CHAPTER 15

Claiming Paternity of Independent Republics

In December 1943 the prominent Lebanese magazine *al-Dabbur* printed a cartoon on its cover entitled "Here is Our New [National] Emblem" (fig. 18). A bare-chested man resembling Pierre Jumayyil of the Phalanges held a long sword in his right hand and a shield in his left. At his feet sat a woman, similarly gazing into the distant future. She posed in a sleeveless gown like a 1940s Hollywood star, wearing a Phrygian cap styled after that of Marianne, symbol of the French Republic. The cartoon celebrated Lebanese independence with the replacement of the mandate's tricolor by a new flag of red and white bands and a green cedar in the center, emblazoned on the man's shield.[1]

This model of paired citizens would have been unimaginable in 1918. Only in the intervening 25 years had colonial and nationalist propaganda converged on ideals of the male warrior-citizen and his female companion. The cartoon was not, however, merely the natural fulfillment of a quarter-century of political discourse. It expressed but one of many competing visions of citizenship. The cartoon's use of French symbols appealed mainly to Maronite sentiment, likely offending those of other groups. And its portrayal of male and female as partners in the new nation challenged the primacy of father-son relations in the paternalistic civic order preferred by many.

Read more closely, the cartoon expresses the ambivalent and conflicting meanings of gender and democracy in the civic order of 1943. The virile Jumayyil-man poises his phallic sword over the Marianne-woman's head in a gesture of seeming double-entendre: Marianne, the symbol of democracy, sits at his feet as much like a captive as a mate. Earlier in 1943, *al-Dabbur* had printed another cartoon featuring a captive Marianne: She was embraced—or kidnapped—by a leering Senegalese soldier carrying a gun at the very same angle as the Jumayyil-man's sword (fig. 19). The caption cynically remarked: "Even black slaves have understood French liberty, as they rally beneath her

flag and shed their blood for her sake."[2] Together the two cartoons suggest, through familiar racial and gendered metaphor, that colonialism had violated the democratic ideals of the French Revolution, and that Lebanese nationalists had redeemed those pure (white) ideals by freeing Marianne from its (black) clutches. This was, however, a conditional freedom. The Jumayyil-man did not set Marianne and her ideals free; rather, they were to be secured behind his sword and shield, under the guardianship of male, nationalist elites. Thus the equal relationship between citizens seen at first glance becomes on the second a hierarchical and gendered one, defining the independent civic order in paternalistic terms.

The unstable relationship between right and privilege, freedom and protection, and male and female portrayed in the cartoon also marked the political transition from colonial rule to independence in both Syria and Lebanon. The dual and contradictory impulses of France's paternalism and republicanism persisted in the political cleavages between mass movements that had been born under the mandatory regime and deepened by the war's social stresses. The nationalist victors of the 1943 elections, Bishara al-Khuri in Lebanon and Shukri al-Quwwatli in Syria, claimed paternity of independent states as they forced France to relinquish control of civil government. However, both founding fathers immediately met challenges from subalterns who demanded reform of the civic order as part of their independence. Violent political crises in Lebanon in November 1943 and in Syria in May 1944 became crucibles of the postcolonial civic orders. Khuri and Quwwatli both secured their rule through political pacts that appeased religious interests and reaffirmed the paternalistic, gendered boundaries of citizenship that had been set under French rule.

Ambiguous Results of the 1943 Elections

The summer 1943 elections were hailed as a resounding victory for elite nationalists, as the new parliaments chose Khuri and Quwwatli as their presidents. In fact, nationalists' popular support was rather tenuous. They earned their majority of votes from a small electorate. Turnout was surprisingly low for what had been touted as a momentous referendum on the future of French rule: While 60 percent or more of Syrian voters had turned out in previous elections, only 31 percent of eligible male adults voted in the first round of the 1943 elections. Beirut's first-round turnout was only 25 percent of eligible males, a mere 11,000 of the city's population of nearly 83,000. Turnout in Lebanon as a whole fell from 67 percent in 1937 to 54 percent, a quarter of the

adult population. Women did not participate in either country; in June the Lebanese women's union had petitioned President Ayyub Thabit to include a referendum on female suffrage on the summer ballots, but he refused.[3] The resulting minority of first-round voters elected an even smaller number of second-round electors: only 830 in Syria, 628 of whom voted finally for Quwwatli.[4]

Voter apathy no doubt derived partly from distrust of the French, although observers said the elections were the fairest ever under the mandate, and British minister Edward Spears himself claimed that British soldiers posted at the polls boosted voter confidence.[5] Distrust of the nationalists was also a factor, given available evidence from Damascus. First-round voters in Syria had little idea of what they were voting for. They were left in the dark by censorship, a newspaper strike, and Quwwatli's refusal either to announce his slate before election day or to commit himself to a particular political platform. He ran his campaign as a personal battle against another faction of elite nationalists, followers of the deceased 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar. Shaykh Kamil Qassab, leader of the Society of Ulama and former supporter of Shaykh Taj, called for a boycott of elections because they would bring to power only "money-grubbing politicians." Turnout was also exceptionally low among the city's Christians and Jews.[6]

In Lebanon campaigns were far more open and platforms more explicit, with all four parties—Khuri's Constitutional Bloc, Eddé's National Bloc, Charles Da'ud 'Ammun's Popular List, and the Communists—pledging to expand democracy, equality, and social welfare.[7] However, sectarianism became an overriding issue when the pro-Eddé interim president, Ayyub Thabit, attempted to engineer Christians' dominance by assigning them a disproportionate number of parliamentary seats and registering Christian emigrants as voters. When Muslim protests threatened to derail the elections, Catroux returned briefly from his new post in Algiers to dismiss him. Thabit's replacement, Petro Trad, did not abolish sectarianism, but rather divided the parliament on a fairer ratio of six Christians to five Muslims. Ultimately, the elections turned on the power of Khuri and Eddé to woo their personal clienteles with coffers enriched on both sides by British and French funds. Although Khuri enjoyed more support among the Muslim majority, Beirut and many parts of Mount Lebanon (including many Druze voters) elected enough parliamentary candidates loyal to Eddé to threaten, briefly, Khuri's election as president.[8]

There were other signs of dissent from the victorious nationalists' agenda. Despite the dominance of elite patronage, the relatively penniless

Communists made a surprising showing. Although they failed to win a parliamentary seat, six pro-Communist candidates earned 40,000 votes in all of Syria and Lebanon, nearly 12 percent (15,000) of all votes cast in Lebanon alone. Khalid Bakdash qualified for second-round balloting in Damascus, where he earned 180 votes.[9] Most surprising of all was the election in Syria of Akram Hawrani, who rallied peasants in the region of Hama (turnout there was nearly 60 percent) against large landowning elites with a campaign for just redistribution of wealth.[10] Hawrani would later build a movement that would transform the civic order in the 1950s by extending political participation to the countryside.

