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Origins of Child Sponsorship: Save the Children Fund in the 1920s

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Introduction

The origins of child sponsorship (CS) are poorly understood. Ove (2013, p.56) comments that 'If there is one "true" origin of child sponsorship, it appears to be lost in the mists of time or to the vagaries of marketing personnel.' It is true that the passing of time does seem to have obscured recollection of its early use to the point that at least three CS organizations have been incorrectly credited with founding CS in the 1930s or 1940s when in fact it was pioneered much earlier. Importantly, while CS has been enduringly popular and widely used, there has been little analysis of its historic precursors. Those interested in early CS are invariably left with important questions. When and where did it begin? How did it function? What challenges and achievements are evident in early CS programmes? This chapter seeks to answer these questions with extensive reference to Save the Children Fund archival sources, allowing where possible for the sources to speak for themselves.

Lynch (1986, p.13) describes the search for the origin of institutions, customs and inventions as an important task of scholars. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to set the record straight and argues that contrary to claims surrounding the invention of CS in the 1930s by China Children's Fund (CCF is now referred to as ChildFund), Foster Parents Scheme for Children in Spain, or Save the Children USA, the origins of individual CS are readily traced to 1919, in the post-World War One work of The British Save the Children Fund (S.C.F.), the Society of Friends and various relief missions in Europe. At that time CS was couched in terms of 'child adoption' or 'godparenting' and primarily involved short-term provision of food rations to children and ongoing

support of orphans. Referring to sponsors in the UK as godparents, it seems evident that the early 'adoption' scheme of the S.C.F. was firmly rooted in the Christian tradition of sponsorship and provision of a godparent at the point of baptism, a non-biblical custom dating to the second century CE. To some extent this may account for the popularity of international non-governmental organization (INGO) facilitated child sponsorship in countries with historic connections to Christianity.

Competing claims

Tise's (1993, p.5) history of Christian Children's Fund (formerly China Children's Fund and now ChildFund) credits the invention of CS to its American founder, John Calvitt Clarke. Referring to very rapid growth in fundraising in the 1940s and the care of children in Chinese orphanages, Tise writes:

The secret to the miracle was CCF's very popular 'adoption' program developed sometime prior to 1941. According to this plan, individual donors could contribute a set amount of money per month and per year and 'adopt' an orphaned child in China.

Noting that regular installments totaled US\$24 per year, Tise concluded that '...CCF was the earliest of the various international child assistance organizations to employ this form of "adoption" as a mechanism for raising funds'. Key to this narrative is the idea that CS was conceived by an American, adapted for orphan care in China, popularized in the United States and replicated by other INGOs for worldwide use.

Contrary to Tise's understanding of the origins of CS, an earlier history of Foster Parents Plan International attributes conception of the idea to British journalist John Langdon-Davies in 1937:

While covering the war in Spain for the London News Chronicle, Langdon-Davies conceived the idea of a personal relationship between a refugee or orphaned child and an English sponsor. In England he enlisted the support of the Duchess of Atholl, a prominent conservative member of parliament... (Molumphy, 1984, p.2).

In this narrative the invention of CS is attributed to a brave, well-connected British journalist, for direct support of costs associated with

children's colonies in war-affected Spain. The Duchess of Atholl is presented as an influential supporter of Langdon-Davies' fresh idea.

A third claim is commonly made, presuming that CS was first used in the USA by Save the Children. Referring to Save the Children USA historical accounts available in the 1990s, Journalist Michael Maren wrote, 'The organization pioneered this fund-raising technique with Appalachian children in the 1930s. It has since been adopted by dozens of other charities around the world...' (Maren, 1997, p.139). In similar vein Ove (2013, p.57) cites a Save the Children USA historical account in which:

Save the Children US, which was established to help poor children in Appalachia, claims to be the first instance of a sponsorship program in 1938 – a program in which individuals could sponsor schoolhouses and provide the children who attended them with 'meals, books and school supplies'.

Although ChildFund, Plan and Save the Children USA used CS in their early years, by then it was an already well-used fundraising device. By 1939 the sponsorship of children had been utilized for some 20 years by the S.C.F. in the UK and Quakers (otherwise known as the Society of Friends) whose relief mission was one of many based in post-World War One Europe.

S.C.F. and the Society of Friends in post-World War One Europe

Individual CS was used as early as 1920, as a direct response to widespread poverty and famine in war-torn Europe. From October 1, 1920 the recently established British Save the Children Fund (S.C.F.) published *THE RECORD of the SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND*, a monthly publication designed to advocate for improved child welfare and to raise funds for famine relief in what it referred to as 'the stricken lands.' It was described by the Glasgow Bulletin as 'the most melancholy magazine in existence' (S.C.F., 1920c, p.38). By 1922, when it was renamed *The World's Children: A Quarterly Journal of Child Care and Protection Considered from an International Standpoint*, circulation was 5,000 and sold for three pence per copy (Mahood and Satzewich, 2009, p.59).

