# Yale-UN Oral History Project

Mustafa Hamarneh
Jean Krasno, Interviewer
March 14, 1998
Amman, Jordan

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Index: Middle East

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Interview with Mustafa Hamarneh

Interviewer: Jean Krasno, Ph.D.

March 14, 1998

in Amman, Jordan

**Jean Krasno**: This is an interview with Mustafa Hamarneh, the Director of the Center of Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan. For the record, Mr. Hamarneh--is it Dr. Hamarneh? Dr. Hamarneh, could you just tell us a little bit about your own background, where you were born and where you were educated, and then we'll start.



**Mustafa Hamarneh**: OK, I was born in Zarqa in 1953, on the East Bank, and I was educated until the year before the end of my junior high school on the West Bank of Jordan in boarding schools in both Bethlehem and Beit Jala. When the Six Days War, the 1967 War, took place I was on the West Bank. I was at school then with my younger brother and it was during final exams. We got news that Egypt and Israel were engaged in war, and by noon Radio Jordan announced that Jordan had joined the Egyptian forces in that battle. It was Monday, June 5th, and we had no idea how the war was going on the front, until Wednesday afternoon when we began to see Israeli tanks advancing toward Hebron on the main Jerusalem-Hebron road.

JK: So you could see the tanks?

MH: Yes. We were told by some people then that these were Iraqi troops coming to aid the Jordanian troops in Hebron.

JK: How did you hear that information?

MH: It was a rumor that spread like fire in the little town, and we all were in the process of welcoming the Iraqi troops until some leaders of the community came running around, telling us to raise white flags because these in fact were not Iraqi tanks but Israeli troops. We did, and in the evening there was a curfew, nobody was allowed to leave the dwellings, and of course it was a tremendous tragedy then; we couldn't believe it, there was disbelief. We had hoped that this war would help relieve or remove the injustices inflicted upon us in 1948. On the contrary, Thursday morning the first Israeli soldiers appeared in the town. We knew then that this was occupation. Of course, a good number of the students in the boarding section of the school had their families on the East Bank, and we had no idea what would happen to us, would our families join us on the West Bank, would we join them on the East Bank. Of course, nobody foresaw then that this was in some ways a repetition of 1948. Ultimately, because we were a foreign school, a German school, the German embassy in Tel Aviv intervened and they were our liaison persons with the embassy in Amman where our families continuously called for information about our whereabouts and what happened to us. I don't remember the exact date but I think it was June 19th, when we were put on busses and we were told not to take any of our belongings with us, that it was illegal, and I remember they came to us, the man in charge of the boarding section, and asked us to wear basically all our clothes.

So, I crossed the bridge with six pairs of underwear, seven shirts, five pairs of socks, a winter coat--it was June--because we weren't allowed to take any of our belongings with us.

JK: Now, between say June 5th and June 19th...

MH: I think --- we lived under occupation.

JK: So, there was about a two-week period there...

MH: There were curfews at night.



JK: Did you see fighting at all?

MH: No, but we saw a heavy military presence and the Israelis were everywhere. Of course, it was humiliating because the police officers of the day before walked around without guns, without badges, it was very humiliating.

JK: So, the police at that time were not armed?

MH: The Jordanian police that had existed up until the first day of occupation were not armed, they did not even wear badges --- it was very humiliating. We went down to the

police station, of course, to see what happened, and the Israeli flag was there and Israeli soldiers and troops were there. The third day...

JK: But there was no real military conflict, per se, because there was no ability to...

MH: There was no resistance. The troops withdrew, I think the last troops from our area withdrew the morning of Wednesday. We felt the full Israeli presence Thursday morning. Wednesday afternoon we saw the tanks going to Hebron, and then of course...

JK: So, you could see the tanks.

MH: Yes. And of course, it was announced on the radio that Jordan accepted the cease-fire. The next morning, Israeli radio was broadcasting from Jerusalem and Ramallah, which was the Jordanian broadcasting station was --- one was located in Amman and one in Jerusalem, but the main equipment was located in Ramallah, so when the Israelis the next morning would turn to Radio Israel and they said "This is Radio Israel from Jerusalem and Ramallah" it was a clear signal that that former radio station had been taken over by the Israelis.