However in 1943, as in previous elections, the two-stage process in which voters were asked to choose electoral lists virtually assured the exclusion of opposition parties. Most newcomers to the Lebanese parliament were relatives or clients of leading political bosses; only a quarter of the deputies were members of a political party. The electoral lists cemented an alliance of urban nationalists with rural landlords and tribal chiefs, who represented more than half of the deputies elected to both parliaments. The Syrian parliament was especially rural in character. While more than half of Lebanese deputies held university degrees, only 30 percent of Syrian deputies did; moreover, 41 percent of Syrian deputies had attended no school or only primary school.[11] The leaders elected by these parliaments were thus tightly linked to the landowning bourgeoisie. Syrian President Quwwatli owned the prosperous Syrian Conserves Company, where 200 workers processed fruit from his vast orchards around Damascus. Faris al-Khuri, speaker of parliament, was chairman of a textile firm and a leading partner in the National Cement Company, directed by none other than Finance Minister Khalid al-'Azm.[12] Lebanese President Khuri's longtime financial backer and brother-in-law was Michel Chiha, a prominent banker tied to French concessionary companies. His brother, Fu'ad al-Khuri, headed several large industrial firms. Both prime ministers, Sulh in Lebanon and Sa'dallah al-Jabiri in Syria, were career politicians from prominent landowning families of Sidon and Aleppo that were, incidentally, linked by marriage.[13]

Once in office, these nationalist elites reasserted their conservative social agendas of the 1930s, disappointing those who hoped the return to constitutional government might deliver long-sought rights. In September 1943, Lebanese women reminded President Khuri of Ayyub Thabit's promise in June that the newly elected government should take up the question of women's suffrage. But Khuri again withheld commitment to the issue.[14] In October, a coalition of Lebanese labor unions petitioned the government to

enforce the neglected May 1943 labor laws and to increase aid to poor working families. They too received no concrete response. In his inaugural speech earlier in the month, Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh promised to improve the economy and claimed to support the "legitimate" rights of workers, but only on the condition that they "cooperate with their bosses" in the national interest. This statement effectively rejected the worker-only unions and workers' rights that had been established in the previous decade. As for women, Sulh said in the same speech, "If the government hasn't considered widening the political rights of women, in spite of its sympathy for the progressive spirit that inspires some Lebanese ladies who seek these rights, it does make a firm promise to support all social activity they undertake in the service of nation and of humanity."[15]

In the Constitutional Bloc's ideology of national solidarity, women and workers were to remain subordinate helpmates to male elites. Accordingly, Sulh's cabinet represented leaders of six religious sects, who were to unite Lebanese Christians and Muslims in what was called the National Pact. In announcing the pact during his October 7 inaugural speech, Sulh proclaimed Lebanon a state with an "Arab face" that was also sympathetic to European (Christian) civilization. In seeming contradiction to a regime built upon the patronage power of sectarian leaders, Sulh called for the future replacement of religious affinities with the unified national loyalty of undifferentiated, fraternal citizens. In private negotiations with Khuri, however, Sulh, who had long fought for union with Syria, had accepted Lebanon as an independent state only if Muslims and Christians shared power in equitable proportions.[16] The terms of the pact thus amplified the sectarianism established by the 1926 constitution and evident in the summer electoral campaigns, thereby perpetuating the tension between republican rights and paternal privilege in Lebanese politics.

In Syria Quwwatli also made a religious alliance, but eschewed the multiconfessionalism of the Lebanese. Seeking support among the urban poor, apparently against the growing influence of Communists, he had recruited to his electoral list a leader of al-Gharra, Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid Tabba', and made several campaign speeches at al-Gharra's meeting place, the Tankiz mosque.[17] The National Bloc also subsidized other Islamic populists, like the Youth of Muhammad, whose leader 'Abd al-Wahhab 'Azraq was a personal friend of Quwwatli.[18] Quwwatli thus recemented the nationalist-Islamist alliance made by Jamil Mardam Bey in 1939. Once elected, Quwwatli packed the government with National Bloc cronies from the Sunni Arab hinterland, excluding Druze and 'Alawi minorities and purging the bureaucracy of francophile holdovers

from Shaykh Taj's regime. In his first postelection speech, delivered in early August 1943 at the Tankiz mosque, he still offered no clear political agenda, but rather proclaimed to his "brother" citizens that in the elections the nation had "given proof of the unity of its classes and its aims."[19] He and Prime Minister Jabiri opposed any economic changes that would strengthen the working class or peasantry, urging the population to withhold its demands until the war ended and full independence was achieved.[20] Syrian women and workers apparently acquiesced, for they made no immediate petitions. The only petition was from al-Gharra, whose demand for a moral police squad was ignored.[21]

The willingness of subalterns to cooperate with elite nationalists' fictitious unity in a fraternal republic faded quickly. They soon mobilized to redefine the civic order, during and after crises that would challenge bourgeois nationalist elites' claims to paternity of the independent nation-states. The mobilization of women's and religious groups will be discussed in this chapter, while that of workers will be taken up in the final chapter.

November 1943 in Lebanon: Constructing a New National Family

Government inaction on social affairs was by no means a symptom of political paralysis. Syrian and Lebanese leaders embraced their new power with exuberance and focused their energies on the ultimate political prize, capturing the state from the French. To this end, Sulh's October 7 speech included, in addition to enunciation of the National Pact, the virtual proclamation of an independent Lebanese state.

