

Global Forms of Cultural Propaganda in The Soviet Propaganda Film Collection

Visegrad Scholarship at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives

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Final Report

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Still from *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* (*Gerillatűzek Jordániában*, 1971. HU OSA 424-0-1-059 Soviet Propaganda Film Collection)

During my Visegrad Scholarship at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, my point of departure was a Hungarian film, *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* (*Gerillatűzek Jordániában*, 1971. HU OSA 424-0-1-059 Soviet Propaganda Film Collection), which puts forth Hungary's state-propagated solidarity with Palestine. With studying *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* as a case study, my aim was to understand how the ideology presented in this 1971 film fits the trajectories of both international and Hungarian history. My objective overall was to ground my current research as a contemporary art curator on global solidarity and Second World – Third World relations during the Cold War in more historical-academic terms. My research at OSA was thus twofold: on the one hand, to contextualize internationally a Hungarian piece of the Soviet Propaganda Film Collection at OSA; on the other hand, to reconstruct with archival materials of OSA Holdings the local and global historical contexts in which this Hungarian film emerged in 1971.

***Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* and International Political Filmmaking in the 1970s**

In order to assess the content and the form of Hungarian film—and as one thread of my research—a comparative analysis with other international films about the Palestinian

resistance movement made around the same time as *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* proved fruitful, also to identify the different local formats of agitprop and cultural propaganda. In 1970-1971, the Black September armed conflict unfolded between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the armed forces of King Hussein in Jordan—where the PLO was based at that time—the consequence of which was the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan. *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* in part chronicles this armed conflict. The Hungarian film, made by the Military Studio of the Mafilm Hungarian Film Studios, came four years after the Six-Day War of 1967, a watershed moment when all Eastern European countries—with the exception of Romania—cut diplomatic ties with Israel,¹ and turned towards the Arab World in diplomatic and economic relations.