JK: So that was a significant event? They had control of the radio station.

MH: Yes. Which means that the Jordanian state on the West Bank no longer existed--it collapsed--and that the area now was under occupation. All the visible aspects of occupation were there, tanks, troops, soldiers, Israeli flags, everywhere.

JK: Where there any Israeli soldiers going into homes, or going door to door?

MH: They came to our school. And then they went immediately to the headmaster's office, and immediately a diplomat from the German embassy in Tel Aviv showed up at our school and they put a sign up, "This is a German school," etc., the whole thing that they were supposed to do. And then after that I don't remember them coming in during the next two weeks that I was there, but yes they searched certain homes, they looked for certain people, and I think two or three days later, I went with some of my colleagues at school--we were very young then--and we had to go – I was fourteen.



JK: Yes, I was going to ask you how old... you were fourteen, and how old were the students in the school?

MH: The system, actually, was that up until the 6th grade, we attended school in Bethlehem, and then junior high and high school in Beit Jala, so we had younger kids in Bethlehem, aged five to eight or nine, and then we were from age ten, I think, to sixteen. My younger brother...

JK: You were all very young.

MH: Yes. My younger brother was seven or eight. He was in Bethlehem while I was in Beit Jala, and we crossed the bridge together. We had joined. Two or three days later, I think, we gathered and we went to Bethlehem to see our school in Bethlehem and to see, those of us who had brothers or cousins or friends, to see what was happening there. So, we went to that school and they told us that the Israelis came in and checked the place, searched the place for all kinds of things, and we were very curious then we wanted to go see the nativity church in Bethlehem. So we headed toward the church and the evidence of occupation was in Bethlehem more pronounced than in Beit Jala, where we went to school. The entire plaza in front of the church of nativity was filled with Israeli troops and Israeli armoured personnel carriers, and with some Jordanian armed forces vehicles driven by Israelis, which was another sign of tremendous humiliation. You see, you know, your former army's cars and trucks being driven by the Israelis. The main police station was filled, of course, packed with Israelis and the Israeli flag was there.



JK: So, they put the flag up. They took down the Jordanian flag and they put up the Israeli flag.

MH: Yes. And they immediately started issuing all kinds of orders, and I remember as a kid seeing these signs being hung, signed by Chaim Herzog, who later became the President of Israel and then he was the military commander of the West Bank.

JK: So, from your point of view, from what you could see, there was no sign that Jordan was attacking Israel?

MH: No, we couldn't tell, but the King went on radio, and he said--I remember that--that we are joining the fight, because Moshe Dayan had announced earlier that they would not attack Jordan, and then by noon, everybody was jubilant that we were finally joining in to correct the injustices of 1948.

JK: So Israel had announced that they were not going attack Jordan...

MH: We were *told.*



JK: You were told that.

MH: Yes, we didn't hear that. We heard a recording--you see we weren't allowed to have radios, it was a very strict German school, but once the fighting broke out, some of the teachers came to the boarding section of the school with their families, and they brought their small radios with them and the regulation was broken so we could listen to Radio Jordan, Radio Israel, Voice of the Arabs in Egypt.

JK: So, you could get other stations.

MH: Yes.

JK: What else were you hearing on the radio?

MH: We were hearing about Egyptian military successes. We had no idea we were losing the war.

JK: What stations were you getting? Were you getting stations directly from Egypt?

MH: Yes.

JK: And those stations, the Egyptian stations, were saying that?



MH: Yes, and giving us figures on how many Israeli airplanes were gunned down. And the whole atmosphere was very jubilant. Nobody believed Radio Israel in those days.



JK: And on Radio Israel? What was coming out of Radio Israel?