The widely-circulated periodical played a key role in mobilizing support for British funded relief efforts, in stark contrast to the grim war propaganda prevalent in previous years and strident, ongoing calls for reparations. Referring to the plight of post-war Germany it

described in its first edition (S.C.F., 1920a, p.5), 30,000 tuberculous children in Berlin, a million children dead from hunger and consumption since the cessation of hostilities and 'school children with hollow chests and lifeless eyes, the corpse-like babies dying in the wards'. With Christmas 1920 approaching in Britain, S.C.F. staff adapted war language in their appeal for humanitarian aid, observing that:

The most dreadful siege in history is taking place in Europe to-day – a short journey from where you are reading now. Famine, Cold and Disease are the besiegers. The daily casualties, numbering always hundreds and often thousands, are innocent little children – not strong fighting men. And this siege had been going on for two years – two years during which Millions of Children have Died! (S.C.F., 1921a, p.64).

Poignant commentary and urgent appeals were designed to arouse a complacent, war-weary public, declaring to readers in Europe, 'All hope gone, Death is staring them in the face unless you, or others like you, come to their assistance' (S.C.F., 1921a, p.64).

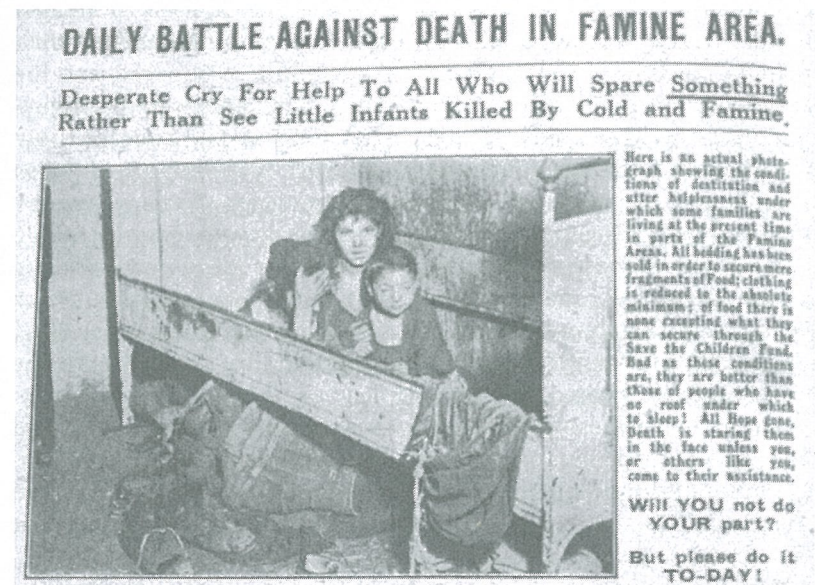


Figure 2.1 1920 S.C.F. appeal
Picture of mother and child in dirty room without bedding, mattress or adequate clothing (S.C.F., 1921a, p.64)

Levels of sympathy in Britain for children in post-World War One Europe varied. Referring to 1921 S.C.F. announcements that it would send aid to starving Russian Children, Mahood and Satzewich (2009, p.55) describe Fund supporters and detractors influenced by anti-Russian, anti-German and anti-alien sentiment with consequent reservations about fuelling Bolshevism and feeding enemy children. However, where it existed concern was linked to pity for starving children, ill women, abhorrence for post-armistice sanctions and sureness of British generosity at a time when the gruesome after-effects of the war had become well publicized. Referring often to the plight of 'thousands of little ones standing in daily peril of death from starvation' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.1) S.C.F. publications also mentioned 'the evil structure of international relations' (S.C.F., 1921e, p.201) with one influential contributor arguing that 'The money we send to feed the children is thus not so much alms as blood-money. It is the compensation which the Koran and other codes have allowed to be paid for murder' (Zangwill in S.C.F., 1921e, p.216).

Noting that 'there is no more generous people in the world than the British people,' (Snowden, 1921, p.68). Mrs. Philip Snowden, described by some as the most eloquent Englishwoman alive, observed that childhood's 'beautiful innocence and helplessness appeals to the best in all. It is bigger than nationality, purer than ambition, greater than material wealth. It must be saved if civilization is to be saved, and the kingdom of heaven achieved.' Snowden's comments were not representative of some strands of public opinion which had branded those who helped German children as Hun lovers. Nevertheless, she also speculated that when the history of the times came to be written by the historians of the future, 'to no body of people will a warmer tribute be paid than to those who organised themselves for the work of saving the children of Europe' (Snowden, 1921, p.69). The adoption of the Della Robbia Bambino by the S.C.F. symbolized its role in appealing, on behalf of countless imploring children, to charity and the beneficence of civilized Europe.

