

Adopting Revolution: The Chinese Communist Revolution and the Politics of Global Humanitarianism

Modern China

2021, Vol. 47(5) 598–627

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DOI: 10.1177/0097700420937990

journals.sagepub.com/home/mcx

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Abstract

During the tumultuous period surrounding the Chinese Communist revolution of 1949, Chinese children wrote thousands of letters to foreign “foster parents” as part of a humanitarian fundraising program called the “adoption plan” for international child sponsorship. Under the adoption plan, private citizens around the world “adopted” Chinese children by funding their lives at orphanages in China while building personal relationships through the exchange of photographs, gifts, and translated letters. This article uses the case study of the Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch to examine how Chinese child welfare workers mobilized the sentimental ties between children and foster parents to secure international support for the revolution. Based on 490 extant letters sent by Chinese children to their foreign foster parents, it analyzes how the adoption plan became a centerpiece of efforts to transform inherited humanitarian practices to meet the new ideological and material needs of the Chinese Communist revolution.

Keywords

humanitarianism, revolution, adoption, childhood, welfare

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On July 1, 1949, a Chinese girl named Yin-ho wrote a letter to an American woman named Esther, whom she addressed as “Foster Mother,” although they had never met in person. Yin-ho was an orphan who lived and studied at the Yu Tsai School in the northern suburbs of Shanghai. Esther worked as a high school teacher in Worcester County, Massachusetts. Yin-ho’s letter begins like this:

Dear Foster Mother:

It is too bad that we cannot open our mouths and speak to each other directly but can only use this piece of white paper to say all that is in our hearts. But this piece of paper is too small for me to say everything. Would you like to hear more? Let me tell you! (FPP: Box 114, Folder 82)

Esther paid all of Yin-ho’s expenses at the Yu Tsai School through the China branch of an international child welfare organization called Foster Parents Plan for War Children 戰災兒童義養會中國分會 (hereinafter “PLAN China Branch”). Opened in 1947, the PLAN China Branch supported children at twenty-seven child welfare institutions across China through the “adoption” model of international child sponsorship. Under the adoption model, foreign “foster parents” could “adopt” individual Chinese children by paying their expenses at PLAN-supported institutions in China while building personal relationships through the exchange of photographs, gifts, and translated letters that used familial terms of address. Similar adoption programs had been operating in China since the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, and they had quickly emerged as among the most successful fundraising strategies for humanitarian work in China.

As it turns out, what Yin-ho wanted to share with her foster mother that day in July 1949 were all the positive changes she had observed since the People’s Liberation Army had liberated Shanghai one month earlier. Her letter continues:

It has been one month since the liberation of Shanghai and we can see that things have changed. For example, in the past nothing was ever given to the people in the villages, but now they are given fertilizer and the poorer farmers also get rice. Also the soldiers are never seen bullying the people.

Her letter is also full of seething anger at the American-allied Chinese Nationalist Party, whose bombing of Shanghai had recently destroyed her classmate’s home:

There is something else I want to tell you. It's that the day before yesterday the Nationalists sent planes to come and drop bombs. They came in the morning as soon as it was light and dropped 16 bombs in one place until the whole area was a tragic sight. We have a classmate whose home was bombed. Luckily no one in the family was killed, but everything was destroyed. The planes did not leave until the afternoon. It was truly terrible!

Yin-ho's letter was one of thousands that Chinese children wrote to their American foster parents during the tumultuous period surrounding the Chinese Communist revolution of 1949. In that year, Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party defeated Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party in what had been a protracted civil war. The United States had supported the Nationalists, and many regarded the Communists' victory as a dramatic defeat for the United States in the emerging Cold War.¹ Against this global political backdrop, Yin-ho and many other Chinese children wrote to their American foster parents with intimate, personal narratives of the Chinese Communist revolution—narratives that were strikingly different from any their foster parents might have encountered in the American press.

This article traces how the PLAN China Branch's adoption plan became a centerpiece of efforts to transform preexisting humanitarian practices to meet the new ideological and material needs of the Chinese Communist revolution. Under the rubric of "people's diplomacy," the PLAN China Branch channeled funding to "progressive" child welfare institutions while encouraging children to write their foster parents about how they had suffered under the American-allied Nationalist regime and were now thriving under the Communists. The PLAN China Branch coordinated with the highest rungs of Chinese Communist leadership, but responsibility for carrying out its experiment in revolutionary humanitarianism ultimately lay in the hands of the Chinese foster children and their local caretakers, who were suddenly thrust into the role of "people's diplomats." The Korean War forced the PLAN China Branch to shutter its adoption plan at the end of 1950, but the strategies of people's diplomacy that it helped to pioneer shaped the development of China's international soft power campaigns throughout the decades that followed.²

The history of the PLAN China Branch's adoption plan sheds new light on the global proliferation of humanitarian programs in the post-World War II era. Previous scholarship has argued that the expansion of Western humanitarian organizations across East Asia after World War II served the geopolitical and economic interests of the United States and Western Europe in the emerging global Cold War (Kim, 2009; Barnett, 2011; Choy, 2013; Hong, 2015; Oh, 2015). In line with this broader narrative, a small body of research

has connected the rise of international child sponsorship specifically to U.S. Cold War foreign policy goals in Asia (Klein, 2000, 2003; Fieldston, 2014, 2015).³ However, historians have paid less attention to how the people who *received* relief aid in the non-Western world reshaped humanitarian programs to suit their own political and economic interests. While scholarship has justifiably criticized humanitarians past and present for failing to allow the “the victims of the world” to define their own visions of progress, focusing almost entirely on the providers of transnational aid has ultimately reinforced the impression that only the perspectives of the would-be rescuers matter (Barnett, 2011: 14).⁴

In contrast, this article explores how the global history of humanitarianism might appear differently by focusing on those who received help in addition to those who provided it. My analysis toggles across four distinct but intersecting levels: PLAN headquarters in New York; the PLAN China Branch in Shanghai; PLAN-supported orphanages throughout China; and the individual “foster children” who benefited from PLAN aid. Specifically, I argue that Chinese children, their local caretakers, and the PLAN China Branch staff transformed the adoption plan to serve the political and economic needs of the Chinese Communist revolution. More broadly, I use the case of the PLAN China Branch to suggest a new approach to the history of humanitarianism that incorporates the significant ways the recipients of humanitarian aid in the non-Western world have both shaped and challenged the global humanitarian order.