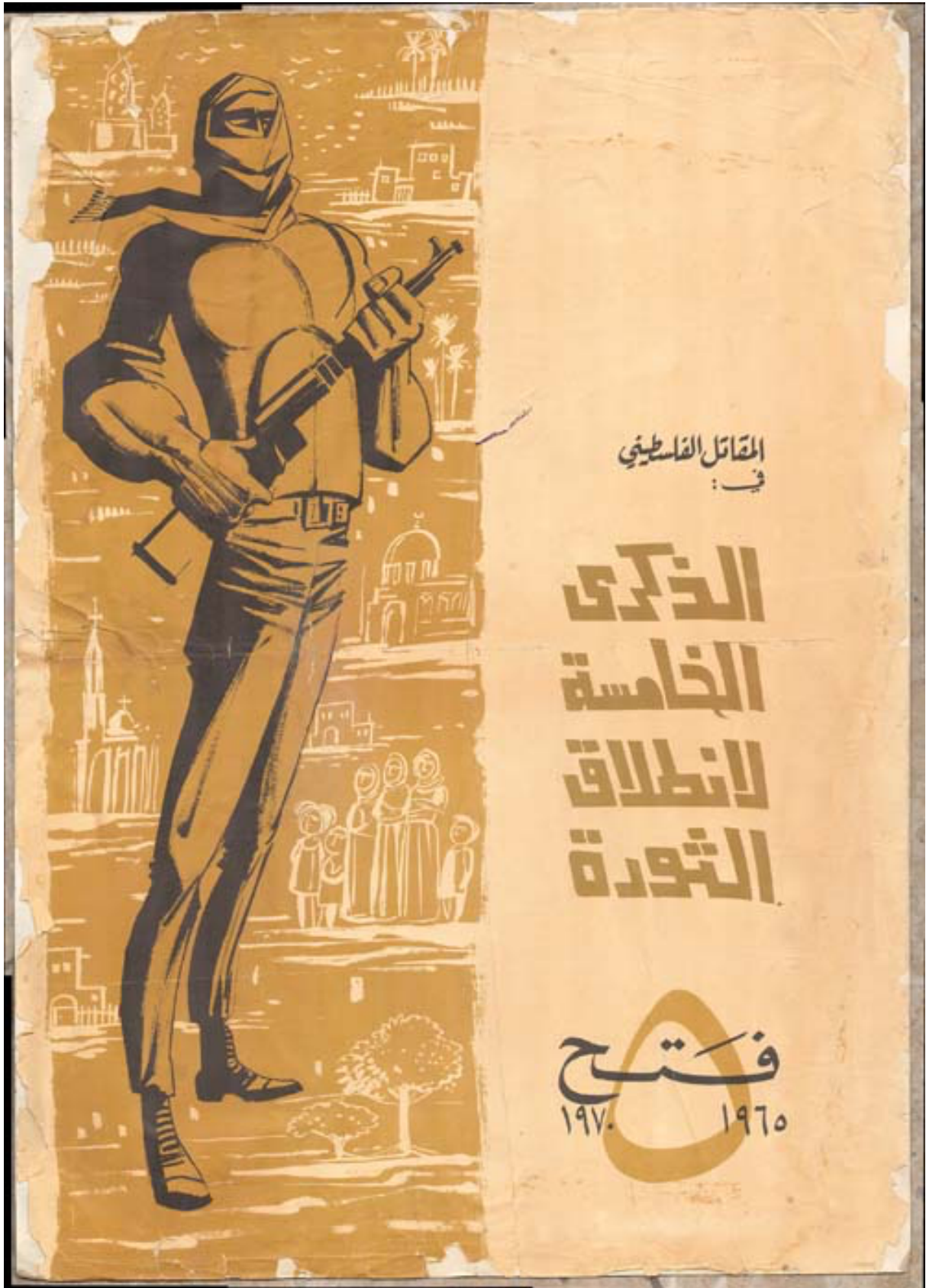
Guerilla Fighters in Jordan follows a conventional format: an expert, an authoritative male voice, Hungarian journalist Alajos Chrudinák, narrates the history of Palestine, from Biblical times up until then contemporary times, framing the Palestinian revolution within the anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist fight. Beyond filming in studio with various requisites, including several maps, the Hungarian film includes archival footages, as well as excerpts of the interviews Chrudinák made with Yasser Arafat in Jordan, with Khalid Bakdash, the Secretary General of the Syrian Communist Party in Damascus, and with a lieutenant of the Palestine Liberation Army in Ramtha. A similar dramaturgy was applied in *The NATO*,² another Hungarian film in the Soviet Propaganda Film Collection at OSA, also made in 1971 by the Military Studio of the Mafilm Hungarian Film Studios, by the same director, Róbert Glósz: an authoritative male figure (journalist József Pálffy) sitting behind a desk, narrates the story, with maps and archival footages. In *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan*, there are also original posters displayed in the studio that were published by Fatah and the PFLP between 1969 and 1971, including one that was modified and used as the title image of the Hungarian film.



Still from *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* (*Gerillatűzek Jordániában*, 1971. HU OSA 424-0-1-059 Soviet Propaganda Film Collection

¹ László J. Nagy, *Magyarország és az arab térség. Kapcsolatok, vélemények, álláspontok 1947–1975* (*Hungary and the Arab Region. Relations. Opinions. Statements 1947–1975*) (Szeged: JATE Press, 2006), 119.

