

CAMILLA DAWLETSCHIN-LINDER,
*Diener seines Staates: Celal Bayar (1883-1986) und die Entwicklung
der modernen Türkei* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, Turkologie und
Türkeikunde, herausgegeben von Klaus Kreiser, Band 6, 2003), pp.293.

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Writing biography is already hard; but as the author has stated in the foreword to his book, it is harder and sometimes even impossible in the Near East. Cultural reasons are the main obstacle. The respect that has to be shown to the intimate (you can include Islam's principle of not speaking bad things behind a dead person's back to this), the belief that secrets should not be revealed, the tradition of not leaving any documents behind, the subjective narrations and presentations of acquaintances are hindrances before the biography author. Indeed the same gap continues in Turkey. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir's biographies on Atatürk (*Tek Adam*, 3 Volumes), considered to be the ancestor of Turks and his close comrade and successor İsmet İnönü (*İkinci Adam*, 3 Volumes) and; Enver Paşa (*Enver Paşa*, 3 Volumes) who was condemned in the Republican Turkey, are in a sense an exception and they find their place in the literature (still!) as nice examples on the issue. Biographies have been usually written for politicians. It is almost completely stuck in this area. The academic standard for biographies is even more problematic. They are usually penned to politically defend or criticize the person being written about. Their quality and objectivity is rather debatable since they have no other questions or problems. That is; biographies are rare in number and badly written. Most often they remain a repetition.

Celal Bayar is a sufficiently important political figure as the second Prime Minister and third President of the Republic of Turkey. He is a politician that has been present continuously in the transition from Ottoman to the Republic, at the last years of the Ottoman Empire and for a long period in the Turkish Republic especially since the beginning of the 20th century, and he has symbolized this continuity in his personality. The fact that the first book written about him coincides with the period right after the end of his term as Prime Minister and that it belongs to Cemal Kutay (*Celal Bayar*, 4 Volumes, 1939) who has been loyal to Bayar politics all his life but, who was a journalist at (the daily) *Ulus*; the official publishing organ of the Republican People's Party (and of course of the government) that was the dominating party of the single party era, as Dawletschin-Linder mentions in his book, form an example of the tradition I have mentioned. Although there were many publications about Bayar, the ones with a high academic standard among them are scarce. Nurşen Mazıcı's (*Celal Bayar: Başbakanlık Dönemi*, 1996) book dealing only with the period when Celal Bayar was the Prime Minister is the only example. There is another book about Bayar (Erkan Şenşekerci: *Türk Devriminde Celal Bayar 1918-1960*) which the author couldn't see. Yet, I think recently Andrew Mango's biography on Atatürk (*Atatürk*, 1999) must be regarded as a nice example found rarely on the issue and not just the most recent one. Mango sheds light to what must be done in this field.

Politicians in Turkey do not usually write their memoirs. They don't write diaries either. Most of the time they do not have a chance to do so. The exception to the rule is İsmet İnönü, the second President of the Republic of Turkey. Although he did not write his memoirs he had them written (*Hatıralar*, 2 Volumes, 1992). Moreover, he kept a journal and his journal has been recently published (*Defterler*, 2 Volumes, 2001). Bayar has also written his memoirs, but only a small part of it (*Ben de Yazdım*, 8 Volumes, 1965-1972). Bayar's memoirs have been spared for the beginning of his life story and the beginning of the National Independence War. Bayar probably wrote his memoirs at the time when he was politically free after his Prime Ministry. His later political adventure must have prevented him from continuing. His other memoir is his journal about life in prison with the legendary Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, after the military coup of 27 May 1960 (*Kayseri Cezaevi Günlüğü*, 1999).

As the author mentions in the foreword, the difficulties of biography writing are not limited to these. Methodological difficulties must be mentioned as well. The feelings of the author for his subject matter bring forth the problem of subjectivity. The author's attitude towards the subject matter's political philosophy, method, purpose may also effect what is being written. The author may have difficulty finding his/her path among a whirlpool of praise and criticism.

Despite all these difficulties Dawletschin-Linder is the first academician handling Celal Bayar's biography. The author reconciles Bayar's life with the socio-economic, political and cultural phase of the late Ottoman and Republican Turkey era. Thereby, Bayar is in front of the mentioned background as a political personality. In this world where usually soldiers take place in the political arena, it is important to handle Bayar who has found a major political position for himself. Dawletschin-Linder uses all possible sources in his biography. He makes use of archives not only in Turkey (he would not have found much of an archive source in Turkey anyway) but also benefits from German and British archives. We must add that the mentioned archive documents have been used in this manner for the first time.