The collapse of French rule would be astonishingly swift, due in part to Spears' avid support of the nationalists, but mostly to France's own ineptitude. Georges Catroux had left in June to take up a position in the new Free French government at Algiers. With him departed the brief and final effort to uphold French prestige through bargaining around social policy. His successor, Jean Helleu, showed little interest in such a project and instead engaged in brute efforts to withhold power from the newly elected Syrian and Lebanese governments. To these governments' reasonable and expected demands to revise their constitutions, Helleu stonewalled. To their demands to transfer control of the police, military, and Common Interests, he turned a deaf ear. Helleu's blunt intractability only raised the stakes. Syrian officials shunned all contact with French advisers posted to their ministries. Defiance was more

direct in Lebanon. On November 8, even as Senegalese soldiers surrounded its assembly hall, the Lebanese parliament proceeded unilaterally to amend the country's constitution, expunging all reference to the French mandate. Deputies proclaimed their fidelity to the Rights of Man and gave Prime Minister Sulh a standing ovation.[22]

In response, Helleu staged a coup in the early morning hours of November 11. In an act that outraged the public in its gross violation of public-private boundaries, he sent soldiers into the bedroom of President Bishara al-Khuri, while his wife Laure and their children cowered behind another bedroom door hammered by rifle butts. Also roused from his bed was Riyad al-Sulh, whose wife Fa'iza later reported her absolute humiliation at confronting 30 soldiers in her nightdress and bare feet. Other government officials were arrested and all were imprisoned in the Bekaa village of Rashaya. After sunrise, Helleu made a radio broadcast suspending the constitution and appointing Emile Eddé, who had abstained from the November 8 vote, head of state.[23]

The coup precipitated the biggest political crisis of the war years and the most serious armed confrontation with the French since the 1925–27 Syrian Revolt. Eleven days of protest shut Lebanon down. Crowds poured into the streets of Beirut, ripping down pictures of Charles de Gaulle from public walls, building barricades on the streets and burning several French trucks. Homemade bombs exploded around the city. Truckloads of soldiers roved the avenues, shooting at demonstrators while French planes buzzed overhead. The Phalanges and labor unions organized a general strike by merchants and workers, while women staged protest marches that drew the attention of the international press. On November 12, a rump government formed in the mountain village of Bshamun, protected by a militia of more than 200 troops, mostly Druze, who exchanged fire with the French and prepared an attack on Beirut.[24] Meanwhile, the general strike spread to other Lebanese cities and to the countryside, where local militias formed and villagers attacked the offices of the French General Security police. In the first few days alone, dozens of Lebanese citizens were sent to hospitals and at least 20 were killed, including nine schoolboys. Sympathy strikes and demonstrations resounded in Syria, especially among students who shut down the major cities for several days.[25]

The Lebanese appealed as much to paternalistic authority as to the Rights of Man in justifying their unilateral assertion of independence. Some, like a group of doctors, condemned the coup as "a violation of the democratic principles for which the Allies fight."[26] Students at the American Junior College for Women called for British intervention on the basis of the Atlantic

Charter, which affirmed "the right of all peoples to choose their own form of government."[27] Communists called the coup "contrary to the principles of the French Revolution."[28] Other protesters, like the Phalanges and a group of Beirut lawyers, emphasized the coup as an attack on national dignity and honor.[29] Meanwhile, in many cities protest meetings were held in mosques and churches, where citizens appealed to local religious leaders to redress their moral outrage.

In the evident turning point of the crisis, religious patriarchs parried appeals from pro-French and pro-independence delegations and finally demanded the return of the elected government and, in effect, the end of the French mandate. On November 16 Catroux, flown in again from Algiers, met with the Greek Orthodox bishop to seek his support, while hundreds of men and women marched to the Beirut residences of Maronite Archbishop Ignatius Mubarak and of the mufti, Shaykh Muhammad Tawfiq Khalid, to demand independence. The next day, Catroux traveled to the Bkerke residence of Maronite Patriarch Antoine 'Arida, who said he shared the popular view that the French had committed a grave error. 'Arida had, in fact, just previously told a women's delegation that Lebanon must have complete independence.[30] In desperation, Eddé raced to Bkerke on November 18, where he sought to change 'Arida's mind with rumors that the Sulh government had been planning Lebanese union with Syria. Because of this fear, Armenians, Maronites, and Catholics in Beirut and Mount Lebanon were said to have supported Eddé's appointment on November 11. In his own last-ditch effort, Catroux met on November 19 with the mufti, who said the coup had irretrievably damaged France's position in Lebanon.[31]

Catroux thus found that France had no indigenous constituency to counterbalance the intense pressure of the British, American, and several Middle Eastern governments to end the mandate. The pillars of colonial paternalism had utterly collapsed in the crisis. Religious patriarchs, who had long lingered in their association with France, had now transferred their support to Khuri's jailed government. Eddé's constituency had disintegrated with 'Arida's declaration in favor of independence. On November 20, Catroux made his first public promise to release the prisoners; two days later, the Khuri-Sulh government was reinstated.[32] In his memoirs Catroux noted, "Paradoxically, in one night France had built against her the unification of Lebanon in the same national sentiment that she had tried for 20 years to make the foundation of her position in the Levant."[33]

The end of colonial paternalism was by no means the end of Lebanese paternalism. On November 22, tens of thousands of Lebanese flooded the

streets around the homes of Khuri and Sulh, welcoming their return in a kind of coronation jubilee. No doubt to many in the crowd the moment represented a resolution of the crisis of paternity after 25 years of rule by adoptive French fathers. Khuri, addressed in paternalistic manner as Shaykh Bishara, stood on a balcony over the crowd as founding father of independent Lebanon. From then onward, the day would be celebrated as Independence Day, replacing September 1 when Gouraud had proclaimed Greater Lebanon in 1920. The Lebanese had not only found their true father, but their mother as well. Khuri appeared before the crowd alongside his wife, with whom he had now been properly reunited after so abhorrent a separation (fig. 20). At another celebration the next day, Jamal Karam, a leader in the women's protest marches, proclaimed Laure al-Khuri "mother of the Lebanese people" to great applause.[34] It was this sense of family reunited, a paternalism rehabilitated under the National Pact, that likely guided the hand of the artist who drew the National Emblem cartoon for *al-Dabbur* two weeks later.

However, all was not well in the new Lebanese national family. In the political fluidity of the time, the Lebanese debated what sort of family they were to be. The crisis had opened the political arena to subalterns who had been snubbed in the first weeks of the Khuri-Sulh government. As in popular uprisings of the mid-1930s, November 1943 became an opportunity at least to renegotiate the hierarchy of power in the civic order, if not to abolish paternalism altogether. On the strength of their participation in ousting the French, two groups in particular, the Phalanges and women, joined the debate. Both contested the father-dominated vision of the national family, seeking a greater role for sons, mothers, and daughters. In the end, however, neither group was either willing or able to break completely with paternalistic loyalties to advocate a nonfamilial model of the civic order based on individual rights.