In shifting the focus to the Chinese children who received global humanitarian aid through the adoption plan, this article engages with issues of methodology that have long confronted historians of childhood. As Peter Stearns wrote in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, the “granddaddy issue” facing historians of childhood involves “the virtually unprecedented problems of getting information from children themselves as opposed to adult perceptions and recommendations” (Stearns, 2008: 35). This is a particularly pressing problem in the context of modern Chinese history. With the famous final words of Lu Xun’s epochal 1918 story “Diary of a Madman”—*Save the children!*—as their rallying cry, generations of Chinese philosophers, scientists, educators, and political leaders invested their hopes for radical social and cultural change in the nation’s children (Kinney, 1995; Hsiung, 2008; Jones, 2011; Tillman, 2018). A small body of recent scholarship has addressed important topics such as child welfare, children’s literature, education, and the links between conceptions of childhood and conceptions of politics in modern China (Hsiung, 2005; Plum, 2006, 2012; Apter, 2013; Chen, 2012; Cunningham, 2014; David, 2018). However, citing a lack of sources, these

works rarely incorporate the voices of children themselves. Children are central characters in the story of modern Chinese history, but historians have yet to give them a speaking role.

In this regard, the letters written by Chinese children through the PLAN China Branch's adoption plan are a gold mine. I have collected and analyzed 490 such letters for this article.⁵ Nevertheless, these letters pose a vexing methodological problem. How do we read them? It would be naïve to assume that children's letters provide unmediated access to their experiences of the world-historic events unfolding around them. However, it would be equally speculative to dismiss them as nothing but a cynical attempt by adults to put their own words into the mouths of children for financial and political reasons. How to navigate this impasse?

In this article, I set aside the possibly unanswerable question of whether children's writings can accurately reflect "authentic" children's voices (Maynes, 2008; Alexander, 2015; Gleason, 2016). Instead, I use this unique cache of sources to inquire into the historical significance of children's writing itself. My specific case study asks: What role did children's letters to their foreign foster parents play in reconfiguring the politics of global humanitarianism during the Chinese Communist revolution? To answer this question, I proceed along two lines of analysis. In addition to closely reading children's letters to unpack the particular ways they narrated the Chinese Communist revolution for foreign audiences, I use the archival records of Chinese orphanages and the PLAN China Branch to investigate the specific ways Chinese child welfare workers participated in the writing and translation of their letters. In doing so, I show how Chinese child welfare institutions mobilized the child recipients of humanitarian aid in an attempt to secure ideological and material support for the revolution from abroad.

The PLAN China Branch

The PLAN China Branch's activities during the Chinese revolution emerged out of a decades-long history of collaboration between humanitarian organizations and socialist groups in Europe, China, and the United States. Marxist critiques of humanitarianism date back to *The Communist Manifesto*, in which Marx and Engels list humanitarianism as one instance of what they term "bourgeois socialism" (Tucker, 1978: 496–97).⁶ Nevertheless, despite their presumed ideological hostility, humanitarianism and international socialism developed a surprisingly symbiotic relationship as they both grew into globally significant movements during the first half of the twentieth century. Humanitarian relief provided by Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration was crucial to allowing Lenin and the Bolsheviks to survive

the Russian famine of 1921–1922 (Cabanes, 2014: 189–246). As Laura Briggs has demonstrated, widespread American concern with rescuing children overseas emerged in the 1930s out of a “left anti-Fascist internationalist front” arrayed against German Nazism, Franco’s war against the Spanish Republic, and the Japanese invasion of China. She argues that heart-rending photographs of mothers and children harmed in these conflicts were “leftist images that demanded attention for working-class lives” abroad. By portraying their subjects as “hardworking but down on their luck,” these images simultaneously stirred sympathies for vulnerable children across national, racial, and cultural boundaries and “built support for popular organizations and socialist movements” (Briggs, 2012: 129–35).

It was in this context that an English journalist named John Langdon-Davies founded PLAN (initially called the Foster Parents Scheme for Children in Spain) in April 1937 to fund hostels for refugee children fleeing the fighting of the Spanish Civil War.⁷ PLAN’s headquarters were soon moved to New York, where it was chartered as an independent corporation on July 13, 1939. PLAN’s founders strongly supported the Republicans against General Franco and the Nationalists, and they intended their work to bolster the Republican cause. Nevertheless, they believed that framing PLAN appeals in strictly humanitarian terms would best serve its political aims. The PLAN Board of Directors frankly acknowledged as much in its first official meeting on March 24, 1938: “Although this Committee is created to aid the Loyalists [. . .] appeals to the public will be humanitarian, exclusively concerned with refugee children” (Molumphy, 1984: 2). During the course of World War II, PLAN expanded its activities to support refugee children across Europe, and after the conclusion of the war, PLAN further expanded to open programs in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and China. When called upon to justify its continued work in China after the Chinese Communist revolution, PLAN explained that its “purely humanitarian” character required that it not discriminate against children in Communist countries for political reasons (Molumphy, 1984: 104–5).

After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Chinese causes had rapidly moved to the forefront of the global humanitarian conscience, and China became one of the primary fields for humanitarian-socialist collaborations. The PLAN China Branch was formed in September 1947 in partnership with a left-wing Chinese humanitarian organization called the China Welfare Fund 中國福利基金會 (hereinafter “CWF”).⁸ Founded in 1938 by Song Qingling (better known in the West as Madame Sun Yat-sen, widow of the Chinese revolutionary hero), the CWF used its public commitment to politically neutral humanitarianism to justify providing aid to the Chinese Communist Party. While the CWF was officially neutral regarding conflicts

between the Communists and Nationalists—who were then engaged in an uneasy alliance against Japan—it focused on directing aid to Communist-controlled guerilla areas. Since most aid provided to China during World War II was given to the Nationalists, the CWF argued that the principle of humanitarian neutrality demanded that it rebalance the scales by focusing its own work on Communist-controlled areas. As Song put it, “We do not demand that they be given preferential treatment, but we demand that they be given equal treatment” (Song, 1943). The CWF also deployed the rhetoric of international solidarity to solicit humanitarian aid for the Chinese Communists among labor organizations abroad. For example, in a February 8, 1944, open letter “To American Workers,” Song asked that they “openly express their hope that the people fighting Fascism behind the lines of the Japanese invaders are also able to receive a share of supplies befitting of their combat mission” (Song, 1944). Much like PLAN, the CWF was officially politically neutral but dedicated most of its resources to aiding leftist groups in the context of the popular front movements of the 1930s and 1940s.