MH: Then we thought that it was demoralising news and maybe we shouldn't listen to it. They weren't saying anything about our success, on the contrary. Radio Jordan announced that we had liberated it, which of course added to the jubilant atmosphere, until everything collapsed on Wednesday. We did not hear about events elsewhere. We had no contact with people in Jerusalem, or Hebron, or other areas around us. So, until actually I don't know exactly when but I think it was a few days later I went down to

Bethlehem with some of my colleagues, we went walking--actually, running--it wasn't a very far distance, to see what happened to my kid brother and others in that school and we were curious enough that we wanted to go to the church of nativity and see the scene, and of course it was different: Israeli tanks, troops, armoured personnel carriers, all of these. And then when we left the West Bank to unite with our families, to the bridge, it became even clearer, the number of Jordan armed forces' vehicles destroyed along the way from Jerusalem to the bridge. We went all the way down through Bethany/Eizaria all the way down to Haram Agmar and down to Nabi Musa and Jericho. We saw what seemed to be hundreds of Jordanian army cars either destroyed, burned, abandoned, and driven by Israelis. Some of them had small Israeli flags, we saw pictures of the King upside down on some Israeli cars. And then we got to the bridge, which I used to cross endlessly with my Dad; he was in the army then. The bridge was blown up. So we had to go down, hold ropes and go down. My brother was a bit sneaky, he carried his briefcase with him, and he was allowed to cross with the briefcase. I crossed with, as I told you, five pairs of underwear and six shirts.



JK: When you saw a rope, was this a rope bridge of some kind?

MH: No, no. There was a mass of refugees crossing with us, we weren't the only ones. The Israelis welcomed everybody leaving, but nobody was coming from the other side, so anybody who wanted to leave, left. So, we were on the bridge, it was a mess. We, all of us, I was semi-in-charge of the team that was me along with another friend and another

cousin, so we all got in a small truck, I remember sixteen of us, and we headed towards Amman.

JK: OK, but I am still not sure how you got across the river.

MH: We got on a bus, an organized bus by the Israelis, it was a caravan. There were armed cars in front of us and armed cars behind us. We were little kids, and in every bus there were Israeli troops, armed troops in every bus.

JK: But the bridge had been blown up--you could still go across it?



MH: Yes, down to the water and up. Once we got to the bridge, the doors [of the bus] were open, and out we leaped.



JK: OK, so had to get out of the buses once you got to where the bridge had been, but you had to go down the bank. Did you have to go in the water to get across?

MH: No. It was very safe. You could avoid going all through the water. I mean, you got wet, but you had to hold on the rope.

JK: So, they had strung a rope across so you could hold on to it. I see, so you could get across. How had the bridge been destroyed? What had happened?

MH: We were told that the Israelis blew it up. I don't know whether that was the case or not. Some said, "No, the Jordanians blew it up in the fear that they didn't want the Israelis to cross to Amman." I don't know the exact story, actually His Excellency might know.

**Abdul Sallah** (a colleague in the room): ... because I was talking to him [King Hussein] about it and he was calling the foreign minister at that time, "How are you asking me to ask the United Nations that we have a truce to stop the fighting while all the news from Arab states says that they, the Arab forces are advancing." And the foreign minister told him, "They are just arriving, approaching the bridge, they are about to cross. Carry on, please! Let the UN Security Council, just warn them to get a cease-fire."



MH: A cease-fire.



JK: Because the information that had been coming in to the UN, in New York, was that the Arab nations had been advancing.

MH: This was the impression we got, that we were winning. When we got to Amman, my brother and I got in a taxi, and of course we had no idea that there was such anxiety about our fate, because the cabbie, when he saw me and my brother, he recognized us immediately, he said, "Get in, get it! I'll take you to Madeba [home]." And, you know, people were congratulating us as if we were fighters, but we were kids, you know, seven years and thirteen, fourteen.

JK: So you walked from the river where the bridge had been to Amman?

MH: No, no. We got in a small truck. It was a mess, there were thousands of people, people yelling, screaming, shouting, looking for each other.

AS: It was the second exodus, the first exodus was 1948, and then 1967.

MH: Thousands of refugees were crossing, it was an endless stream of human beings.

JK: So, people had come down to the bridge with trucks and vehicles to try to find...