The resemblance of the proud male citizen to Pierre Jumayyil in the *al-Dabbur* cartoon was perhaps no accident. The Phalanges, with their motto "God, Family, Nation" emblazoned on their petitions, had played a prominent role in the crisis. Along with the Najjada, they had organized the general strike among shopowners, acted as liaisons between the populace and the rump government, and taken up armed defense against French troops. Jumayyil himself was injured and arrested while defending a closed shop. He later claimed, amidst conflicting accounts, that the Phalanges had designed the new Lebanese flag and raised it for the first time over public buildings on November 22.[35] Khuri rewarded the Phalanges (who had by then switched to their Arabic name, al-Kata'ib), by lifting the legal ban imposed on them in 1937. In

return, the Phalanges reversed their earlier opposition to the National Pact. At the reopening of parliament in December Jumayyil embraced 'Abd al-Hamid al-Karami, the ardent Sunni leader of Tripoli who now abandoned his demands for union with Syria.[36]

As an explicitly youth movement, the Phalanges were positioned politically as sons to the nationalist elites' generation. After the November crisis, they wielded their new power in an effort to transform the father-son relationship into one of fraternal equals. After the November crisis they adopted an antisectarian stance, in spite of their support of Thabit's plan the previous summer to pack the electorate and parliament with a disproportionate number of Christians. In the spring of 1944 they and their erstwhile rivals, the Syrian National Party, mounted a joint campaign against article 95 of the 1926 Constitution, which perpetuated sectarianism with its provision that "the sects shall be equitably represented in public employment and the composition of the Ministry." They argued instead for employment based strictly on merit. However Sulh, who had himself envisioned the demise of sectarian politics in his October speech, blamed pressure from the Maronite patriarch for its persistence.[37] 'Arida and other religious patriarchs were also heroes of November 1943, and they used that power to perpetuate the political influence they had enjoyed under the French. Muslim-Christian hostilities erupted again by May 1944.[38] The Phalanges were caught in the contradictions of their own paternalistic discourse of religious fidelity and manly virtues, and would never truly abandon their Christianism.[39] That they were ultimately wedded to a paternalistic model of the national family, even as they partially criticized it, was evident in their staging of women's demonstrations in the November crisis.

The relationship between women and men in the new Lebanese national family was more problematic than that of sons and fathers. Women's protests in November had been organized centrally by Najla Sa'b of the new Lebanese Women's Association, which included well-known leaders of the women's movement like Rose Shahfa, Eveline Bustros, Imilie Faris Ibrahim, Ibtihaj Qaddura, and Nazik 'Abid Bayhum. Their role was crucial in providing communications while newspapers, telephones, telegraph, and even tramways were cut during the protests. They not only marched to embassies and patriarchs' residences, but also met daily with wives of the imprisoned officials, received secret directives from their husbands in prison, organized international petition campaigns, and provided first aid to the wounded. They also established contact with women's leaders in other cities, and recruited hundreds more women from other classes to join street demonstrations.[40] Never

before had Lebanese women's leaders recruited so many for so sustained a protest. Women had been integral players in a process that brought their country independence, but what would their role be, exactly, in the new independent state?

While women's leaders later trumpeted the crisis as women's formal entrance into politics, the terms of their initiation apparently slipped from their control in the fluid, improvisional theater of the street. Women made symbolic gestures with contradictory meanings in a drama that simultaneously opened politics to subalterns and reinforced the paternalistic Lebanese family on a national scale. Women's difficulty in defining their political role lay primarily in the fact that the crisis had begun in a climate of highly charged gender anxiety: The most private and most sacred site of honor, the bedrooms of the country's most eminent husbands and wives, had been rendered shamefully public.[41] Indeed, above all else, it was dishonor that united the fractured Lebanese polity to demand independence. The women's association itself had employed these terms in their November 12 telegram to the British prime minister: "We Lebanese ladies of different creeds strongly protest against the hideous aggression and treachery committed against the officials of our independent government . . . and regard this as an insult against our honor."[42] The very same day, Mgr Ignatius Mubarak, Maronite archbishop of Beirut, delivered a speech calling on Muslims, Christians, and Druze to unite and "throw out the traitors—the robbers who violated the sanctuary of the homes of your leaders."[43] In apparent response, two days later an anonymous leaflet appeared to rally support for Eddé by dishonoring Riyad al-Sulh with obscene remarks about his being arrested while in bed with his wife.[44]

Gender anxiety was evident in the events surrounding women's marches to embassies and religious patriarchs. On the morning of November 12, a group of mostly Christian women led by women's union president Eveline Bustros, an elderly writer and patron of the arts, began marching toward the central Place des Canons (Martyrs' Square). As they marched, they were surrounded by young men, likely members of the Phalanges, who linked their hands as a protective barrier (fig. 21). They soon joined another group of women, mostly Muslim, dressed in black and veiled. "Then an extraordinary thing happened. All the Moslem women together, with one gesture, as if obeying an unvoiced command, threw their veils back over their heads," wrote Edward Spears. "They were saying that they were Lebanese women, just women who loved their country as much as did their Christian sisters."[45]

Spears was likely repeating explanations for the unveiling conveyed to his wife, who met with women's leaders daily. Muslim women's unveiling may

well have been intended to signify their unity with fellow Christian women, in the multisectarian spirit proclaimed by the Lebanese Women's Association. But their unveiling must also have been understood in the context of controversies over Muslim women's public presence since the Nazira Zayn al-Din affair in 1928: They were symbolically lifting the veil of paternalism that had distanced them as citizens from direct relations with the state. As an assertion of women's public identity and claim to a presence in the political arena of the streets, however, their unveiling stood in uneasy tension with their encirclement by male guardians.

The procession, now embracing 200 or more women and as many men and boys including prominent politicians and businessmen, stopped at the British embassy and then proceeded to the American embassy, where it was met by two truckloads of Senegalese soldiers. The confrontation would inspire stories for years to come. As the 30–40 soldiers pointed machine guns, rifles and revolvers at their chests, the women sought refuge behind a garden wall, "insulting and spitting (even the best of them) at the troops, and screaming that the Senegalese would shoot," reported an American eyewitness.[46] Eveline Bustros yelled at the French officers who commanded the troops: "Whom are you threatening like lions? Us women, who are only liberating our country. If you are really men, go liberate your own country from your enemies. Shoot your bullets, you cowards!"[47] In a twist of gender roles, Lebanese women posed as more manly and more patriotic than French men, who had so far failed to liberate their own country from Nazi Germany. Bustros's taunt echoed the linkages between nationalism and masculine virility expressed in the propaganda of the 1925 Syrian Revolt. But her rhetorical act of female bravery was undercut by her simultaneous implication that women were not, in fact, true soldiers, and so inappropriate targets for French guns.