The improbable partnership between these two geographically disparate humanitarian organizations was facilitated by an American named Gerald Tannebaum 譚寧邦. Born in Baltimore in 1916, Tannebaum moved to Shanghai in the fall of 1945 to serve as the deputy director of an Armed Forces Radio station (Washington Post, 1974).⁹ He quickly befriended Song Qingling, and it was during a dinner at Song’s home with the future premier of China, Zhou Enlai, that the two Chinese leaders persuaded Tannebaum to remain in China to work as the general secretary of the CWF (Gu, 2012: 260–61). On a brief visit to New York in 1947, Tannebaum met PLAN’s executive chairman, Edna Blue, who hired him to help PLAN expand into China (FPP: Box 115, Folder 88). Tannebaum opened the PLAN China Branch in Shanghai in September 1947 as a department of the CWF (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 10). He would personally serve as director of the PLAN China Branch while also continuing his duties as the CWF’s general secretary. In addition to hiring Tannebaum, the PLAN China Branch hired nine other staff members, all of whom were Chinese (FPP: Box 114, Folder 81).

By the time of the Chinese Communist revolution in 1949, the PLAN China Branch had become a critical humanitarian organization relied upon by dozens of child welfare institutions and thousands of children across China. PLAN advertisements in major American newspapers invited readers to become “foster parents” for US\$180 per year, payable in \$15 monthly installments (see Figure 1). As of 1949, PLAN foster parents had “adopted” 617 Chinese foster children in twenty-seven child welfare institutions throughout China. However, the PLAN China Branch did not provide cash grants directly to children but rather allocated money to each institution on a monthly basis.

"Eyes that trust, plead, and accuse"



"In the cold winter it is not much surprise to hear that 40 to 50 children with not enough clothes died in one day of coldness . . . of course, the rich people wear as much as they can carry . . . Students and lao pei shings (folk) sometimes have only two meals of maize made into steamed bread. . . refugees from floods and wars are everywhere—they eat the bark of trees and roots of grasses, some even a kind of soil . . ."

This is a 13-year-old Chinese boy, Chen Tsien-yuan speaking, writing to his American foster parent. . . but comparable misery is spread all over the world, wherever war has struck.

And the children are the greatest sufferers. The children, who are the most important of the world's resources, the children, who are the world of tomorrow.

You alone, or as a member of a group, can do your share to help, by becoming a foster parent. You will receive a case history and a photograph of the child. Correspondence with the child through our office is encouraged.

The Plan is helping children of fourteen different nationalities in France, Poland, Belgium, Italy, Holland, England, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and China. By aiding children in these countries you are working for peace—because all the people in contact with the children cannot but realize that we want friendship and not war.

The Foster Parents' Plan does not do mass relief. Each child is treated as an individual with the idea that besides food, clothing, shelter and education, the child will live in a homelike atmosphere and receive the loving care that so rightfully belongs to childhood.

EDNA BLUE, *International Chairman*

PARTIAL LIST OF SPONSORS: Nancy Craig, Mary Pickford, Ilka Chase, Fredric March, Joan Bennett, Helen Hayes, Edward R. Murrow, Larry LeSueur, Ned Calmer, Helen Keller.

FOSTER PARENTS' PLAN FOR WAR CHILDREN, INC. (NT 9)
55 West 42nd Street, New York City 18, New York Longacre 5-1096

A. I wish to become a Foster Parent of a War Child for one year. If possible, sex. . . . I will pay \$15 a month for one year (\$180.00). Payments will be made quarterly (), yearly (), monthly (). I enclose herewith my first payment \$

B. I cannot "adopt" a child, but I would like to help a child by contributing \$

Name

Address

City State Date

Contributions are deductible from Income Tax

Figure 1. A 1948 advertisement for Foster Parents Plan for War Children published in the *New York Herald Tribune* (October 24, 1948). Quoting a letter from a Chinese child, the advertisement appealed to liberal donors by highlighting socioeconomic inequality in China.

As PLAN-supported child welfare institutions used the funds for general expenses such as food, clothing, and medicine that benefited all children at

the institution and not only those in the adoption plan, the PLAN China Branch estimated that approximately six thousand children benefited from its support. In 1949 alone, the PLAN China Branch received donations totaling US\$65,516.25 as well as relief supplies valued at US\$5,813.21 (FPP: Box 114, Folder 81).

Only two years after the founding of the PLAN China Branch, the Chinese Communist revolution rendered the future of all humanitarian activity in China uncertain. In this period of flux and instability, the Plan China Branch's status as part of two larger humanitarian organizations—one American, one Chinese—would provide both opportunities and liabilities as it sought to navigate the seismic shifts in local and global politics wrought by the revolution.

The Rise of Revolutionary Humanitarianism

After weeks of fierce fighting, on May 27, 1949, the People's Liberation Army pronounced the city of Shanghai liberated. For the PLAN China Branch—as for the rest of China's largest, wealthiest, and most cosmopolitan city—the revolution had arrived.¹⁰ In the ensuing months, the PLAN China Branch sought and received approval of its work from the highest ranks of the Chinese Communist Party. In July 1949 Gerald Tannebaum traveled to Beijing to meet with high-level officials about the future of both the CWF in general and the PLAN China Branch in particular. While in Beijing, he secured meetings with Dong Biwu, who would soon become vice premier of the People's Republic of China, and his old acquaintance Zhou Enlai. While Zhou and Dong informed Tannebaum that it was too early to determine the long-term future of the CWF, they instructed him that it should continue all of its current work and even “increase its work if not limited by manpower and financial resources” (SMA: C45-1-2-1). Tannebaum also met with personnel from the foreign affairs office 外事局 to discuss “the overall situation of organizations from different countries conducting relief work in China” (SMA: C45-1-2-5). As of the summer of 1949, the PLAN China Branch had been granted explicit but temporary approval from the highest echelons of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Communist government allowed humanitarian organizations like the PLAN China Branch to continue operating without a determination on their long-term future until April 1950, when it convened the Chinese People's Relief Congress 中國人民救濟代表會議 in Beijing to establish official policy on social welfare and relief work.¹¹ A standing committee highlighted by Dong Biwu and Song Qingling presided over the meeting, which Tannebaum also attended (Remin ribao, 1950a; FPP: Box 1, Folder 5). The congress established the People's Relief Administration of China 中國人民救濟總會

(hereinafter “PRAC”) to coordinate social welfare and philanthropic activities nationwide (Renmin ribao, 1950b; Wen, 2013). Among the meeting’s most passionately debated topics was whether to continue accepting humanitarian aid from countries such as the United States, now considered among China’s foremost enemies.

