

The Rule of the Democratic Party, 1950–60 The new assembly and the new cabinet There is widespread consensus among historians that the Democratic Party's landslide election victory in May 1950 is a watershed in modern Turkish political history. There was more competition for the post of prime minister, but the post went to Adnan Menderes, who was backed by Bayar because of his popular appeal. Over the years, therefore, state and party tended to coalesce again, especially at the higher levels, but the difference from the Kemalist era was that the party dominated the bureaucracy, not the other way around. The most striking difference from the RPP was the virtual absence of representatives with a bureaucratic and/ or military background. It was clear that a significantly different section of Turkey's elite had come to power.¹ One of the first things the new assembly did was to elect Celal Bayar president of the republic. There was very little debate about his candidature: he was the founder of the new party, he had a record as a statesman going back to the days of Atatürk and he was widely regarded as a moderate. Under the RPP the state apparatus and the party machine had been merged (even officially) to the extent that one could say that the party was just one of the instruments through which the state controlled and steered society. The character both of the new assembly, in which the DP held an overwhelming majority (408 seats against the RPP's 69), and of the new government was very different from the old. When one looks at the social characteristics of the DP representatives, one is struck by a number of differences from those of the Kemalist period. The DP representatives were on average younger, more often had local roots in their constituencies, were less likely to have had a university education, and far more likely to have a background in commerce or in law.