MH: No trucks or vehicles were allowed to cross. You only crossed on foot. And then you joined whomever you wanted to join on the East Bank. Traffic was allowed one way. If you were stuck in Amman and you were from Jerusalem or from Bethlehem or from any locality on the West Bank, and you wanted to cross back, you couldn't. No you couldn't. My family couldn't come see us, for example. We had to go.



JK: You had to go there.

MH: And in retrospect, the thing that took place then, everybody was sure that we would be back. I remember that my parents didn't look for a school for us, hoping that by September, they were very sure that the international community would ask the Israelis to

withdraw and we could go back to our schools and continue our education. I remember very well that at the end of August, we had no idea what school we would be going to. My sisters were also in boarding schools on the West Bank. So the whole family sat there, thinking that we would be back in Bethlehem and Beit Jala and come September, to continue our schooling. And of course that didn't happen. And my grandmother was there in Beit Jala, and I had asked the schoolmaster if we could get my grandmother to come with us on the bus, join the caravan to cross. I went to see her, she's an old Palestinian lady--she died--and I said, "Grandma, I got your permission if you want to come." She said "No, if I go, the Jews will take the house. They did it in 1948, I will not do it now again."



JK: So, your grandmother stayed?



MH: Stayed. She used to come back and forth and visit, until she died here in Amman at the hospital. But she refused, she said, "They took half of the country in 1948, if I leave now the Jews will come and take the land. I am not leaving. Kiss your father and mother for me, and I am staying here in Palestine." And she didn't come with me. So, when my father asked, "What about my mother?" I said, "She refuses to leave."

JK: But you did go to see her.

MH: Of course. She was in Beit Jala. She wouldn't leave. She came and I think she died in 1983, here in Amman hospital.

JK: Could you make phone calls?

MH: No. My father communicated with her via the Red Cross. He would send her money or letters through people he knew in the Red Cross, or, in those days you know people who had special permissions, the UN people who had special permissions, and there were very few, but she could communicate with us far easier. She could send things with people who were leaving.

JK: Did UNTSO the UN Truce Observation...



MH: Well, this was one, and the Red Cross was another. And then after a few months, I think, some people got special permission to cross back and forth. In the mid-1970s, she crossed once, I think. When I got married she crossed and came to congratulate me, and then I saw her between 1978 and 1982 maybe three or four times.

JK: For those people who had houses and left, what happened to their houses?

MH: It depends, actually, on what area you are talking about. In Jerusalem, it was a different story, but on the West Bank, most of those who left were actually refugees from refugee camps who left in 1948. But one of the major differences between the defeat of 1967 and the defeat of 1948 was that so-called "miraculous emptiness of the land" that the Israelis talked about in 1948 did not occur in 1967. The great majority of Palestinians

from the major towns and villages on the West Bank did not leave, precisely because of what happened in 1948. But the displaced people who came to Amman and other areas on the East Bank, the majority of them were from refugee camps on the West Bank.

JK: So, at that point they didn't have property to protect.

MH: Yes. My Grandmother, like all people of her generation of Palestinians who vividly remember 1948, what happened in Jaffa, what happened in New Galilee, refused to leave.

MH: ... and then they put us in the school system here on the East Bank, and we stayed here, every year hoping to go back.



JK: So there was a feeling that the Israelis would withdraw?

MH: There was a feeling that yes, eventually, the international community will interfere, and because the Israelis have always wanted Arab recognition it was felt then that yes, they would be given that recognition as a result of 1967, and the conflict will come to an end. But then the most disappointing elements of this whole equation began to appear with the Yigal Allon Plan, and then the settlement, and then of course the final realization that the Israelis would not withdraw from the West Bank and Jerusalem under the same conditions that the Arabs, or at least we in Jordan, had been demanding, and that things had changed in a fundamental way.

JK: So now, you were in Amman from that period on in through the 1970s, and so forth.

MH: Yes.

JK: So what did you observe in Jordan at that time?