Speaking on the second day of the congress, Song Qingling forcefully articulated her vision for a new model of humanitarianism as “people’s diplomacy” that could secure much-needed material aid while also forging people-to-people links with “progressive” forces abroad (Song, 1950a). Later published in the *People’s Daily*, Song’s speech stands out as among the most influential public testimonials for how humanitarianism could serve the Chinese Communist revolution (Renmin ribao, 1950c). She singled out the PLAN China Branch for its contributions to the revolution:

Before liberation, the recipients of Foster Parents Plan aid were progressive or potentially progressive organizations. At that time, these schools and children’s institutions had very few other sources of funding. Through Foster Parents Plan’s help, they were able to survive this extremely difficult time.

While Song acknowledged and echoed the congress’s widespread criticism of “imperialist” humanitarian organizations that “use the issue of relief aid as an artifice for attacking new China,” she did not call for ending all foreign philanthropy in China. Rather, she argued that the transnational connections forged through humanitarianism could be used to “transform foreign people’s opinions” of China. In contrast to “formal government and news reports,” humanitarianism could better accomplish this goal by building “people-to-people relationships,” which Song argued were “more easily embraced by the people of imperialist countries.” The PLAN China Branch’s adoption plan, which sought to foster intimate ties between Americans and Chinese children, was the ideal vehicle for this new model of humanitarian aid. In citing the continued importance of its work “in accordance with the policies of the People’s Government,” Song trained a national spotlight on the PLAN China Branch as a model humanitarian organization for the Communist era (Song, 1950a).

Nevertheless, maintaining a clear demarcation between “revolutionary” and “imperialist” humanitarianism was far from easy. While the congress was still in session, Song received news that PLAN headquarters in New York had agreed to work with other, more conservative relief agencies including United Service to China and Church World Service to secure U.S. government aid for famine areas in China (Christian Science Monitor, 1950). Blindsided, she immediately cabled executive chairman Edna Blue to demand

that she cut off all relations with those other relief groups. On April 26, 1950—only one day after her speech to the Chinese People’s Relief Congress—Song wrote to the PLAN China Branch’s deputy secretary-general, Zhang Zong’an, to express her hope that “Mrs. Blue did not understand the political significance of her agreement.” “If this is not the case,” she added ominously, “then I feel the time has come to tell Foster Parents Plan for War Children that we do not want their help anymore” (Song, 1950b). The episode quickly blew over, and the PLAN China Branch continued its work uninterrupted. Nevertheless, the wide gulf between Song’s public assurances and private doubts foreshadowed the delicate tightrope act that the PLAN China Branch would have to maintain in pursuing its global humanitarian agenda in the context of the quickly descending Cold War.

The Adoption Plan as “People’s Diplomacy”

The PLAN China Branch was not the first humanitarian organization to use the adoption plan in service of its philanthropic and political goals in China. During and after World War II, Chinese and foreign transnational aid organizations had utilized the adoption plan to fundraise for child welfare work in China as well as to attract international support for their own political and religious causes. Founded in 1938, the National Association for Refugee Children 戰時兒童保育會 used a sponsorship program it called the “adoption of warphans by foreign nationals” to attract thousands of “adopters” from across North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific (SHAC: 11-4034, 6).¹² In addition to attracting donors, the National Association for Refugee Children used the letters children wrote through the adoption program to build support for China’s war effort and bolster the international prestige of the Nationalist Party. For example, a boy named Cheng Zur wrote to his foster mother Katherine in Wanganui, New Zealand:

Because the enemy occupied our native home, I had to leave my family. But friend, my luck is not so bad! Do you know that in China we have a great mother, Madame Chiang? She established many warphanages to take in child refugees. I was sent to the No. 2 Warphanage where I have the opportunity to attend school. (SHAC: 11-4237, 117-119)

The National Association for Refugee Children’s adoption program was often quite successful in convincing foreign citizens to associate their “adoption” of a Chinese child with China’s broader war effort. In a letter to the association enclosing money for the adoption of one child, the organizing

secretary of the Texas State Committee of the Church Committee for China Relief wrote, "I hope and pray I may be of more and more help to you and China. We feel very proud and hopeful of dear China. We must win grandly. We *shall*" (SHAC: 11-4234, 78).

After the conclusion of World War II, an American transnational aid organization named China's Children Fund 美華兒童福利會 (hereinafter "CCF") dramatically expanded the use of the adoption plan to fundraise for child welfare work in China.¹³ By 1949, the CCF's adoption plan alone supported approximately 5,113 children in forty-two institutions across China (Tise, 1992: 24). The CCF viewed the adoption plan not only as a highly effective fundraising tool but also as a means to promote Sino-American friendship and Christianity in China. As a CCF article put it, "Dollar for dollar, the investment in a child's life is the most economical and efficient investment a Christian can make" (China News, 1947). As evidence of the adoption plan's political efficacy, CCF's founder, Calvitt Clarke, wrote to the State Department's director for Chinese affairs Edmund Clubb that "many" Chinese children's letters were "full of wishes to see America and appreciation for what America has done" (CCF: Box IB21, Folder 16). The CCF circulated one story about a Communist cadre who visited a CCF orphanage in Guangzhou to lecture the children about Russia's help to the Chinese people. But when he asked the children which country had helped China the most, they nevertheless responded, "America!" (CCF: Box IA1, Folder 9; China News, 1950).

But rather than discard the adoption plan as a tool of the reactionary Nationalist Party and their American imperialist allies, the PLAN China Branch instead sought to transform it into a new mode of revolutionary humanitarianism that could promote the Chinese Communist revolution abroad—a strategy it termed "people's diplomacy" 人民外交. The sheer volume of correspondence between Chinese children and their foster parents marks the adoption plan as a highly significant avenue of communication between ordinary Chinese and Americans at a moment when the two nations were fast becoming enemies on opposite sides of a global Cold War. As stated in the PLAN China Branch constitution, all children in the adoption program were required to write one letter to their foster parents every month. If a child failed to write for two or more consecutive months without a valid excuse, the PLAN China Branch would consider terminating that child's financial assistance through the program (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 32–34). In the year and a half between January 1949 and July 1950—the crucial period surrounding the Chinese Communist revolution—Chinese children wrote 6,385 letters to their foster parents as part of the PLAN China Branch's adoption plan. During that same period, American

foster parents sent 1,437 letters to their Chinese foster children. These numbers would be even greater if not for disruptions to China's domestic and international postal services in 1949 due to the civil war (SMA: C45-2-4-4; C45-2-9-13). In July 1948, *Dagong bao* had reported that some American foster mothers would send their Chinese children four or five letters in a single month (Dagong bao, 1948).