The November 16 and 17 pilgrimages to religious patriarchs were even more ambiguous in meaning. On the 16th, the Lebanese Women's Association gathered 200 women at the invitation of the Phalanges, who recruited them, according one participant, in a strategy much like that of Damascene nationalists in November 1934, because "it was thought that if only women took part in the demonstration, with as few men as possible, the procession will be less liable to be attacked by the armed forces parading the streets."[48] The women marched, again flanked by the Phalanges, to the homes of arrested minister Camille Chamoun and to Archbishop Mubarak. When they proceeded toward the mufti's residence, they were again ambushed and dispersed by armed troops. Undeterred by the violence, the following day 100 women paid their visit to Mgr 'Arida, the Maronite patriarch. Their leader,

Najla Sa'b, appealed to 'Arida's paternal stature in her defense of the Khuri-Sulh government: "You, who have always been a loving father, jealous as to his children's interests, realize that they are one solid block in their determination to protect Lebanon's freedom and dignity." In contrast, Rose Shahfa did not deferentially tailor her speech for the patriarch, but rather stressed the crisis as a struggle for democracy: "These things have been done to Lebanon by the nation who was the first to raise the banner of freedom, and to recognize the Rights of Man. . . . Shall we continue to submit to their [French] despotic treatment, while it was they who first taught us to demand our rights?"[49]

Women's contradictory appeals to male paternal guardianship and to their equal rights as citizens would work against their efforts to reshape the Lebanese national family. Leaders of the women's union used the crisis as a springboard to demand an end to gender barriers in the civic order. Echoing the claims made by Nazik 'Abid in 1920, they argued that women's battle experience in the crisis proved their patriotism and their right to vote. A women's delegation visited the reinstated parliament to demonstrate their commitment to political participation. Imilie Faris Ibrahim published an article calling for women's suffrage as a sign that independent Lebanon would join the "advanced nations," and condemning its opponents in the government as "more nazi than the Nazis themselves in their denial of us and their theft of our right to run for office."[50] At the same time, women also criticized another pillar of paternalism, sectarianism. Najla Sa'b and others boasted about how women of all religions had united in protest. Among leaders of the Lebanese Women's Association, Sa'b was Druze; Qaddura, Sunni Muslim; Karam, Maronite; and Bustros, Greek Orthodox. They were clearly identifying themselves primarily as citizens of the Lebanese state, unmediated by loyalty to their respective religious patriarchs.

The government at first seemed to respond positively. When Bishara al-Khuri met with leaders of the Lebanese Women's Association after his return to office, he praised their role in the independence struggle and promised that "we will not find complete rest until the Lebanese woman occupies her place under the dome of parliament and attains her full, unconditional rights."[51] Afterward, the Sulh government donated funds for a new women's union headquarters. An important asset to the campaign for women's rights was none other than the president's wife, Laure al-Khuri. In March 1944, a group of women in the southern city of Sidon staged a collective unveiling, perhaps in imitation of that in Beirut during the crisis. However, protests against their action shut the down the city, which was, incidentally, Sulh's political fief.

Even the Maqasid foundation, long known for its support of women's education, cancelled the group's right to meet in its building. In response, Laure al-Khuri traveled to Sidon to offer the women encouragement. She announced in a speech that the famous Egyptian women's leader, Huda Sha'rawi, would soon visit Lebanon. Khuri had just returned from Egypt where she had made her first official state visit.[52] She clearly intended to hold her husband to his promise of women's rights.

But as the Phalanges had also discovered, the dual discourses of paternalism and rights did not mix well with the government of the National Pact. The long-delayed petition for women's suffrage was finally taken up by parliament in August 1944, five months after Free France decreed women's right to vote and shortly before Sha'rawi's visit. Women may have had reason to expect success, for Riyad al-Sulh had criticized opponents of women's suffrage in Faysal's Syrian Congress of 1920. However, a parliamentary committee killed the proposal before it reached the floor for a vote. Committee members argued that women's suffrage was contrary to Lebanese tradition and to Islam, and that "women were needed in the home rather than in public office."[53] In 1944 as in 1920 and 1924, anti-suffrage debates overtly tied gender hierarchy to religious hierarchy, and implied the divine order would crumble if women attained equal political rights. On a more mundane level, parliamentarians elected along sectarian lines through paternalistic clienteles were likely little disposed to undermine the system that had brought them to power. Women's marginalization and subordination to male authority would continue to be a cornerstone of the paternalistic edifice reinforced by the National Pact. Indeed, far from fostering the community of undifferentiated citizens envisioned by Sulh, the pact appeared to institutionalize sectarianism by secularizing it, substituting the president for the Maronite patriarch as leader of his community, and the prime minister for the mufti as leader of Muslims.

Lebanese women found themselves, as they had during the suffrage debates of 1924, caught in the contradictions of paternalism and republicanism. But unlike 1924, leaders of the women's movement themselves had participated in the affirmation of the paternalistic civic order, wittingly or not, by accepting male guardians and deferring to the authority of religious patriarchs. It is not clear that they could have choreographed their actions in the November crisis differently. On the one hand, their actions during the crisis may be read as adaptations to a civic order that marginalized them spatially and legally. Since the street battles of the 1930s, women certainly were not free to claim the streets as their own space. And in reality, they were bound to religious authority by the personal status laws they could not reform. On the other hand, the

symbolic contradictions in their actions also likely reflected women's own conflicting views of their proper role in the civic order, those of the maternalist Women's Social Democratic League and those of the rights-oriented women's union. As in 1924, and despite 20 intervening years of mobilization, there were no mass suffrage demonstrations before the parliamentary committee made its decision. That the women's movement was not united in the suffrage cause certainly weakened the bid of the petitioners and strengthened the hand of opponents. The attempt to find a political middle ground for women, through the ideology of patriotic motherhood, had clearly failed to unite women against the powerful and contradictory pulls of paternalistic and egalitarian republicanism.

The November crisis was not, however, an unmitigated failure for Lebanese women. As the *al-Dabbur* cartoon showed, they had, after all, earned a place in the national family, albeit an ambiguous one. Women would face higher obstacles in Syria, where the inclusive metaphor of national family was not prevalent, and where forces for women's exclusion were much stronger.

May 1944 in Syria: A Gender Pact to Rebind the Civic Order

The Khuri-Sulh victory in November 1943 equally benefitted the Quwwatli regime in Syria. Allied pressure forced the French not only to reinstate the Lebanese government, but also to relinquish their administrative power in both countries. On January 1, 1944, the French surrendered to the national governments the main pillars of their civilian rule: the Common Interests administration and the concessionary companies that controlled most utilities and railroads. The transfer of other ministries followed. By the end of 1944, the only important institutions remaining in French hands were the Special Troops (the locally recruited military), the General Security police, and the Serail building, French headquarters in Beirut since World War I. The French cut their civilian staff in half and as befit their now primarily military presence, replaced the civilian Jean Helleu with General Paul Etienne Beynet.[54] Syrian and Lebanese demands for sovereignty were nearly fulfilled.

