

## **National Consultative Assembly, 24<sup>th</sup> Term**

The 24<sup>th</sup> National Consultative Assembly was inaugurated on September 8, 1975 immediately after the 23<sup>rd</sup> Assembly ended its term. The 24<sup>th</sup> Assembly, which was the last National Consultative Assembly under the Pahlavi regime, ended its term in office in February 1979, marking the date of the Islamic Revolution.

Campaigning for the 24<sup>th</sup> election started in April 1975. More than 10,000 hopefuls registered, 779 of them were cleared to run. Finally, 268 were elected and Abdollah Riazi was once more elected speaker. Due to public protests, Javad Saeed took over from Riazi in 1978.

The establishment of Rastakhiz party just several months before the term of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly ended and the installation of a single-party system at the order of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi imposed restrictions on the electoral process as only party members were allowed to run. Since government officials were assured that people were reluctant to vote in the election they threatened people particularly civil servants against prosecution in case they decided to boycott the election. (Shahedi, 2003: 53)

Meantime, Mohammad Reza Shah, while confirming electoral fraud, promised free and fair election in a bid to win public trust. However, the vote was rigged again as senior political figures planned to have their supporters elected in a bid to win premiership. (Karkheyran Khozani, 2013: 178)

With the formation of the 24<sup>th</sup> Assembly, whose members were all affiliated with Rastakhiz, no parliamentary faction was formed. Although the Shah had authorized emergence of a progressive and a constructive faction it did not mean an assembly dominated by a majority and minority to oppose each other.

Regardless of these restrictions, factionalism took shape in the Assembly until in November 1958 when Rastakhiz was powerless several blocs were established in the parliament. Freedom, National Unity, Nation's Path, and Iranians' Cause were among these factions. In the final months of summer 1978, party leaders had no more control on the Assembly and MPs who were overly criticizing conditions were running the parliament. (Baqeri et al, 2014: 421)

Amid the decline of Rastakhiz, Pan-Iranist, and Unity parties were revived, but they were eclipsed by revolutionary fever that had gripped the country. In fact thanks to a popular revolt, political parties managed to resume their activities. The Freedom Movement of Iran, National Front, Islamic Coalition groups, Fadaian Khalq guerrilla fighters, Mujahideen Khalq Organization, and Tudeh were among these parties. (Jaafarian, 2008)

Anti-regime struggles, led by Imam Khomeini, reached their climax in the final two years leading to the Islamic Revolution. Nationwide anti-regime demonstrations were regularly held across the country under different pretexts.

As Democrat Jimmy Carter was elected president in the US, who insisted on human rights, the Shah came under international pressure to ease his crackdown on dissent. Subsequently, more political and social freedom was granted to people. Amir-Abbas Hoveyda, who was in office for 13 years, stepped down and the Assembly voted confidence in Jamshid Amouzegar as new prime minister.

A fire broke out at Rex Cinema in Abadan, leaving 377 people dead. Amouzegar was impeached and he was replaced by Jaafar Sharif Emami in September 1978. In the face of mass

protests, the parliament ordered martial law in Tehran and 11 other cities for six months. The Sharif Emami government collapsed in the aftermath of November's deadly clashes with students. General Gholam-Reza Az'hari then took power, but he failed to convince the public and had to quit. The Shah thought of a coalition government and picked Shapour Bakhtiar, from the National Front, to serve as prime minister. The Shah then left the country because Bakhtiar had set such a condition for accepting the post in which the Shah agreed to only be a symbolic monarch not a ruling one. Abrahamian, 2004: 647)

The MPs welcomed Bakhtiar's premiership. Imam Khomeini opposed and the National Front expelled Bakhtiar. In an interview, Imam Khomeini declared the Senate and the National Consultative Assembly illegal and called on their members to resign. After Imam Khomeini returned to Iran on February 1, 1979 from 12 year of life in exile, MPs sporadically tendered their resignation. On the day of vote of confidence for Bakhtiar, 70 MPs stepped down and the parliament lost its quorum. The remaining lawmakers tendered their resignation on February 11 and the last Pahlavi-era national assembly was dissolved. (Khoshzad, 2011: 340-395)

The most important acts of this parliament were as follows: Iran-Iraq agreement on shipping and navigation in border waters, agreement with Germany on peaceful nuclear energy use, Establishment of House of Unions, Prosecution of Prime ministers and Ministers, Dissolution of State Intelligence and Security Organization SAVAK. (Baqeri, 2014: 433)

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