In its 1949 annual report, the PLAN China Branch argued that by providing an intimate view into how children had suffered under the Nationalist regime but were now thriving under the Communists, children's letters could win friends for the Chinese revolution within American society:

Before liberation, the content of the children's letters reflected the bleakness and corruption of the reactionary Nationalist regime and their collusion with the American government. On the other hand, since liberation the children's letters have instead reflected the excellent discipline of the People's Liberation Army and the new People's Government as well as the children's own progress. Their letters have made some of PLAN's donors believe that China is a country with a bright future and that the Chinese Communist Party isn't what the American media makes it out to be. (SMA: C45-2-4-4)

To be sure, the PLAN China Branch did not claim that it could turn large swaths of American society in favor of the Chinese Communist Party. Instead, the report deployed anecdotal examples of children's letters influencing their foster parents to suggest the effect such programs might have if carried out on a large scale.

There is one donor who has adopted a student at the Yu Tsai School who works for an American radio station. He read a letter written to him by the student he sponsors out loud over American airwaves. This is exactly what we're hoping for. (SMA: C45-2-4-4)

One letter at a time, children could reveal to their sponsors a different side to the Chinese Communist revolution from what they read in the newspapers.

In order to understand fully how Chinese children's letters constructed particular narratives of the revolution for their foreign foster parents, it is important to cross-reference these letters with the case files that the PLAN China Branch provided to foster parents when they "adopted" a child. For instance, on July 1, 1949, a boy named Ping-pu wrote a letter that expressed outrage at the recent Nationalist bombings of Shanghai: "Several days ago Nationalist planes came again to bomb Shanghai.

About 500 people were killed or hurt. Now the Chinese people hate the Nationalists even more” (FPP: Box 115, Folder 84). Turning to Ping-pu’s case file, we learn that he was fifteen years old, born in Hangzhou, and attending the Yu Tsai School in Shanghai. We also see a first-person account of how he became an orphan:

As the Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937, we had lots of air-raids and my parents were killed finally in one of the raids which also destroyed our home and everything. I was then only five years old. I became a beggar in the streets. In the daytime I begged my meals and spent my nights in some dilapidated temples. (FPP: Box 48, Folder 45)

In light of this story, Ping-pu’s July 1949 letter takes on new layers of meaning. While experiencing the Nationalist air raids of Shanghai in the summer of 1949, his mind must have flashed back to the Japanese air raids that killed his parents, destroyed his home, and condemned him to years begging on the streets. In the context of his case file, Ping-pu’s letter helped build the narrative that the Nationalists had replaced Japan as the new threat to China’s children and would need to be defeated if they were to grow up in peace and safety.

“Use the Heart to Influence the Mind”: The Politics of Global Intimacy

The PLAN China Branch recognized that children’s letters could only be politically effective if children maintained close, affectionate relationships with their American foster parents. To this effect, the PLAN China Branch sought to use children’s letters to foster what it called “sentiment across national boundaries” 國際間的情感—or what I render loosely here as “global intimacy” (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 13).¹⁴ In order to balance these twin imperatives of teaching foster parents about the Chinese revolution and sustaining their emotional investment in their foster children, the PLAN China Branch issued prescriptions regarding both the content and tone of children’s letters. In November 1949, the PLAN China Branch published a booklet titled *Work for the Suffering Children* 為苦難兒童而工作 that posed the issue succinctly: “How can we take the exchange of ordinary pleasantries and dull greetings and transform them into people’s diplomacy and international propaganda?” (see Figure 2). To achieve this goal, the booklet suggested potential topics for children’s letters: “the construction of new China, the glorious achievements of the People’s Liberation Army, the contrast between the People’s Government and the government of the Nationalist reactionaries—all of these can serve as subjects for the children to report on.”



Figure 2. *Work for the Suffering Children: Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch Work Report* (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949). This booklet was published to explain and justify the PLAN China Branch's work to domestic audiences.

The booklet even went so far as to suggest specific narrative strategies suited to the particularities of the American psyche.

Generally speaking, the majority of Americans' political level is low, but they are relatively inclined to seek out facts. For this reason, they will not easily accept empty sayings and slogans and on the contrary will feel an aversion to them. On the other hand, they are willing to accept narrative stories and specific facts and examples. [. . .] We think that the people who lead children in writing letters should grasp hold of this type of propaganda and reporting. (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 15–16)

In internal reports, the PLAN China Branch moved beyond the topic and narrative structure of children's letters to argue for the need to train children to write with the proper tone. The 1949 annual report stated: "In order to serve as effective propaganda, their letters cannot be too strident. They must be soft in tone but firm in substance 外軟內硬. Of course, this requires a comparatively high level of epistolary skill. Therefore, our education department must ensure that they clearly understand this point" (SMA: C45-2-4-4). By 1950, the PLAN China Branch had refined its prescriptions on children's letters into a concise formulation: "use the heart to influence the mind" 從感情到理性 (SMA: C45-2-9-13). Preserving affectionate ties with American foster parents would help ensure that children's stories of revolution were read with sympathy and open-mindedness.

The imprint of these prescriptions is visible in the generic quality of many of the children's letters. For example, on July 8, 1950, a 14-year-old boy named Cheng-chung at Shanghai Boystown Orphanage wrote a letter that skillfully applied the PLAN China Branch's recommendations. The letter begins: "Whenever I write letters to you a feeling of warmth and intimacy often rises up inside of me. This is because of the correspondence we have been exchanging back and forth." Only after this affectionate opening does his letter turn to politics: "I love peace. I hate those warmongers who go about starting wars. [. . .] I think that you also must support peace. Have you signed your name on the peace petition yet? I have already signed my name" (FPP: Box 46, Folder 38). Written shortly after the United States had intervened in the Korean War, the letter (and the peace petition then circulating in China to which it referred) were clearly critical of the United States. However, by writing in broad terms against "war" and in favor of "peace," Cheng-chung's letter "used the heart to influence mind" by being "soft in tone but firm in substance."

"We Do Not Have Enough Control Over the Children's Letters": Translation, Censorship, and the Problem of Off-Script Letters

Imposing rigid discipline on children writing from twenty-seven institutions in fourteen cities across China was easier said than done. Every one

of the 490 letters written by children as part of the PLAN China Branch's adoption program that I have read is unique. With the exception of children who were too young to write, the PLAN China Branch constitution required that all children write their letters in their own hand (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 24–26, 32). The variety of handwriting seen across these letters—sometimes precociously elegant, sometimes clumsy and juvenile, sometimes all but illegible—confirms that this rule was generally observed. Oftentimes, letters deviated dramatically from the PLAN China Branch's recommendations. The PLAN China Branch readily admitted as much in an internal report from 1950: "We do not have enough control over the children's letters. Since liberation, the children's political level has become very high, but their propaganda skills remain poor. This has started to have some effect on the sentiments of the foster parents, causing the number of people who discontinue their adoptions to increase." For example, the report continued, some children "decry American imperialism and lecture to their sponsors, displaying the erroneous tendencies of excessively harsh language or excessively leftist ideology" (SMA: C45-2-9-13).