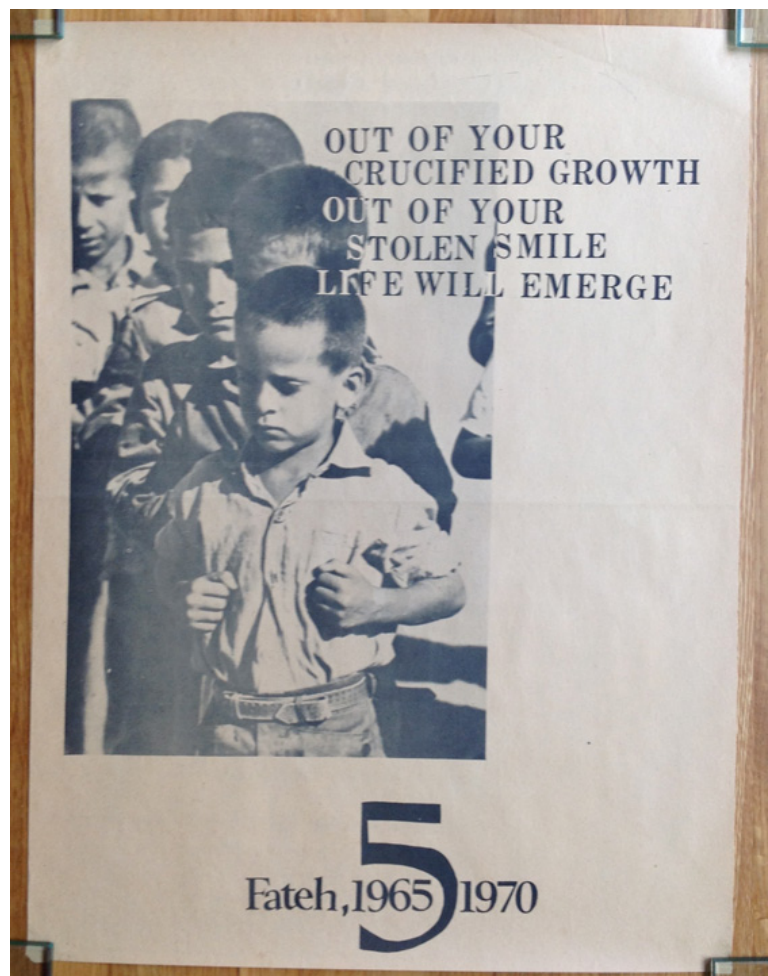
² “A NATO,” 1971. HU OSA 424-0-1-071; Soviet Propaganda Film Collection; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.



"The Palestinian Fighter. Arabic translation: The Palestinian fighter on the fifth anniversary of the launching of the revolution." Publisher: FATAH (Palestinian National Liberation Movement), 1970. Source: The Palestine Poster Project Archives, <https://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/the-palestinian-fighter>



Still from *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* (*Gerillatüzek Jordániában*, 1971. HU OSA 424-0-1-059 Soviet Propaganda Film Collection



“Stolen Smile – 1.” Publisher: FATAH (Palestinian National Liberation Movement), 1970. Source: The Palestine Poster Project Archives, <https://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/stolen-smile-1>

However, one can discern some elements in the film, which are specific to the Hungarian, local context: in terms of the Palestinian resistance movement, the preference of political resolution over armed struggle, the acknowledgment of the state of Israel, and an attempt to differentiate between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. Comparing the Hungarian state-propagated solidarity with Palestine, as exemplified by *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan*, with surveys conducted by RFE in 1967 and 1970,³ on public opinions about the conflicts between Israel and Palestine/the Arab World, however, shows little popular support of Eastern Europeans for the Palestinian cause, beyond the alliance of Party members, according to the report.

While the Hungarian film is conventional in its format and narration, its theme of the Palestinian revolution was very much in tune with other international, New Leftist and radical leftist filmmaking aspirations at that time. In 1970, the same year Chrudinák Alajos was in Jordan and Syria to make his interviews,⁴ Fatah commissioned, with funding from the Arab League, Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin to make a film about the Palestinian revolution in Jordan.⁵ In 1971, Masao Adachi and Koji Wakamatsu went to Amman⁶ and Beirut to film *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War* (*Sekigun-P.F.L.P: Sekai senso sengen* (赤軍PFLP・世界戦争宣言), as a collaboration between the Japanese Red Army (JRA) and the PFLP. Beyond these two well-known films, the Palestine Film Unit (PFU), founded by Mustafa Abu Ali, Hany Jawhariyyeh, and Sulafa Jadallah,⁷ also emerged at the end of the 1960s in Amman⁸ to forge a Palestinian militant cinema.