The author begins his book by describing the milieu Bayar was born in. After that he talks about his childhood and youth. On the one hand Bayar starts working after irregular schooling, and on the other he is introduced to political activity at an early age. He joins the Committee of Union and Progress while still at Bursa. Bayar's employment at a German Bank at this period and the Islamic capital of Bursa must have shaped his nationalistic, Turkic economic views. During the first five years of the Second Constitutional Monarchy he serves as a major administrator at the Committee of Union and Progress in Bursa. He goes to İzmir right after Committee of Union and Progress comes to power again in the summer of 1908 with a coup. The author explains how Bayar was affected by İzmir, a rather different city after Bursa.

Bayar's devotion to Unionist belief and policies during the WW I years reveals itself in the Armenian exile as well. The same belief would cause him to be at

the very front in Turkey's struggle for independence. The author also sheds light on Bayar's going under the Kemalist leadership in Ankara, leaving the old unionist leaders. Yet Bayar's major leap during the Republic era is his gaining Atatürk's trust and becoming the General Director of *İş Bankası*; believed to constitute the basis of national economy and achieve the development of Turkish/Muslim bourgeois. Thus he has a chance to develop his previous banking knowledge and experience and he has achieved important success in this area in a short time, obtaining the chance to become the brains of the Republic's economy. This chance gives him the opportunity of becoming the Minister of Economy. Although Prime Minister İsmet İnönü was anxious and doubtful before this fast rise with Atatürk's personal support, he was not able to stop this appointment. These elite politicians with different economic views and which would stay that way although their political lives ended up having to work together for many years. Finally, Atatürk defines Bayar as the second most important politician of the country as a consequence of his disputes with his Prime Minister İnönü and appoints him as Prime Minister.

Although this post lasted very short due to Atatürk's death, the political competition between Bayar and İnönü will continue into the 60's. Only after the end of WW II Bayar again finds a place in the foreground of politics as the Chairman of the opposition Democrat Party; established because of the competitive political parties order beginning to re-form in Turkey with the impact of the international environment. The author only briefly mentions his short lived but very difficult opposition years.

Bayar who became the third President of Turkey in 1950, is the symbol of the 10 year long Democratic Party rule. In fact he now plans to stay out of active politics as President – although it is his constitutional right. Much has been written about the ruling period of the Bayar and Menderes duo. Indeed the author has preferred to mention this era with detail. The internal and external political developments of the period and the role Bayar has assumed before all these developments covers a large part of the book.

Bayar, like many members of the Democratic Party which fell from power after the military coup of 27 May 1960, will be tried by the extraordinary judiciary organ for a while and sentenced to death. He will stay in prison for a while after his imprisonment is pardoned. His pardoning again and his efforts in taking part in politics at the background at first deprived of his political rights, and after that retrieving his political rights with the help of his political sworn enemy İsmet İnönü will may be place him in a prestigious position before the political parties that are political and ideological followers of the Democratic Party and their voters in Turkey until his death, but his impact in politics will eventually become stubby. The change that can be observed in the socio economic structure of Turkey and in the sociology of the voters and political parties, will eventually dim Bayar's traditional political charisma, and will lead to new actors taking his place.

The author's mention of Bayar being "at the service of his State" all through his political life displays Bayar's political role. He had safeguarded the interest of "his state" in power and in opposition. Yet the "spirit of the Unionist

tradition" (member of a secret revolutionary committee) has formed the basic core of his political identity. His unbowed stand at the court unlike his Prime Minister Adnan Menderes while being tried after the military coup is an example to this. This attitude putting the State forward has effected the sprit of the Democratic Party he has founded. Yet the author seems not to have had a chance to well on these issues and discuss them.

The author uses his material in a very cold blooded manner. Yet despite his use of all the major sources, the limited material he has forces the author to emphasize the latter while plotting the story of Bayar with the overall political story of the country. However, the author's critical approach before Bayar is satisfactory. The life story that is spread from the last era of the Ottoman Empire to almost all of the Republican era of Turkey display a balanced distribution. The book is more of a compilation of high quality and with an efficient academic quality, formed as a result of blending the existing information and the sources, rather than forwarding new information to the reader/researcher familiar with the subject.