But if the PLAN China Branch worried that children might alienate their sponsors with naked political propaganda, other children deviated from their prescriptions by neglecting to promote the revolution altogether. On June 15, 1949, a girl named Hsiu-yun at the Hsiang Shan Orphanage near Beijing wrote a letter that eschewed politics and instead shared a poem she composed on a fan she made herself out of cardboard:

The wind blows into the fan
I grasp it inside of my hand
If someone wants to borrow it

They'll have to wait till winter hits. (FPP: Box 114, Folder 80)

As this letter and many more like it demonstrate, children were not *required* to take up the explicitly political topics suggested by the PLAN China Branch.

Although I have not come across any letters that overtly criticize the Chinese Communist Party, some letters painted a bleak portrait of life after liberation. On July 12, 1949, nearly half a year after the liberation of Beijing, a boy named Chih-sun wrote to his foster mother to describe what he saw on a fieldtrip to the outskirts of the city. His letter reads like a chronicle of misery. He describes sweat-drenched workers emerging from a coal mine "like ants swarming out of a hole" and farmers "working with knitted brows" because drought had led to a poor wheat harvest. Finally, he

describes returning to the city to see people who were once landlords, rich peasants, and Nationalist soldiers peddling their old possessions to eke out a living. "Before they enjoyed wealth," he wrote. "Now they are suffering" (FPP: Box 114, Folder 83). By dramatically deviating from the script, letters such as this one reveal that the PLAN China Branch depended on the active participation of children for its adoption plan to function as "people's diplomacy."

When the PLAN China Branch thought that the content or tone of a child's letter threatened its philanthropic or political goals, it turned to the process of translation as a means of censoring children's letters. The PLAN China Branch's booklet *Work for the Suffering Children* points out how the necessity of translating correspondence allowed it to mediate the relationships between children and their foster parents: "What needs to be explained here is that they do not communicate directly but instead through our organization. Therefore we can pay close attention to and carefully translate their letters" (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 15). In internal reports, the PLAN China Branch more strongly hinted at the censorial function of translation. The 1949 annual report stated that until the education department had successfully trained children in the delicate art of writing letters "soft in tone but firm in substance," "all that we can do is to pay extra attention during the process of translation" (SMA: C45-2-4-4). If these statements are perhaps deliberately vague, careful comparison of the original Chinese-language letters with their English translations reveals examples in which translation was clearly used to censor content seen as detrimental to their mission. On July 29, 1950, a boy named Shu-san at the Baillie School in Gansu wrote a letter in which he boldly encouraged his foster parents to fight for revolution in the United States. A literal translation of an excerpt from his letter would read:

I wonder what it is like in your country. I think that every one of you must look forward to liberation at an early date. In that case, you must work hard, for in the course of liberation there will arise many difficulties. For example, many progressive thinkers will be captured, jailed, and interrogated with torture. This is a necessary stage of revolutionary work, and we can learn important lessons from it while at the same time we will come to hate it even more. This is my opinion. I do not know if it is correct. (FPP: Box 46, Folder 38)

In contrast, the corresponding section of the PLAN China Branch's English-language translation reads as follows:

I wonder how is the general condition in your country. I am sure that every one of you wishes to enjoy the full liberty, but it can only be achieved at the cost of countless struggles. In the course of a revolution, it is not uncommon that so many people sacrifice their lives in order to realize the happiness of the mass of people. (FPP: Box 46, Folder 38)

In the English translation, “liberation” 解放 has been rendered as “enjoy the full liberty,” and his appeal to his foster parents to struggle for revolution has been edited to read as a statement about the difficulty of revolution in the abstract. Clearly, the PLAN China Branch feared that encouraging foster parents to incite revolution risked jeopardizing their support for the program.

The PLAN China Branch’s practice renders the process of censorship transparent and offers a rare opportunity to treat the ways adults edited, shaped, and censored children’s writing as an object of analysis rather than an obstacle to analysis. The PLAN China Branch used its role as translator to omit content it found counterproductive, but I have encountered no evidence that it fabricated the content of letters. It could suggest potential topics for children’s letters, coach them on style and tone, and even censor problematic content, but it ultimately relied on the children themselves to write letters that could serve as effective people’s diplomacy.

The corpus of Chinese children’s letters sent to the United States through the adoption plan raised several questions, as relevant to the PLAN China Branch at the time as they are to the historian today. Who were the Americans receiving these letters? What did they make of what their foster children told them about the Chinese revolution? In short, was people’s diplomacy working? To answer these questions, the PLAN China Branch collected information about American donors through which it could analyze their class backgrounds and political leanings—and adjust its program accordingly.

Meet the Foster Parents

As the PLAN China Branch did not receive biographical information about American foster parents, it relied on the information foster parents shared in their letters to gain an understanding of the donors who were the targets of people’s diplomacy. According to its analysis, the categories of people most likely to serve as foster parents included students, religious people, teachers, community organizers, workers, capitalists, and public figures (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 11–12). In addition to creating a demographic portrait of American donors, the PLAN China Branch also analyzed their letters to gauge how their participation in the adoption plan affected

their views on China. While they found most foster parents ill-informed about Chinese politics, they believed that children's letters were providing them with a favorable impression of the new People's Republic of China:

From the foster parents' letters, we can see clearly that the majority of Americans do not have a good understanding of the surrounding political situation. Their letters generally discuss things like family affairs and religion. Although these kinds of people have an indifferent attitude toward China, their reaction to the People's Republic of China has actually been fairly good. Of course, there is also a minority of foster parents' letters that are indeed very reactionary. (SMA: C45-2-4-4)

While some sponsors remained "indifferent" to the People's Republic of China, and a small number were apparently downright hostile, the PLAN China Branch initially remained optimistic that children's letters were gradually improving American foster parents' views of the Chinese Communist revolution.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any original letters that American foster parents wrote through the PLAN China Branch's adoption plan. However, the PLAN China Branch's booklet *Work for the Suffering Children* published two example letters from American foster parents in Chinese translation. While these should not be read as representative of sponsors' letters in general, they modeled the type of responses the PLAN China Branch sought from American donors. One of the letters, from an American identified as "E.H." to his foster child Ping, expressed approval of Ping's commitment to work for social equality:

I am extremely interested in your determination to dedicate yourself to improving the lives of working people. [. . .] From the perspective of morality, there are some people who have too much, and then there are others who have nothing at all and have even been deprived of life's basic necessities. This is wrong indeed. (Foster Parents Plan for War Children China Branch, 1949: 19–21)

In its condemnation of social inequality, the letter meshed well with Communist rhetoric. By using it as an example, the PLAN China Branch conveyed to a domestic audience that foster parents were not "imperialists" but ordinary people who shared their hopes for China's future.

