, he declared autonomy in December 1945. (Shajiei, 1965: p. 162)

The riots in Azarbaijan had immediate impacts on parliament. Some insisted on Iran's national unity and some others proposed boosting the army. Moreover, six MP's ruled themselves out of the Freedom faction in order to take legal action against the Democratic sect of Azarbaijan for "distributing security in Iran".

Qavam, the prime minister, was the only politician who could negotiate with the Russians to pull out of northern Iran in a bid to calm the riots in Azarbaijan. During the Tehran conference, the Russians were looking for a pretext to keep their forces in Iran, but this time they faced a new US ultimatum. Qavam held talks with the Russians for two years until they reached agreement on April 4, 1946. Under the Qavam-Sadchikov agreement, the Russians agreed to withdraw their

troops from Iran in return for Iran awarding oil concession to them. The agreement was submitted to Iran's parliament for approval.

Consequently, as the Russians quit, the people and the army took action to suppress the People's Republic of Azarbaijan in Azarbaijan Province and the Republic of Mahabad in Zanjan. Pishavari and his henchmen fled to Russia and the crisis was contained. (Abrahamian, 1982: pp. 277-297) Meantime, the Kurdistan Democratic Party was officially established in February 1946 in Mahabad and declared autonomy. This crisis also ended with the execution of Kurdish leader Qazi Muhammad and his brothers. (Shajiei, 1965: p. 163)

The 14th Assembly adopted 90 laws, the most important of which was Mossadeq-proposed Negative Balance Law in 1944 which rejected any awarding of concessions to foreign governments, leading to the nationalization of petroleum industry in Iran. Other important laws were as follows: Law on scrapping authority of Arthur Millspaugh, a former adviser at the U.S. State Department's Office of the Foreign Trade who was hired to re-organize the Finance Ministry of Iran, law on withdrawal of American troops from Iran in November 1945, law on withdrawal of British troops from Iran in 1945, adoption of UN Charter, law authorizing the Iranian government to contribute to regulations governing the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), law on legality of action against former prime minister Ali Soheili due to meddling with elections in Azarbaijan and purchase of equipment for the Foreign Ministry building, credit allocation for the Dekhoda dictionary (Shajiei, 1965: p. 161, Majlis Research Center, 2006: pp. 299-300)

One of the most important pieces of legislation in the 14th Assembly was the extension of its term. It was submitted to parliament six months before its term ended. According to the single clause of this piece of legislation, which passed the Assembly, the next legislative election had to be held one month after foreign troops' withdrawal from Iran.

Then, Esfandiari suggested that the term of the 14th Assembly be extended for two years, but some MP's opposed this citing Article 5 of the Constitution and the necessity of formation of an Assembly of Constituents. (Ibid, pp. 49-50)

The 14th Assembly ended its term in March 1946, some seven months after the end of World War II.

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