PART II

Paternal Republicanism and the Construction of Subaltern Citizens

In the postwar period the intimate matters of the household became the target of a sustained and intense public scrutiny. Choices families made on how to allocate their resources became the subject of general debate: how much food families consumed; whether they were giving their babies sterile milk; how clean mothers kept their homes; how much time parents allowed for their sons' and daughters' education; whether they depended on children to contribute to household income; whether mothers were spending too much time at work and not enough on caring for their families; whether fathers should be the sole breadwinners, earning a family wage. These and similar issues were debated at political club meetings and ladies' charity socials, and in government offices, newspapers, and cafes.

While such discussions had occurred before World War I, in the context of Ottoman reform and the need to save the empire, the terms of discussion were utterly transformed by the war and the French occupation. As discussed in Part One, the war had shattered many households and prostrated others to an unforgettable base of vulnerability. At the same time, the war marked the end of several decades of prosperity, and opened the door to state intervention in household affairs. However, France's paternalistic social policy distributed benefits unevenly, aggravating gender, class, and religious tensions that had mounted in the trauma of the war. These factors contributed to the rise of new urban social movements that did not merely discuss social reforms, but organized to demand them from the state as a right, as had never been done under the Ottomans. The

most important of these were women's, labor, and Islamic populist movements. They opposed the way social policy subordinated them because of their class, gender, or religious status. Their mobilization disrupted the elite's political strategies—both France's paternalism and nationalists' appeals for unity.

Social policy was, as a result, thrust into the center of mandate politics. Debates on the state's role in promoting social progress invoked broader political questions about the proper nature of the civic order, and about citizenship. The new social movements found inspiration in the language of democratic republicanism in the Syrian and Lebanese constitutions, which contradicted the realities of the paternal republicanism that they confronted. Through the reforms they proposed, they sought to change the terms of membership in the civic order from a hierarchy of privilege to the equality of citizens' rights.

In the perspective taken here, citizenship is defined not only by the political language of constitutions, but also by the social policies of states. All of the points at which people come into contact with the state inevitably shape their citizenship. Citizens' rights (or lack thereof) are established in the daily practices of government, when a tax collector appears at the door, when a police officer stops a car, or when a public works engineer designs a new street or water system. For a large number of citizens, contact with the state comes mainly through its social policies. Their relative status as citizens is defined when a state school admits their children (or does not), when a government clinic vaccinates a child (or does not) against a disease, or when the state intervenes to stop employer abuses (or does not).

Subaltern citizens are defined as those who are systematically placed at a disadvantaged remove from direct state benefits, under the protection and control of privileged mediating elites, by virtue of their class, caste, gender, race, religion, or ethnicity. Subaltern movements may be either left- or right-wing in orientation; they represent any subordinate groups who reject the authority of mediating elites and who seek to raise their status.[1] By the mid-1930s, the women's, labor, and Islamic populist movements were strong enough to mount a significant challenge to the colonial civic order. Their challenge would shake the twin pillars of paternalism: mediated rule and a gendered hierarchy of power.