However, the PLAN China Branch's initial optimism that children's letters were improving Americans' views of China eventually gave way to the realization that most foster parents were unwilling to engage in protracted political exchanges. A mid-1950 report summarized the changes in foster parents' letters during the ten months that had elapsed since the founding of the People's Republic of China:

They go from not understanding Chinese affairs to having a favorable impression, but in the end they ultimately go silent. The majority of sponsors' letters do not say a single word about China's domestic situation. Those that do are a very small minority, and they often distort the facts.

Privately, the PLAN China Branch complained, "the American imperialists' actions to oppose our people have hindered donations and interfered with the affection between donors and their adopted children" (SMA: C45-2-9-13). And with the United States and China on the brink of war in Korea, the PLAN China Branch's adoption plan, already on shaky ground, would face its most difficult challenge yet.

Unhappy Endings: The Korean War and the Closing of the PLAN China Branch

Among the most prominent institutions to receive PLAN China Branch support was a home for troubled youth called Shanghai Boystown 上海少年村. Shanghai Boystown closely collaborated with the underground Communist Party in Shanghai, hiring numerous underground party members as teachers, their salaries paid with PLAN funds (Wang Juan, 2007: 50). After the liberation of Shanghai in the summer of 1949, many of the older boys signed up to join the People's Liberation Army, and twenty-three of them ultimately met the requirements and enlisted. A boy named Gun-chun was one of them (Song Jianhua, 2007). In June 1949, he wrote a letter to his foster parents, the Macauleys, explaining his decision to join the army. Although he asked them to continue writing, it was in effect his goodbye letter: "I am very thankful to you my foster parents for raising us. Although we have entered society on the path to serve humanity, I still hope that you will write to us, and finally I hope that you will send me pictures of my foster brothers" (FPP: Box 114, Folder 83). In October 1950, approximately fourteen months after he wrote that letter, China intervened in the Korean War and Gun-chun was deployed to the Korean Peninsula, where he found himself at war with the country of the people he called his foster parents. As a member of the cultural work team 文工隊, Gun-chun's job was to make costumes and props for a dance troupe that performed to encourage the troops. He was remembered as someone who talked little but was painstaking and meticulous in his work. During the summer of 1951, as the Chinese army retreated north toward the 38th parallel, Gun-chun suffered severe burns on his face and hands from napalm bombs dropped by UN forces. He was rushed to a field hospital for treatment, but shortly thereafter the hospital was caught in an attack and he was never heard from again (Ren, 2007). It was not until years later that one of

Gun-chun's former classmates and comrades, Wang Wenxiang, looked him up in the military archives and found the coordinates of his burial site just south of the 38th parallel (Wang Wenxiang, 2007: 93).

Gun-chun's tragic fate illustrates how the PLAN China Branch's strategy of cultivating global intimacy to ameliorate global politics eventually crumbled against the hard realities of war. When he left Shanghai Boystown, Gun-chun was, by all appearances, an adoption plan success story. He had received food, shelter, and an education through the support of his American foster parents, with whom he had built a mutually affectionate relationship. And he left Boystown ready to become a self-sufficient young adult through a career in military service. Nevertheless, within two years of leaving the adoption plan, he was engaged in a vicious battle with the compatriots of his foster parents that would leave him dead, buried in an unmarked grave in an unfamiliar land. To the Macauleys, Gun-chun was a "foster son," but to the American warplanes dropping napalm bombs over Korea, he was still simply "the enemy."

By the time Gun-chun met his fate in Korea, the PLAN China Branch had already been shuttered. The official reason for its closing in December 1950 stemmed from a dispute regarding whether PLAN funds could be subject to the approval of the People's Relief Administration of China. As part of a broader reorganization of the China Welfare Fund in 1950, the organization's new regulations required that "all money and goods donated by international friends must receive the approval of the PRAC before they can be accepted and used" (SMA: C45-1-12-4). On October 11, 1950, Tannebaum wrote to Edna Blue in New York to explain this new policy: "The reason for this [. . .] is that a national plan on relief and welfare is being developed and it is their intention to muster all possible aid to effecting this plan." Tannebaum added that he had met with PRAC vice-chairman Dong Biwu, and he assured Blue that there was "no question" that the PRAC "clearly understand our operation in China, and are in agreement with allowing us to function" (FPP: Box 1, Folder 5). Nevertheless, on November 2, 1950, the PLAN General Committee decided that requiring funds to be cleared by the PRAC violated the PLAN charter's insistence that it "should be free from any connection with, or allegiance to any group having any political or propagandistic interest of any kind." A motion to immediately terminate PLAN's work in China passed unanimously (Molumphy, 1984: 104-5).

The PLAN China Branch, the CWF, and the PRAC were outraged by PLAN's decision to terminate the China program, which they viewed as PLAN succumbing to domestic pressure not to do anything that might help the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party. Tannebaum wrote to Blue, "The American government is making the breach between the Chinese people and the American people wider and wider. [. . .] If there is anything you can do to correct it, the American

people will be ever appreciative to you” (Messmer, 2008: 25). Nevertheless, PLAN headquarters explained in a series of telegrams and letters that it had become “difficult for one to believe that the relief funds can directly benefit the children” (SMA: C45-1-27). In their capacities as chairman and vice-chairman of the PRAC, Song Qingling and Dong Biwu replied, excoriating the termination of PLAN aid to China as politically motivated: “We were extremely indignant to hear of this measure, which is obviously searching for a pretext to treat the Chinese people as an enemy.” However, in a separate letter to the CWF, Song struck a somewhat softer tone, noting that PLAN “always helped the Chinese people in the past” (Du, 2002: 28).