In comparing *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* to *Until Victory* (*Jusqu'à la victoire*, 1971) / *Here and Elsewhere* (*Ici et ailleurs*, 1976) by Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Pierre Gorin, and the *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War*, as well as *The Palestinian Right* (1969, (الحق الفلسطيني) by Mustafa Abu Ali,⁹ I was interested to see the different, localized forms agitprop takes in militant-political films that were produced around the same time (1969–1971/1976) about the same phenomenon (the Palestinian revolution). Instead of “evaluating” the aesthetic qualities of these very different films, I attempted to pin down how the Palestinian struggle was conceptualized in different localities. Godard and Gorin could not finish their film in 1970. According to Masao Adachi’s account, Godard and Gorin’s filmmaking was disrupted by the Black September armed conflict in Jordan: on the one hand, several of their collaborators on the film died, and Godard wanted also to reflect on the Black

³ HU OSA 300-6-1:12, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Media and Opinion Research Department: Administrative Files – “The Arab-Israeli Conflict and Public Opinion in Eastern Europe” [1970] and HU OSA 300-6-2:2, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Media and Opinion Research Department: East Europe Area and Opinion Research – “The Arab-Israeli Conflict and Public Opinion in Eastern Europe” [1967-07].

⁴ Alajos Chrudinák published a reportage in a Hungarian magazine in 1970 about his visit to Jordan, and an excerpt of his interview with Yasser Arafat that is *Guerrilla Fighters in Jordan* is also published in this article: Alajos Chrudinák, “Valahol Jordániában. Találkozás Arafattal. Tévedések két oldala” *Magyarország* Vol 7.No. 42 (October 18, 1970): 5.

⁵ Nadia Yaqub, *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution* (Austin: Unversty of Texas, 2018).

⁶ *Ibid*, 81.

⁷ Nick Denes, “Measures of Stillness and Movement The Poster in Cinema of the Palestinian Revolution” in *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East* ed. Anthony Downey (London – New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2015): 68.

⁸ Nadia Yaqub, “Palestinian Cinema,” 49.

⁹ Mustafa Abu Ali made the film *With Sweat, With Blood* in 1971, however, I was not able to access this film, that is why I am referencing his earlier film from 1969, *The Palestinian Right*.

September events in the film, which was dismissed by the PLO/Fatah.¹⁰ Six years later, Godard with Anne-Marie Miéville made *Here and Elsewhere* out of the footage Godard shot with Gorin in 1970. *Here and Elsewhere* narrates the ultimate failure of communicating the Palestinian revolution (“here) to the French working class (“elsewhere”).

Masao Adachi and Koji Wakamatsu, in accordance with the radical-militant leftist position of the JRA and the PFLP, advocated in *Declaration of World War* for the internationalization of armed struggle—“world war”—“as the best form of propaganda”¹¹—in sharp contrast to the Hungarian film’s favored position of political resolution. Interestingly, however, the same PFLP poster appears in both films.



Still from *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War*, dir. Masao Adachi and Koji Wakamatsu, 1971



Still from *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* (*Gerillatüzek Jordániában*, 1971. HU OSA 424-0-1-059 Soviet Propaganda Film Collection

¹⁰ Masao Adachi, “The Testament that Godard has Never Written,” (2002/2012) *Diagonal Thoughts*, March 16, 2014., <http://www.diagonalthoughts.com/?p=2067>.

¹¹ Quote from the film *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War*, dir. Masao Adachi and Koji Wakamatsu, 1971.



“Triple Threat – 1.” Publisher: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), circa 1970, Source: The Palestine Poster Project Archives, <https://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/triple-threat-1>

As Nadia Yaqub highlights, after 1948, for two decades, Palestinians had very little access to film and photography, and thus had no control over their own representation; they were seen and represented by others.¹² It was in the late 1960s, when Mustafa Abu Ali and the PFU started Palestinian militant filmmaking as documentation and as integral part of the revolution, the audience of which were the Palestinians.¹³ Moreover, as Mohanad Yaqubi likewise accentuated in relation to his film project *Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory*, militant films of this era marked also a turning point in Palestinian’s identity: from refugee to freedom fighter.¹⁴

The Palestinian Right (1969), directed by Mustafa Abu Ali, as one of the first attempt to film the revolution from a Palestinian perspective, was commissioned by the Jordanian TV, but was eventually censored and thus was never aired.¹⁵ Even though, as Nick Denes underlines, *The Palestinian Right* is groundbreaking in its content—it talks about the

¹² Nadia Yaqub, “Palestinian Cinema,” 25.

¹³ Ibid. 51.

¹⁴ Mohanad Yaqubi, *Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory*, 2016., <http://idiomfilm.com/movies/off-frame/>.