MH: Well, a new force emerged, and a very powerful force, and that was the Palestinian resistance movement. In those days, basically the image of the Arab state was tarnished and the image of the Arab armies was tarnished, and there was a feeling then that something else needs to be done, a new force needs to be created, and this force was created beginning with the Fatah, Yasser Arafat and his colleagues, and these people immediately gained enormous popularity in the country, and of course the popularity gained a tremendous push after what is known in this country as Marat ...Battle of March 21st 1968, when the Israeli troops crossed the river to wipe out the Palestinian resistance movement and further force Jordan to submit to Israeli demands. There was a general sense in the country in those days that this was a battle that we won, and it was referred to always as the fruits of joint cooperation between the Palestinian resistance movement and the armed forces. But eventually, of course, the Palestinian resistance movement grew enormously popular in the country, and powerful, and began to challenge the Jordanian state in every aspect of life. The political maneuvers of the King and his government to bring to an end the Arab-Israeli conflict via diplomatic means was not popular at that time

and there was a general sense that something needs to be done in the realm of armed forces to correct the injustices, and it was felt then by the generation that was older than us in those days that we needed to fight and fight hard to correct these injustices. So, the clash between the Jordanian state and the Palestinian resistance movement was really inevitable, in my view, because both had two conflicting ideologies, two conflicting perspectives and methods of action, in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian resistance movement grew in strength to the point where the Jordanian state, in reality, ceased to exist in terms of law and order, in terms of anything that is related to people's daily lives. Successive clashes took place, beginning with the one that took place I think in November 1968 and then we had a big clash in February 1970, a big clash in June of 1970 that went on and off until September.



JK: Describe for me the first one that you had mentioned.



MH: The first one was sort of a surprise one, we heard it on the news. At that time, still the Palestinian resistance movement was almost embryonic. It was one the news, there was a curfew in Amman, and I remember people, the employees who had jobs in Amman, came back in the morning. We were going to school, and we asked them what happened – Madeba then was a very small town--and they said, "Amman is closed. The army is preventing people from going to Amman. There is a curfew in Amman." We didn't know whether there was a curfew or not, and then we heard on the news what had happened. Some Fedayeen attacked army land rovers in the center of the town, and the result of which was, I don't know how many were killed and wounded, and then the state

in it's effort at reimposing itself once again had a clash with the Fedayeen at that time. But immediately after that they mushroomed and they were visible everywhere. We began to see a sort of withering away of state powers and in the vacuum jumped the various organizations of the Palestinian resistance movement.

JK: Was it felt at the time that Yasser Arafat was leading this, directing this?

MH: No, at that time the general sense in the country was that the main group, Fatah, Yasser Arafat, who had a commanding lead within the Palestinian community in the country, it was the biggest organization in the country, of the Palestinian organizations. It was not felt then that they were spearheading the clash with the government or with the state, but other organizations were. The second largest organization in the country then was one that was funded and organized by the Syrian Ba'ath party, by the regime in Syria. Then, you had another one that was funded and organized by Iraq, by the Ba'ath party in Iraq. Also, you had the other smaller, but very vocal and boisterous and politically powerful organizations, the two main Marxist groups, the Popular Front and the Democratic Front. Of course, on the Palestinian side, every clash with the state led to a new form of cooperation between the various Palestinian organizations, a new system of cooperation would emerge, until finally clearly the head of all organizations, at least in a nominal sense, was Yasser Arafat and he negotiated with the Jordanian state on behalf of all other organizations. But he actually, did not have leverage or power over either the pro-Syrian or the pro-Iraqi or the other Marxist groups, but because his was the most powerful and had the most support among the Palestinians in Jordan. And of course, they

began mobilizing the Palestinians in Jordan, which was new to us. In this country, we grew up thinking everybody was Jordanian, and then all of sudden there was this very powerful identity thrust into the internal politics, and that was the Palestinian identity. So, all of a sudden you went to school, and half of the school was Palestinian and half Jordanian. They belonged to different student unions, we belonged to other student unions. So, it was a period of transition. Actually, nobody foresaw what this would bring until it was quite clear towards the end, September 1970, that definitely a clash would take place. And the clash did take place. It began with skirmishes and clashes in late August, early September, and then the military government was formed, and then the next day the battle took place. I think it started on Thursday, September 17th, 1970.



JK: And the earlier clashes that were building up to September, in 1970, what were the major issues of those clashes?