Song Qingling, Dong Biwu, and the PLAN China Branch were probably justified in viewing PLAN’s stated reason for terminating its China program as a “pretext.” While subjecting PLAN funds to PRAC approval could be read as violating the letter of the PLAN charter, PLAN frequently coordinated with politicians and government bodies in other contexts. Shortly after closing its China Branch, PLAN began operating in Korea, where “institutions were supported only upon the recommendation of the Korean Ministry of Social Affairs” (Molumphy, 1984: 28–30, 111). Ultimately, the PLAN China Branch’s experiment in revolutionary humanitarianism ended because PLAN’s New York headquarters would no longer fund what it perceived as a humanitarian program that benefited the Chinese Communist revolution.

Conclusion

On July 3, 1950, a boy named Da-chwen at the World Red Swastika Society’s Orphanage for Homeless Children in Tianjin wrote a letter to his foster mother Shirley in which he mused on the importance of self-sufficiency: “Everyone says that only the People’s Government can help the people solve their difficulties. It is right to use our own abilities to overcome disaster. Depending on other people is not a fundamental solution. Don’t you agree?” (FPP: Box 46, Folder 48; Box 47, Folder 43). It is unclear whether Da-chwen intended the irony of writing such a letter to the woman who had financially supported him for several years. Regardless, his words were prescient. China’s intervention in the Korean War in October 1950 lent new urgency to a campaign to achieve national self-sufficiency in providing for social welfare needs. In this context, Chinese officials, intellectuals, and child welfare workers revived the Marxist argument that humanitarian programs facilitated imperialism in China by rendering China’s most vulnerable citizens dependent on imperialist largesse. In the ensuing campaign to uproot foreign humanitarian organizations from China, the intimate ties forged between children and their foreign foster parents through the adoption plan emerged as explosive symbols of how humanitarianism functioned as a “cloak” for

imperialist encroachment. After leaving China, transnational aid organizations like PLAN refocused their efforts on East Asian Cold War hotspots like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, where they reimagined the adoption plan as building sentimental bonds between the United States and its Cold War allies. The closing of the PLAN China Branch coincided with the end of humanitarian–socialist collaborations in China and the birth of a new era of Cold War humanitarianism in East Asia, in which humanitarian organizations massively redistributed aid according to the political geography of the Cold War.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Eugenia Lean, Leslie Wang, Colette Plum, Nara Milanich, Dongxin Zou, Sandy Chang, Yanjie Huang, Sau-yi Fong, Ron Neubauer, and Ellen Neubauer for their generous and helpful comments on drafts of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Research for this article was supported by an International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Sciences Research Council and an IIE Fulbright Grant.

Notes

1. On the intertwined politics of the Chinese Civil War and the emerging U.S.-Soviet Cold War, see Chen, 2001; and Niu, 2012.
2. On the People's Republic of China's international propaganda and soft power efforts, see Lovell, 2019; Cook, 2014; and Ungor, 2009.
3. While Klein and Fieldston focus on the Cold War period, Baughan (2018) has shown that the earliest programs for international child sponsorship were started by organizations like Save the Children and Near East Relief during the interwar period.
4. An important exception to this pattern is Wang, 2016. Wang argues that since the 1990s the Chinese government has used its international adoption program to attract foreign funds and expertise for its child welfare programs and bolster China's image abroad.
5. The vast majority of these letters can be found in the archival records of Foster Parents Plan for War Children housed at the University of Rhode Island Library Special Collections. Generally speaking, children's letters were archived for one of several reasons. Some letters were donated to PLAN by the descendants of

foster parents after they passed away. Other letters appear to have been returned to PLAN headquarters because they were unable to be delivered. Finally, a small number of letters were reproduced by PLAN for use in publicity materials. Sponsors typically received typewritten English translations of their foster children's letters stapled above the original handwritten Chinese letters. With few exceptions, both the Chinese originals and English translations remain stapled together in the archives.

6. Marx and Engels write, "A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. To this section belongs economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the working class, organizers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind. [. . .] They desire the existing state of society, minus its revolutionary and disintegrating elements. [. . .] It requires in reality, that the proletariat should remain within the bounds of existing society, but should cast away all its hateful ideas concerning the bourgeoisie."
7. On the institutional history of Foster Parents Plan for War Children, see Molumphy, 1984.
8. The CWF has used three different official names over the course of its history. From its founding on June 14, 1938, until the end of World War II, it was known as the China Defense League 保衛中國同盟. After relocating to Shanghai in November 1945, it was renamed the China Welfare Fund 中國福利基金會 to reflect its expanded focus on providing for impoverished children and establishing model medical facilities. On August 15, 1950, as part of a broader reorganization in the wake of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the organization was again renamed the China Welfare Institute 中國福利會 to reflect its shift away from fundraising for relief work to providing a range of child welfare services on a permanent basis. The China Welfare Institute remains an active organization focused on maternity care, preschool education, and children's cultural activities. For clarity and simplicity, I will use the name "China Welfare Fund" (CWF) throughout this article, as that was the organization's name for the majority of the time period discussed here. On the institutional history of the CWF, see Xu, 2013.
9. Tannebaum lived in China for twenty-six years (1945–1971). During the 1950s and 1960s, he appeared in numerous Chinese films, most famously playing the titular role in the 1964 biopic *Dr. Bethune* 白求恩大夫. Tannebaum married a Chinese actress named Chen Yuanchi 陳元琪 in 1962, and they moved to the United States together in 1972. Chen was widely reported to be the first private citizen of the People's Republic of China to receive a visa to immigrate to the United States (Washington Post, 1947, 1974; New York Times, 1972).
10. On the Communist takeover of Shanghai, see Wakeman, 2007.
11. For a periodization of Chinese state policy toward nongovernmental charities in the early People's Republic of China, see Li, 2012. On the gradual demise of private charities over the course of the New Democracy period (1949–1953), see Dillon, 2007.

12. On the institutional history of the National Association for Refugee Children, see Zhang, 2015.
13. Originally founded as “China’s Children Fund” in 1938, the organization changed its name to the “Christian Children’s Fund” in 1951 to reflect its expansion into a vast international child welfare organization working in countries across the world. The organization again changed its name to “ChildFund International” in 2009. Based in Richmond, Virginia, ChildFund remains an active child welfare organization and continues to use child sponsorship as a fundraising tool. On the institutional history of the CCF, see Janss, 1961; and Tise, 1992. For a biography of its founder, J. Calvitt Clarke, see Clarke, 2018.
14. I define “global intimacy” as a form of affective and material relationship that self-consciously crosses national, racial, and cultural boundaries. On the political significance of transracial intimacies in colonial contexts, see Stoler, 2002. On the centrality of economic activity to intimate relationships, see Zelizer, 2005.

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