In the meantime, the Syrian nationalist government faced its own baptismal crisis, centered like that in Lebanon on gender issues, when a campaign against women's unveiling by Islamic populists turned into a virtual armed revolt against the Quwwatli regime. As in Lebanon, the revolt was a theater of street politics that tested the legal and spatial boundaries of citizenship. It

would result in a tacit gender pact that defined the paternalistic basis of Syria's postcolonial civic order.

The crisis began with what appeared to be a routine protest by the al-Gharra group. On the morning of May 19, al-Gharra circulated a familiar statement condemning women's unveiling as immoral and the cinema as an evil influence. In a sign of the group's growing influence, the statement was read at Friday prayers in mosques throughout Damascus. Saturday morning, 300 people gathered at al-Gharra's Tankiz mosque in the city's central Marja Square. Speakers included the recently elected parliamentarian Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid al-Tabba', who lived east of Marja in the old Shaghur quarter, and Shaykh Muhammad Ashmar, a popular religious leader in the Maydan, a lower-class quarter outside the walled city and south of Marja. The crowd combined the two shaykhs' followings among petty-bourgeois merchants, ulama, religious students and recent rural migrants. The shaykhs spoke in anger about a charity ball scheduled that night by the Drop of Milk (Goutte de Lait) society, to which the Muslim wife of the education and defense minister, Rafiqa al-Bukhari, was selling tickets. Appalled that unveiled Muslim women might attend the dance with men, the shaykhs demanded that the government cancel it as an offense to public morality. The city police chief, who attended the meeting, explained that Drop of Milk was mainly a French-Christian society and promised to ask the society to bar admittance of Muslim women to the ball. The audience was not appeased.

At 12:45 p.m., apparently at Ashmar's instigation, the crowd poured out of the mosque. Some headed eastward, forcing the city's main markets to close, while others marched one block westward to the Serail, where they shouted insults at Nasuhi al-Bukhari and other government officials. An unveiled Muslim woman on a nearby tramcar was attacked, but escaped unharmed. Tram service was shut down when 20 boys stoned another tramcar. The crowd then turned northward toward the upper-class Salihiya quarter, where the ball was to be held at the French Officers' Club. Their numbers swelled to more than 500, many carrying guns and knives. Police followed behind on horseback. The crowd threw stones at the club, and then noticed that a ladies' matinee was showing across the street at the Empire cinema. Reports vary on what happened next. Police claimed that the crowd battered the cinema's doors with stones and guns and then turned their guns on the police who rushed to protect the women inside, some of whom had fainted. Others, including British informants, claimed the police shot first. There is no doubt that police fired fatal shots at two demonstrators, a religious student from a

nearby village and a 12-year-old boy. One policeman was mildly wounded in the face.

That evening (May 20), Prime Minister Sa'dallah al-Jabiri and the police chief met and ordered the arrest of the protest's leaders. Shaykh Ashmar, clearly the most dangerous with his previous experience of leading rebel bands in the 1925–27 Syrian and 1936–39 Palestinian revolts, was arrested that night and transported to the desert town of Palmyra. Jabiri also visited Drop of Milk's leaders to ask that they postpone the ball. This was evidently a shocking request, for the 1943 ball had been a glittering affair, held at the Orient Palace Hotel and hosted by Mme Catroux herself.[55] Leaders of the society, who included women's union president 'Adila Bayhum al-Jaza'iri, consented on condition that they might exact revenge: they would withhold distribution of free milk to infants as long as the troubles continued. Indeed, the next morning, May 21, they turned away 250 poor mothers, mostly Muslim, telling them instead to "apply to the shaykhs."

The troubles had, in fact, only begun. Officials estimated that up to 40 percent of the city sympathized with the protest against unveiling. City markets remained closed on Sunday and Monday (May 21–22), as rallies in Maydan mosques vowed to continue the strike until the government released Ashmar. The crowds rejected demands to call off the strike by Interior Minister Lutfi al-Haffar and by delegations of elite merchants and bosses of other city quarters, while shouting down Tabba' and another al-Gharra leader, Shaykh Ahmad al-Sabuni, when they made similar appeals. Tabba' was apparently no longer in control; he would meet with Parliament Speaker Faris al-Khuri and President Quwwatli on Tuesday to disclaim responsibility. Meanwhile, a violent faction took over in the Maydan, which prepared a siege as rumors spread of a weapons shipment from rural sympathizers south of the city. At this time the revolt appeared to spread beyond Damascus, with protests in Aleppo, where the governor and police chief were dismissed, and in Homs, where Ashmar and al-Gharra had links to local Islamic populists. Most markets in Homs were shut down by a group of shaykhs demanding bans on women's unveiling and moviegoing, and freedom for Ashmar.[56]

As prospects for wider support opened, Damascus exploded into armed revolt on Tuesday, May 23. That morning the government had finally convinced merchants (some informants said with bribes) to open their shops. Police reinforcements mounted security patrols throughout the city, while the largest crowd yet assembled at the Manjak mosque in the Maydan, meeting with representatives of the Druze, Kurds, and Hawran region in the south to rally support. At about 11 a.m., an estimated 1,000 men exited the Manjak

mosque, carrying guns and grenades. They attacked police posts and set up blockades on the quarter's northern end. Moving into the central quarters of Shaghur and Marja, they fired guns and lofted hand-grenades at police who tried to cross their barriers. Reopened shops quickly lowered their shutters. A second woman was attacked, wounded in the head by a rogue stone-throwing group, apparently because her veil was too thin. At Marja Square, some rebels encountered a group of old notables, women and children who tried to push them back toward the Maydan.[57] The gendarmerie sent in two tanks borrowed from the French to disperse the rebels, killing two. That night, two other Islamic populist groups, students of Youth of Muhammad and the older professionals of al-Tamaddun, prepared leaflets supporting the rebel shaykhs. The government press office, however, blocked their publication.