MH: Basically, everything was related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Basically, the Palestinian movement had two edges over the state, political and moral. Political in the sense that it was easy to mobilize using that moral edge of theirs, that the state, the Jordanian state has been historically a state that had collaborated with the West and with the Zionist enemy, and the Palestinian resistance movement and their supporters on the East Bank wanted to mobilize the populace to correct the injustices in Palestine and of course face the challenge head on against the forces of imperialism and Zionism.

JK: OK, so there was a disagreement on the policies in general.

MH: Major disagreement; fundamental, I would say. They had two different ideologies, two different perspectives, two different methods of action.

JK: So, what would trigger a particular conflict?

MH: Anything. At that time, anything, because the army, at least in the eyes of the resistance movement, and a good segment of the population, was not one that was up to the confrontation. Everything became an issue: the quality of arms, this was an army that was armed by the Americans and the British. Johnson in those days refused to give Jordan even the arms they lost in the war. There was tremendous pressure in the country by these political groups among others to get weapons, to buy weapons from China and the Soviet Union. Of course, the King resisted this to the last minute. There was the pressure of Arab nationalism.



Of course, what all this did actually was reintroduce again into debate in the country the role of the Hashemites in modern and contemporary Arab history, specifically in relation to the Palestinian question. The Hashemites, at least with the Palestinians, or a good segment of the Palestinians, was viewed with suspicion. The policies of King Abdulla beginning with the Borat incidents of 1929, the Palestinian uprising of 1936 and 1948, was viewed as one that was in cahoots with all these forces, that has contributed in some way or another to the disaster that fell upon the Palestinians in 1948. So, anything that took place after that had a cumulative effect on this, and therefore you had a great mass that was politically mobilized against the Hashemites, and therefore once the first

incident took place and the Palestinian resistance movement kept controlling, the state had no political edge and had no moral edge over what was taking place. And the Israelis of course did not help at all on the other side, they continued to embarrass the Jordanian government, they continued to be belligerent and very uncompromising. We were told many years later that Johnson had informed King Hussein, if you had read Donald Neff's book that if Jordan accepts 242 along with Egypt, the Americans commit themselves to Israeli withdrawal within six months. So, when the Jordanian state threw its weight behind a political solution, nothing happened. And of course, the Rogers plan came. Rogers came to the area and when the Jordanians along with the Egyptians accepted the Rogers plan, it was viewed by the political and military groups in the country as another testimony to the fact that these people are in cahoots with the enemy, "Why would they accept Rogers's plan? It does not represent anything."



JK: And then it proved to be nothing in the end.

MH: Nothing. Therefore, I remember in June or in March, I don't remember exactly, by Joseph Sisco was then Assistant Secretary of State and he was coming to the country. I remember, I was a kid, that we demonstrated. There were massive demonstrations all over the country against Sisco's visit. And then Sisco decided not to come, and I think the American embassy in Amman advised that Sisco not come and the Jordanians...

JK: He arrived to go to the embassy, but then there was a huge demonstration in front of the American embassy, and he thought that it was too dangerous.

MH: My recollection is that the Jordanians I think in those days asked the ambassador to leave because he recommended that Sisco not come to the country. And the Jordanians issued a very strong statement over the radio in those days that they were capable of defending him and they were capable of securing his safety. At that critical moment, the Palestinians had hijacked these planes, the PFLP.

JK: OK, so that happened at the same time.

MH: Within days or weeks. But I remember another thing came and it was incredibly powerful, that was in September and all these planes started landing in the desert, hijacked by the PFLP. They blew them up, which further embarrassed the Jordanian government.



JK: They blew them up with the passengers?

MH: No, they took the passengers as hostages, but the Jordanian troops located most of these passengers in some refugee camps and took them and delivered them to their respective embassies as the fighting was going on. So, many things contributed to the timing of the conflict. The conflict, in my view, was inevitable. It could have taken place in 1971 or 1972. But the timing was September 1970 precisely because of all of these incidents with the Sisco trip, the Rogers plan that needed to be implemented, and the blowing up of the planes which contributed to the almost total collapse, at least on the

level of appearance, of the institution of the Jordanian state. But when the army struck on September 17th, things changed gradually all the way until I think June 1971 when all the forces of the Palestine resistance movement were evicted from the country.