¹⁵ Kay Dickinson, *Arab Film and Video Manifestos. Forty-Five Years of the Moving Image Amid Revolution* (Cham, Switzerland : Palgrave Pivot, 2018), 91.

injustices Palestinians went through and acknowledges popular armed struggle—it still employs the colonial newsreel tradition of the expert, foreign, male narrator.¹⁶ What Denes also points out in *The Palestinian Right* as adhering to a colonial and Eurocentric discourse—such as “legal positivism,” citing maps and resolutions, or catering towards a foreign audience¹⁷—hold true for *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* as well. It likewise has to be noted in relation to *The Palestinian Right* that it has only recently been identified and digitized from the archival footage that was discovered in 2008 at the Jordan–Soviet (now Russian) Friendship Society headquarters in Amman.¹⁸ Similarly, the Soviet Propaganda Film Collection as a whole at OSA, which has been digitized and made openly accessible online in 2016, was also recovered, from among other places, the House of Soviet Science and Culture in Budapest, and has been preserved through the work of Hungarian historian of Russian and Soviet cinema Anna Geréb.

The Hungarian Perspective: To Be Continued

In order to try to understand how the *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan* fits into Hungarian history of the last five decades, I studied materials at OSA in relation to Anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in the USSR in the Gorbachev era¹⁹ and RFE’s biographical files of the Hungarian Unit on Chrudinák Alajos, including newspaper clippings.²⁰ The main turning point, however for me was following the appearance of Chrudinák in one of the raw documentary materials of Fekete Doboz (Black Box)—which was established in 1988 as the first independent media group in state socialist Hungary.²¹ The Black Box footage documented the Third World Congress of Hungarians organized in 1992 in Budapest.²² Watching through the documentation, as well as by being tipped off precisely by the Black Box material to trace the history of the World Association of Hungarians in RFE’s Subjects Files, Situation Reports, Weekly Bulletins, and Newspaper Clippings between 1955 and 1993,²³ I could pinpoint the ideological alignments of the World Association of Hungarians.

One of my main realizations was that the concept of the right to self-determination and the question of autonomy (especially the former) usually associated with the Palestinian struggle was submerged in Hungary in the late 1980s-early 1990s, and even in the early 2000s, at least in part, into a right-wing, nationalistic, exclusionary discourse. More precisely, the World

¹⁶ Nick Denes, “Between Form and Function,” *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, vol. 7. no. (2014): 222, .doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-00702008>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Anastasia Valassopoulos, “The international Palestinian Resistance: Documentary and Revolt,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 50. no. 2, (2014): 148-162, DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2014.883172, 153. The film project, and some of the films are available here: <http://afilmarchive.net/>.

¹⁹ HU OSA 300-5-180:2. Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Analytic Research Department: Subject Files of Ann Sheehy

²⁰ HU OSA 300-40-5:25 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Biographical Files – Chrudinák, Alajos [1980 - 1991], HU OSA 300-40-6:3 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Biographical Card Files – Chrudinák, Alajos [1955 - 1992].

²¹ Black Box Documentary Films, at Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, <http://www.osaarchivum.org/film-catalog/305-0-2>.

²² HU OSA 305-0-3:513 Fekete Doboz Alapítvány Video Archive: -: Unedited Video Materials – 10. 3rd World Congress of Hungarians [1992].

²³ HU OSA 300-40-1:1111 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Subject Files; HU OSA 300-40-1:1112 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Subject Files.

Association of Hungarians, which in the state socialist period was a state-maintained organization that wished to connect with the Hungarian diaspora living in others countries (in Western Europe, North America, Latin America, Australis, etc.), ignored Hungarian minorities residing in Hungary's neighboring countries. As the question of Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries, Hungarian identity, and forms of Hungarian nationalism were part of the right-lenient opposition discourse under state socialism in Hungary, the World Association of Hungarians, after the regime change of 1989, focused on Hungarian minorities in Hungary's neighboring countries, evoking the concept of the right to self-determination and territorial autonomy. Alajos Chrudinák, a journalist and TV reporter in state socialist media, was on the board of directors of the World Association of Hungarians between 1996 and 2000.