Bread, not guns, finally brought down the revolt. In apparent imitation of the Drop of Milk society, Prime Minister Jabiri announced that if the siege continued, the shaykhs had better find bread for the Maydan, because he would withhold flour rations "unless and until it was fully understood that the government was the sole responsible authority."[58] Since the Syrian government still controlled all flour rations in the wartime economy, the Maydan faced the prospect of starvation. On the morning of Wednesday, May 24, al-Gharra voted to reopen the town. That afternoon it became clear that the Druze would not aid the Damascus rebels, and the insurgency ended without a reprise of the 1925 revolt. In all, four rebels were killed, at least 10 policemen and unknown numbers of civilians were wounded, and 50 people were arrested.[59]

Popular sympathy for the revolt may be gauged by the fact that the reopened shops closed Wednesday afternoon while the funeral procession of a rebel passed (although they may have closed simply out of fear of more violence). Other signs of support were suppressed, however, by the National Bloc's control of city quarters through client notables and quarter chiefs. Significantly, the only other Damascene group to show open support for the Maydan was the Kurds, whose quarter was not controlled by the Bloc. There is also some evidence that dissenting politicians within the government had aided the rebels. One of the revolt's leaders was later identified as an employee at Syrian University. Another official was witnessed by a British informant to have sent his own agents to the Tankiz mosque to help rally crowds. Indeed, British observers reported that many Damascenes had greeted the revolt with the open delight.

The rebels' motivations may be surmised from the political climate of the Quwwatli regime's first months in office. Al-Gharra's decision to ally with

Ashmar and the Maydan was apparently prompted by a sense of betrayal. Quwwatli's government had ignored the group's pressure to adopt its program of social reforms, despite their alliance in the summer elections. In frustration, Tabba' mobilized his network of students, many of them from nearby villages and popular quarters like the Maydan, to force the government's hand.[60] Populists were also likely provoked by the resurgence of the women's movement that spring. In late April the women's union had renewed its registration with the national government. Rafiqa al-Bukhari, a union official, and others openly campaigned against the veil. In Hama, meanwhile, a group of teachers and midwives revived their movement after it had been crushed by Islamic populists in the previous summer's campaign against women's moviegoing.[61]

In the Maydan, class tensions were certainly a major factor. Bread prices rose in the spring of 1944 and the Maydan, among the poorest sections of Damascus, would have been most disgruntled. The poorer classes likely did not forget that Quwwatli had attacked their bread subsidies in his campaign against the French-backed regimes of 1942–43. The Maydan had also long been a center of political dissent against the elites of the old, walled city who had now captured the state.[62] Maydan resident Kamil Qassab, leader of the Society of Ulama, Shaykh Ashmar, and leaders of the Tamaddun group had been supporters of Quwwatli's bitterest rival, 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, as had the Maydan as a whole, the Kurdish quarter, Hawran, and Aleppo.[63] Finally, it is worth noting that the Maydan hosted the headquarters of the Faysal Club, whose leaders included several Communists and Michel 'Aflaq, cofounder of the nascent Ba'th party and himself the son of a Maydani grain merchant. The club had been closed down a month before the revolt for its anti-government propaganda.[64]

The spontaneous, poorly planned revolt was the gravest challenge to the National Bloc since the elections. It was the first time that nationalist rulers ordered guns fired upon their fellow Syrians. Prime Minister Jabiri spoke before parliament at the revolt's height, on May 22, condemning it as a product of an unpatriotic rabble. President Quwwatli, who was bedridden with illness at the time, made his first public speech about the revolt a month later. Like Jabiri, he avoided discussing the causes of discontent, attributing the revolt to a "rash" movement by "short-sighted" traitors. Quwwatli also emphasized that he was the nation's supreme legal authority: "Those responsible for the policy of this country will not permit mutinies to be stirred up, no matter what the pretexts may be that cloak them." Quwwatli's reassertion of sovereignty came in response not only to Maydanis' resistance against police, but

also to fears that the revolt might have triggered a French intervention, and especially to rumors that al-Gharra had declared the Tankiz mosque the nation's only legitimate authority. Not unsubtly, Quwwatli devoted the remainder of his speech to the imminent transfer of control over the army to his government.[65]

May 1944 was not, then, the ratification of Quwwatli's regime that November 1943 had been for Khuri in Lebanon. There had been no common enemy against whom the population could unite. The revolt not only violently polarized dissent, but cost Quwwatli the popular support he had cultivated in the previous summer's elections through his alliances with Islamic populists.

It is noteworthy that the factional, ideological, and class-based sources of dissent came to a focus around gender issues. The immediate cause of the revolt, it may be recalled, was opposition to women's unveiling and moviegoing. Al-Gharra had renewed its campaign against the women's movement all spring. Islamic populists were chagrined by the fact that Quwwatli's government was filled with bourgeois men whose wives socialized publicly in European fashions at cinemas, hotels and clubs. The linkage between gender and class tensions is suggested by the revolt's geography. Rebels from the poor southern Maydan confronted elites of the northern Salihiya quarter at the social crossroads of the city, Marja Square, not only seat of government, but also the nexus of tramlines and the city's main entertainment district. Here was where the classes rubbed shoulders, where unveiled women might appear on tramcars and attend matinees. While the French could be blamed for colonizing these central public spaces of the city, alienating them from the culture of popular quarters, al-Gharra had clearly expected that its ally, the National Bloc, might reverse that process.

Gender complaints were thus no mere pretext for the revolt, despite the claims of Jabiri and Quwwatli. The condemnation of women's increasing publicness was integral to the new aims of Islamic populists. In the 1930s their goals had been primarily defensive, to limit state intervention in religious affairs and foreign influence in society. Now they adopted a proactive campaign to control state policy, if not the state itself. Tabba'ʿs assumption of political office was a sharp departure from past practice, as were the rumored claims that Tankiz mosque was the sole seat of legitimate authority. The political opening occasioned by independence, and influence from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, likely fueled Islamic populists' ambitions. One of the Egyptian group's brochures, sent to Aleppo in May 1944, called for all government affairs to be based on Islam and carried out by religiously trained civil servants: "The Qur'an must be the sole source of our

political, economic, social and legislative life."[66] According to British sources in the Maydan, al-Gharra used veiling as a battering ram, on the assumption that government cooperation on that issue would open the door to more sweeping control over social policy.[67] Their social policy was concerned primarily with public morality and uniquely directed at women, with aims to require veils, ban them from cinemas, segregate tramcars and schools, and to enforce the above, a moral police squad. For Islamic populists, ousting the French was only the beginning of a process of purging society from foreign, and even indigenous Christian, influence. They envisioned the postcolonial state as an instrument of return to a perceived past of untroubled tradition, and the heart of that tradition to be in gender relations.