JK: So, it really took a major military force, then, to end the situation?

MH: Yes, that was the only way. A clash had to take place. It was either the Jordanian state will survive or the Palestinian resistance movement will take over. And in the end it proved that they were no match. And also in the end it proved...

JK: You are saying that the PLO were actually no military match for the Jordanian military once they decided that they had to do this?



MH: Yes. But it was a very difficult decision because they had to go into all the Jordanian towns to take over--the state, the Jordanian state. And it also proved that much of the support for the PLO, especially among East Bankers, which was aimed at the Israelis was not translated to support against the King and the monarchy. So, a good number of those people who joined the resistance movement joined it to liberate Palestine, but once they had to choose between fighting the army and the King or staying home, they stayed home.

JK: So, was that a miscalculation on the part of the PLO? Had they expected they would get more support?

MH: I don't know if now, in retrospect, we can condemn anybody or pass judgment. The general perception among the people then, the politicized segment of the population, was that the Hashemites were in cahoots with imperialism and Zionism, and that they were no good, basically, and they were in the way, stopping everybody else's efforts from liberating Palestine. Once this new force emerged, with the Hashemites clearly in the diplomatic camp, conscious, very conscious of the international balance of power, very conscious of what can be achieved via force, what can be achieved via diplomacy, they had to clash--not only with the Palestinian resistance but also with leaders in both camps who thought that maybe this is emotionally correct, maybe it is politically correct to fight, but in view of the existing balance of power on the international scene and on the regional level, this approach stands no chance. But it was inevitable in my view, precisely because of this.



Another thing maybe that has not received adequate analysis is the issue of the Palestinian identity. The fact that the leadership of the movement came from Gaza, not from the West Bank, and had no history of co-existence with Jordan and the Jordanians, also contributed, I think. It was a contributing factor. If you look, for example, before 1967, most of those who were considered leaders of the Jordanian political scene, became leaders of Palestinian political scene as well--Jordanian *and* Palestinian. You have George Habas, who is a Palestinian, Matt Howard was a Jordanian.

JK: Can you say those names again?

MH: George Habas, the leader of the PFLP. Before 1967 he was a leader of the Jordanian political scene. People from both Jordanian and Palestinian origins, were considered the leaders of the mass political activity. Suddenly, after 1967, these same people became leaders of the Palestinian mass political activity. So, you had this identity crisis thrust into the middle of the country, and the Palestinians wanted to be Palestinians, express their national aspirations. And then the mobilization of the masses took on this, if you wish, perpetuated this dichotomy. In part it could be explained by the fact that the three major leaders, most important leaders of all, Yasser Arafat, Abu Jihad, and Abu Ehad{?}, came from a completely different political tradition, solidly Palestinian, had nothing to do with what took place between us and the Palestinians in 1950. And basically when they started their overt political activity in the country, what they did was a wholesale condemnation of the events that took place between 1950 and 1967, and this is what we call in this country, grew up calling 'Unity.' On the West Bank they refer to it as annexation. And the debate still goes on with us today.



JK: So there was a distinct, different point of view.

MH: Radical. A very interesting footnote to all this, actually, is when the Palestinians began re-evaluating the role of the Hashemites in the Palestinian question, as we call it here, took place in 1990, 1991, 1992, during the Gulf War. The King's stand was viewed as very patriotic, consistent with Arab nationalism. And then he got sick and came back from the United States and everybody in the country went out to the streets to receive him. And I remember in those days, correspondents and journalists from all over the

world came to the country and they were looking at that time for one view that was negative of the King and they couldn't find it, even among the PFLP, those people who had condemned him in the past. And this really opened the door for revisionist history, for re-reading the Hashemite role in Palestine and re-evaluating it.

JK: I know you have to go, so I want to thank you so much for meeting with me on such short notice.

**Yale-UN Oral History Project**
Mustafa Hamarneh
Jean Krasno, Interviewer
March 14, 1998
Amman, Jordan

Name Index: Middle East