

National Consultative Assembly, 19th Term

The 19th National Consultative Assembly was one of the "least controversial and most submissive" (Azghandi, 2003: 220) legislative terms after September 1941. The 19th National Assembly was inaugurated by Shah Mohammad Reza's speech on May 30, 1956.

The legislative election was held under full control of Hossein Ala's administration and even moderate figures were banned from entering the parliament. Of 136 deputies, 100 had already served in the 18th term. Five lawmakers died, two resigned, and four quit to take up government posts. Land proprietors and civil servants constituted the majority of deputies. The interesting point with this round of assembly was that for the first time no cleric had been elected.

Reza Hekmat, better known as Sardar Fakher, was elected speaker of parliament for a second time. The fate of political parties in Iran changed to some extent in the aftermath of the 1953 coup against the Mossadeq government. Before the coup, a few government-affiliated parties were active, but after the coup the Shah established government-run parties in a bid to block any anti-regime attempt and ward off political crises. In the end, the Shah opted for a bipartite system. Under Manouchehr Eqbal, two political parties came into existence; one of them was People's Party led by Assadollah Alam and the other one was Nationalists party led by Eqbal. For the next legislative election, each party fielded 200 candidates. (Aqeli, 1999: 369)

In the 19th Assembly, political parties became isolated and lost their force. The Assembly even moved to adopt a motion to urgently outlaw the Iran Party and expose it to dissolution. The reason for this motion was that the Iran Party had released a statement confirming the Eisenhower doctrine of monarchy system (Safari, 1991: 259; Sharifi, 2011: 588)

The Eisenhower doctrine was based on the following principles:

- a. All-out opposition to any alliance of the USSR with Communism
- b. Blocking any USSR attempt for infiltration and confining it to the Russian territory through erecting an iron wall around it
- c. Expanding US influence on the USSR's neighbors
- d. Promoting the threat of Communism in a bid to facilitate US dominance on Third World countries, particularly the USSR's neighbors, with a view to confronting USSR expansion by taking advantage of the threat of Communism (Malek Mohammadi, 2006: 88)

The 19th Assembly marked the replacement of longtime powers Russia and Britain with the United States. From 1953 to 1960, the US offered an equivalent of \$567 million in economic aid to Iran (James, 1992: 192). Among the outstanding features of the 1950s was money supply to Iran's economy by the Eisenhower administration. That made Iran more dependent on the US in addition to letting America strengthen its foothold in Iran. (Malek Mohammadi, Ibid: 129)

When Hossein Ala was serving as prime minister, the National Assembly adopted on March 13, 1957 a piece of legislation on the establishment of State Security and Intelligence Organization, abbreviated in Persian as SAVAK. Backed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), SAVAK started work under Maj. Gen. Teimour Bakhtiar in April 1957. The main objectives sought by the

West and the Pahlavi regime with the establishment of SAVAK were to avoid a repetition of popular uprisings and to protect the Pahlavi regime. (Mansouri, 1998: 43; Shahbazi, 2009: 328)

In line with the development of relations with the US, Tehran and Washington signed an amity treaty on 2 Mordad, 1334 following seven years of negotiations on economic and consular ties. Finally on March 18, 1957, this agreement was endorsed by the National Assembly.

In 1957, Manouchehr Eqbal was elected prime minister after winning 110 votes (114 MPs were in session). At the order of the Shah, a Congress was established on May 15, 1957 to amend the Constitution. Under the new amendments, the number of MPs increased from 136 to 200 and their term was raised from two to four years. This law applied to the 19th Assembly too. (Masoudi, 2014: 322)

Eqbal also submitted a bill to parliament to freeze foreign exchange rates. A new petroleum law was adopted on July 28, 1957, which determined the share of National Iranian Oil Company and foreign companies in oil production. This law led to the establishment of Iran-Italy Oil Company (Sirip). (Avery, 1994: 80-81)

Another important piece of legislation adopted by the 19th Assembly was The Land Reform Bill in March 1960. The Land Reform Bill, which annulled feudalism, introduced changes to ownership of land. This bill initially faced opposition as most MPs were proprietors of land, but it was finally approved and took effect in the following years. (Masoudi, Ibid: 324)

A total of 611 laws were approved by the 19th National Assembly. In fact, following the coup crisis in Iran, the second period of post-Reza Shah reconstruction started under full control of Shah Mohammad Reza. Most pieces of legislation were economic and social. The most important were the following: Amendments to Article 2 of State Employment Law, formation of mobile courts, Iran-Spain Amity Treaty, Law on Attracting Private Investment from North America, establishment of customs police, Iran's adhesion to the protocol on restricting poppy cultivation, oil agreement with Pan-American Petroleum Corporation, law on banning civil servants and lawmakers from engaging in state transactions, law requiring ministers and civil servants to declare assets, Law on Establishment of Par airline, establishment of police faculty, Law on Laborers Social Security. (Shajiei, Ibid: 170; Masoudi, Ibid: 325-327)

The 19th Assembly concluded its term on June 8, 1960. Nine monthx later, the 20th Assembly took over. In-between, political parties were engaged in rivalry. (Shajiei, Ibid)

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