Elite nationalists apparently understood that al-Gharra's protests about women and public morality were part of a fundamental rejection of the republican civic order bequeathed by the French. At issue was liberalism itself: the confrontation pitted individual rights against collective values, the right to privacy against the prerogative of state intervention. Islamic populists made no secret of their contempt for a new law that prohibited anyone from undermining the individual liberty of another. "Shaykhs and ulama consider this decision as absolutely incompatible with the religious principles of the Qur'an," reported French police on May 23, at the height of the revolt.[68] Jabiri, in his speech the previous day, defended the law and expressed repugnance at the idea of a state that trampled upon the right to privacy in order to impose moral values: "We cannot impose our will on a husband to enforce conduct that is his own affair and that is commanded by his religion. Likewise, we cannot constrain a woman who delivers herself in private to bad morals. If we can catch her in the act, she is subject to severe penalties. Otherwise, can we penetrate into private homes to discover what goes on there?"[69] As Jabiri spoke, the parliamentary audience no doubt recalled the French state's outrageous violation of private bedrooms in Lebanon only six months before.

However, even at the height of the crisis, Jabiri sought to appease the Islamic populists. "No previous government has before battled vice, bad morals, and licentiousness as much as ours," he claimed. He pleaded for a reconciliation of civil and religious authority: "We don't want the world to see our country as atheist or impious, or divided by class or sect. . . . We have taken measures in every city to prevent attacks on liberty, religion, public safety and the security of the army. We wish that every mosque, every church and every synagogue may open their doors in all liberty and without fear." Quwwatli echoed Jabiri's plea for compromise. In his view, there was no contradiction between

religion and republicanism, only the danger of extremism on either side. "Every right and duty should not go beyond its limits," he declared in his June speech, ironically echoing Nazira Zayn al-Din's very different application of the same principle (see chapter seven).[70] Quwwatli and Jabiri further appeased Islamic populists with their lenient treatment of them. Tabba' and other leaders of al-Gharra were never arrested; nor was the group ever shut down, as many had expected it to be. When a deputy proposed stripping Tabba' of his parliamentary immunity from prosecution, Speaker Faris al-Khuri pocketed the motion.[71] And by the end of the year Shaykh Muhammad Ashmar was released and back in action in the Maydan.[72]

In stark contrast, Jabiri made no effort at compromise on women's rights. In his speech before parliament, he made absolutely no defense of women's right to choose veiling or unveiling, or of their right to go to the movies. Instead, he implicitly endorsed al-Gharra's viewpoint by assuring parliament that the charity ball did not offend public morality because Muslim women never attended it. (He omitted the fact that Muslim officials of the women's union were active members of the society.) Jabiri even denied that unveiling was an issue:

> Rumors have spread that the Muslim woman wants to unveil. We have observed this matter in all quarters, be it in streets or alleys or in public squares, without finding signs of anything other than what has been known in the past. . . . We asked if there were not associations who pursue this goal in secret, or if there were not persons who have suddenly unveiled in the street. But we found none of that.

While it may have been true that during the revolt no Muslim women dared to unveil in public, this statement completely erased the recent history of very public unveiling demonstrations, like that led by Thuraya al-Hafiz and the petition by women of Hama the previous year (see chapter 14). Instead of supporting women's rights, Jabiri portrayed the government as their paternalistic protector, and the police as harem guards at the Empire cinema, "where there was not a single man. . . . Imagine the tragic result in this circumstance if these individuals had been able to penetrate to where the women were. . . . Could we have given them free passage? Never!" he said, in justifying the deaths of the two protesters.

In effect, nationalists and Islamic populists forged a tacit gender pact, mirroring the Lebanese National Pact in its intent to reconcile divergent visions of the civic order. In exchange for Jabiri's silence on veiling, Tabba' had

disavowed support for the violent revolt against the regime. The terms of the gender pact were reaffirmed symbolically during Quwwatli's June speech. Billed as a ceremony of thanksgiving for his return to health and full exercise of office, the speech was delivered with great pomp as Quwwatli stood on the balcony of the Serail, flanked by ministers in fezzes and saluted from below by boy scouts raising flags in the air. Absent from the scene, and in contrast to the similar pose of the Lebanese president the previous November, was Quwwatli's wife. Indeed, not a woman was to be seen in photos of the event (fig. 22). Mme Quwwatli was to be no Rafiqa al-Bukhari, partaking in public events with mixed-sex crowds. Nor was she to be a Laure al-Khuri, who had even paid an official visit to Egypt. No doubt to al-Gharra's satisfaction, the Serail, Marja Square, and indeed politics itself, were marked as an exclusively male domain. The gender pact would rebind the fractured postcolonial civic order through the paternalistic exclusion of women.

Women were quick to recognize the terms of the pact. On May 23, the day after Jabiri's speech, a group of unnamed Muslim women sent petitions to Quwwatli, Jabiri, and Khuri supporting the government's crackdown on the shaykhs, and also, in patent reaction to the prime minister's omission, demanding their constitutional rights.[73] The sting of Jabiri's rebuff was all the more sharp in that he had been, like his Lebanese counterpart Riyad al-Sulh, a prominent supporter of women's suffrage in Faysal's government. It was also a personal betrayal, for the leading members of the women's union were wives and daughters of government officials. Women likely recognized the betrayal as a new twist to an old nationalist strategy. In 1934, Fakhri al-Barudi had usurped women's agency in a street demonstration to pose a rival protector to that of the French. In 1939 Jamil Mardam Bey, Quwwatli's predecessor as leader of the National Bloc (and now his foreign minister), had agreed to ban women from cinemas and endorse opposition to personal status law reform to save face after the independence treaty failed. Indeed, the man who suppressed the May 1944 revolt, Minister of Interior Lutfi al-Haffar, himself had banned his daughter from the movies, and prevented her from meeting the movie star Asmahan. Haffar, like Quwwatli and other National Bloc leaders, had moved to Salihiya from al-Gharra's home quarter of Shaghur, but remained personally ambivalent about the new lifestyles there.[74] Political expediency likely reinforced Bloc leaders' paternalistic views on women.

In a sense, ruling nationalists were replaying the 1930s contest between the French and religious leaders for authority over public morality. But while the French had rebuffed Islamic populists' demands, the now-independent

nationalist government was forced to cut a deal with them. Unlike the French, the nationalists depended on the support of conservative Muslims. Islamic populists had grown stronger during the war, making them a greater political threat than the women's movement was. Even though women's groups mobilized many Syrian cities after the May 1944 revolt,[75] the gendered spatial and legal boundaries of the civic order would ensure that they would remain far weaker than the Islamic populists, and that the gender pact would remain intact.