



Introduction

On the morning of September 15, 1970, I stood at attention before King Hussein in his suburban Amman residence and handed him a sealed report from the director general of Jordan's Intelligence Department (JGI). This was a most unusual practice; it had always been the director general's job to carry intelligence reports to the king. I was not aware then that this change in established practice was one signal of the secrecy that shrouded the formation of a military cabinet. Nor was I aware that I was about to become a member of that cabinet, which was being formed as part of the king's decision to crack down on the fedayeen organizations.

Having quickly read the report, the king said with a sober concern, "Brother Adnan, you are one of the few people in this country who are aware of the implications of the situation. If it continues any longer, I am afraid we shall lose Jordan *and* Palestine. Therefore, we [the royal 'we'] have decided to form a military cabinet to restore law and order to the country and put an end to this chaos. You will be the minister of information in this cabinet."

I understood everything the king had said except the last part about my appointment as a minister. It had never occurred to me that one day I would become a cabinet minister. In those days, a ministerial portfolio was the preserve of community leaders, notables, members of prominent tribes or clans, and sometimes senior officials. Neither my age nor my social status qualified me for such a senior post. I was only thirty-six years

old and a major in the JGI, and I came from a working-class Palestinian family. The king, looking me in the eyes, must have noticed my consternation, for he repeated the last sentence more slowly. Now my prompt answer consisted of a military salute and two words: "Yes, sir!"

On the afternoon of June 19, 1991, almost twenty-one years later, a Transjordanian nationalist and a member of Parliament (MP) sent a cable to the king asking him to change his mind regarding the selection of Taher al-Masri, a Palestinian-Jordanian, as prime minister and to terminate my own official functions because they had been rejected by the people. On that day, the king had commissioned al-Masri to form a new cabinet. I was the king's political adviser, a post I had then held for seven years. The nationalist MP concluded his cable by urging the king "to associate himself with Jordan and Jordanians before it is too late."

Reading the cable, I was disgusted but not surprised. Later that day I related the event to my wife, who is a Transjordanian herself, and she was shocked. She knew that since my "Yes, sir" to the king's order in 1970, I had been exposed to two attempts on my life and one abduction plot, all instigated by various factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

What made the difference between my wife's angry reaction and my cool one was the fact that I had already taken the first shock fifteen years earlier. Shortly after my return from a nine-month fellowship at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs in July 1976, I was appointed minister of information in a newly formed cabinet. With this appointment, I became the target of a systematic discrediting campaign launched through rumors. The main theme of the campaign was that I was a CIA agent imposed on King Hussein and that my nine months' fellowship at Harvard University had in fact consisted of a CIA training course. I investigated the source and the objective of this campaign. I was deeply shocked to find that it came from some of the Transjordanian elite, who had been motivated by the September 1970 showdown with the fedayeen. Up to that point, I had been aware of similar discrediting claims against me from the PLO, but those claims I could understand, since to the PLO I was a defector, a Palestinian siding with the opposing Transjordanian camp, and not a Palestinian-Jordanian standing for the restoration of law and order to his state. To be discredited now by Transjordanians was utterly incomprehensible until I discerned their motivation.

These newly revived Transjordanian nationalists had defined their objective as the safeguarding of Jordan against a potential Palestinian takeover.

Their premise was that Jordan was for Transjordanians, and Palestinian-Jordanians should be excluded from the government, especially from senior posts, because they were disloyal to Jordan. My patriotic record belied their premise, as did the patriotic record of every other Palestinian-Jordanian who had publicly defended the integrity of the country.

On that June evening in 1991, as my wife puffed out her frustration and anger in a rare emotional display, I kept asking myself, “What has happened over the last two decades?” I felt a pressing need for an answer, and I realized that in order to find one I would have to examine the roots and the course of the Transjordanian-Palestinian interaction since the rise of Palestine and Transjordan as two distinct entities following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. I also realized that the Palestinian-Transjordanian interaction could not be understood unless it was examined within the broader triangular interaction among Transjordanians, Palestinians, and Israelis—an interaction triggered in the early 1920s and persisting to this day mainly due to the fact that the colonial map of the region, which was drawn after World War I without the consent of the local communities, produced three peoples and two countries. The examination of the implications of this flaw, its manifestations on the Jordanian scene as well as its bearing on the Middle East peace process, formed the genesis of this book.