That is, it seems that *Guerilla Fighters in Jordan*, in a large perspective, simultaneously fits—paradoxically—both the trajectory of internationalist (leftist) Third World solidarity movements and the Hungarian (rightist) nationalist aspirations. My long-term project, within a Hungarian context, is, on the one hand, to query and research these two trajectories in more details, and if this preliminary finding still holds true, then overall, my project it to (re-)divert Hungarian solidarity with Palestine from a rightist, exclusionary discourse to a leftist, inclusive one. Arriving to these preliminary conclusions during my Visegrad Scholarship was only possible through the constellation and interlinkages of the collections made available and accessible at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives.

Detailed list of OSA Holdings consulted

HU OSA 300-40-1:1111

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Subject Files

– Magyarok Világszövetsége [1955 - 1967]

– Magyarok Világszövetsége [1968 - 1981]

HU OSA 300-40-1:1112

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Subject Files

– Magyarok Világszövetsége [1982 - 1984]

– Magyarok Világszövetsége [1985 - 1988]

– Magyarok Világszövetsége [1989 - 1991]

– Magyarok Világszövetsége [1992 - 1993]

HU OSA 300-40-5:115

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Biographical Files – Makai, György [ca. 1995]

HU OSA 300-40-5:25

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit: Biographical Files – Chrudinák, Alajos [1980 - 1991]

HU OSA 300-40-6:3

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit:
Biographical Card Files – Chrudinák, Alajos [1955 - 1992]

HU OSA 300-40-6:9

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Hungarian Unit:
Biographical Card Files – Glósz, Róbert [1974]

HU OSA 300-5-180:2

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Analytic Research
Department: Subject Files of Ann Sheehy
– Anti-Zionism [1978 - 1992],
– Anti-Semitism [1/2] [1979 - 1992],
– Anti-Semitism [2/2] [1979 - 1992]

HU OSA 300-6-1:12

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Media and Opinion
Research Department: Administrative Files – The Arab-Israeli Conflict and Public Opinion in
Eastern Europe [1970]

HU OSA 300-6-2:2

Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Media and Opinion
Research Department: East Europe Area and Opinion Research – The Arab-Israeli Conflict
and Public Opinion in Eastern Europe [1967-07]

HU OSA 300-85-9:41

Published Samizdat – Zionism in the Service of Anti-Communist [1973-12-07]

HU OSA 305-0-3:513

Fekete Doboz Alapítvány Video Archive: -: Unedited Video Materials – 10. 3rd World
Congress of Hungarians [1992]

HU OSA 361-0-10:4

András Hegedüs Personal Papers: Press Clippings – Magyarok Világszövetsége: Az agónia
népéből váljunk a reménység népévé [1993]

HU OSA 424-0-1-048

Soviet Propaganda Film Collection – Tashkent, kinofestival'-82 [Tashkent, Film Festival
1982], Soviet Union: 1982

HU OSA 424-0-1-059

Soviet Propaganda Film Collection – Gerillatüzek Jordániában [Guerilla Fighters in Jordan],
Hungary: 1971.

HU OSA 424-0-1-071

Soviet Propaganda Film Collection – A NATO, Hungary: 1971

HU OSA 424-0-1-079

Soviet Propaganda Film Collection – Afganistan. Splochnost' v bor'be [Afghanistan. Fighting Unit], Soviet Union: 1982

HU OSA 424-0-1-108

Soviet Propaganda Film Collection – Golos sovetskikh zhenshchin [The Voice of Soviet Women], Soviet Union: 1983

FL Record 035920

Secret and Manifest [1973]

directed by Karpov, Boris Leonidovich, Soviet Union: CSDF, 1973

FL Record 0255

Cold War on CNN, Part 17: Good Guys, Bad Guys 1967-1978 [1998], United Kingdom : Jeremy Isaacs Productions, 1998

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Hazan, Barukh, Soviet Propaganda: A case Study of the Middle East conflict
New York : Wiley, c1976

327.1/4/02547 19 ROS

Rose, Clive, The Soviet Propaganda Network: A Directory Of Organizations Serving Soviet Foreign Policy
London: Pinter Publishers ; New York : St. Martin's Press, 1988.