

National Consultative Assembly, 23rd Term

The legislative election for the 23rd National Consultative Assembly was held in summer 1971 immediately after the 22nd Assembly bowed out. The 23rd Assembly was in office for four years.

The chief organizer of this round of elections was prime minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda who had his desired candidates elected. Hoveyda's travel to different cities and his talks with people increased voter turnout by around 40% compared to previous rounds (Morvardi, 1998: 841) Furthermore, 50 seats were added to parliament, bringing the total of 268. Abdollah Riazi was elected once again as the speaker of parliament. (Tolouei, 1995: 743)

There was no strong opposition party in the race. The Pan-Iranist party had been sidelined because of its opposition in the 22nd Assembly to the regime's agreement to detach Bahrain. The Pan-Iranist party was established in 1941 and insisted on nationalism. After the elimination of Pan-Iranists, the election was limited to Modern Iran and Peoples parties, which were known as majority and minority parties in the previous assemblies.

Modern Iran, which had been established in 1963 by then prime minister Hassan-Ali Mansour, was led by Mansour's successor Hoveyda after the former's assassination by Fadaian Eslam. Modern Iran was the largest and most durable state party of the Pahlavi regime. It dominated the 22nd and 23rd assemblies. People's Party was established in 1957 by Assadollah Alam and was the minority faction in the Assembly. (Saremi Shahab, 1999: 95-128)

These two parties were more active in the 23rd Assembly and criticized the government more strongly. In 1974, when the 23rd Assembly was nearing the end of its term, the Shah decided to eliminate multipartite system in Iran and establish a unique party – Rastakhiz. The Shah declared that every Iranian, including civil servants, workers, villagers, and academics had to become a member of this party. The establishment of Rastakhiz was surprisingly backed and praised by MPs who did not hesitate to join it.

This party was non-homogenous, but its main objective was clear: transforming an outdated military dictatorship into a single-party broad-based government. (Abrahamian, 2004: 543)

The revolutionary leader Imam Khomeini, who was in exile, declared membership of Rastakhiz as religiously forbidden. (Khomeini, 1991: 358)

In those years Iran's petrodollars were on a sharp rise. Iran's oil revenue had increased from \$45 million a year in 1951 to \$1.87 billion a year in 1971, to \$6 billion in 1953, and \$20 billion in 1977. Therefore, the government was heavily dependent on petrodollars which contributed to the reproduction of autocracy and authoritarianism.

In foreign policy, Iran-US ties were upgraded after Richard Nixon was elected president. (Azghandi, 1981: 274)

As the regime strengthened its power the opposition faced harsher crackdown. The 1971-1975 period was marked by mass arrests and executions.

The 23rd Assembly approved the establishment of Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Industry and Mine. Meanwhile, the ministries of finance and national economy were consolidated for the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance to be formed. The Ministry of Social Welfare was also established, which was later merged with the Ministry of Health to form the Ministry of Health and Welfare. (Aqeli, 1995: 1014)

Under the 23rd Assembly, 750 acts were approved, the most important of which pertained to the deployment of armed forces in the three islands of the Lesser Tunb, the Greater Tunb and Abu Musa, Islamic Conference Charter, annulment of the 1954 petroleum agreement with consortium, establishment of The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, endowment and requirements for membership of Rastakhiz party. (Masoudi, Fatemeh, 2014: 406)

The 23rd Assembly was in office until August 28, 1975.

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