Sympathy for post-war Austria was especially strong in 1920 and 1921 in S.C.F. writings and is partially attributable to British government pound-for-pound grants to relief societies active in Poland and Austria (S.C.F., 1920a, p.10). Although S.C.F. writers commented that 'The state of Austria outside Vienna is not so distressing,' (S.C.F., 1921b, p.102) they also took pains to describe to readers '...the pauperization and demoralization of the people,' concluding that 'Vienna must be regarded as a dying city' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.4). It was in this



Figure 2.2 The S.C.F. Dela Robbia Bambino
Dela Robbia Bambino (S.C.F., 1921d, p.185)

context that the fledgling S.C.F. made its first international grant on May 28 1919, to work in Austria, almost a month before it was registered under the War Charities Act (S.C.F., 1922b, p.11). Grants to Armenia and Germany were also made in June 1920. More approving of the grant to Armenia, the secretary of the American Near East Relief Administration reported that Armenian refugees had, by contrast, lost everything and 'have no houses, no clothes, no tools' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.3). Notably, by 1919 the Americans had already fed 160,000 children in Austria as part of its massive relief effort (S.C.F., 1920a, p.2). Similar feeding programmes were envisaged by S.C.F., sure that 'The Coming Winter will be A TIME OF Crisis' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.16).

Although it prioritized food and medical aid, S.C.F. emphasized other needs on the basis that '...the rigors of the food famine are considerably increased by the lack of linen, clothing and soap' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.1). Early communication from S.C.F. mentions a range of problems including what it referred to as a 'clothes famine' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.2), manifested in 'unhappy little ones wrapped in newspapers' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.3) and a scarcity of linen so great that in some schools

'between forty and fifty percent of the children have only one shirt each' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.1). The situation reported by one eye-witness in 'Czecho-Slovakia' is especially interesting. Arguing that the term 'house' was too dignified, the worried observer noted that:

Hovel or hole is a better word for these inhabitants. The squalor is almost beyond belief. Six or seven people – if one can call them people – in one stuffy hole and a half-dozen hens or rabbits besides. One picked the fleas off oneself coming out. Idiots and cretins abound, and there is a goiter or two (colossal in size) in every family (S.C.F., 1920a, p.4).

Though a twenty-first century reader is likely to find such descriptions judgmental and insensitive, the issues raised were nonetheless serious. Concern is evident for overcrowding, unhygienic homes with plague carrying fleas, dietary deficiency, untreated medical conditions and disability linked to malnutrition. The specter of typhus, plague and TB loomed large for those who worried about child welfare in the immediate post-war years.

Other voices were less critical though no less passionate about the situation in the 'stricken lands' in 1920. In Hungary, a Mr. Cournos noted the urgent need for '...milk for the children and linen and rubber goods for the hospitals' with schooling for children forced to leave at age 12 but barred from entry to a trade until 14 (S.C.F., 1920a, p.5). U.S Army Medical Core representative Col. Gilchrist summed up the need of Poland in terms of an imminent typhus epidemic with potential to '...threaten the whole of Europe' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.6). In Russia, Miss Francis, senior sister of Lady Muriel Paget's Hospital at Sevastopol declared that throughout the Crimea '...people are living on bread and soup...everywhere there is very grave poverty, people of all classes are selling everything they have...' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.6). The depth of concern is mirrored in the urgency of early S.C.F. communications. Monthly advertising noted that 'The Coming Winter will be A TIME OF CRISIS to many millions of suffering children in the war-stricken lands of Europe and Asia Minor. Even now thousands hover between life and death' (S.C.F., 1920a, p.16). Apart from provision of milk and food rations, arrangements were made '...for children to be "adopted" in Austria and the towns of Germany, and also in Estonia, Poland and Armenia' (S.C.F., 1920b, p.21). It is in this adoption programme that we see use of CS by S.C.F. and the Society of Friends as a fundraising tool.

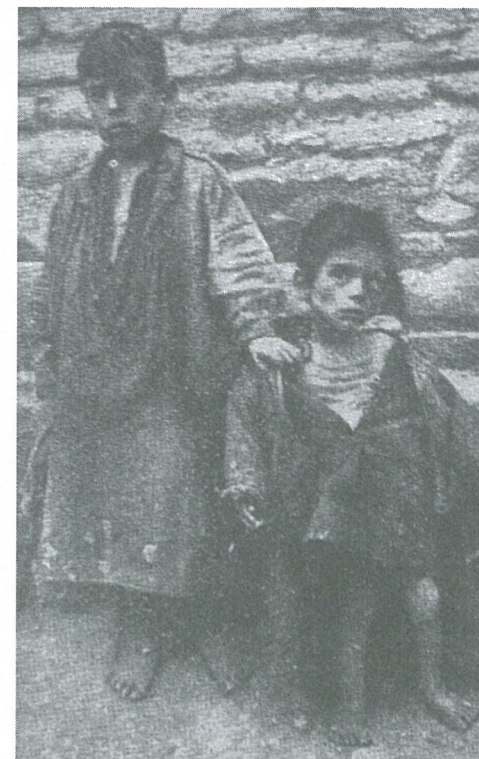


Figure 2.3 S.C.F. picture titled 'Orphaned and Destitute Two little Armenians who might be saved' (S.C.F., 1921a, p.52)

Early child sponsorship at S.C.F.

Subsequent to announcements of the establishment of a child welfare department at S.C.F., early editions of *The Record* make increasingly frequent references to CS, commonly referred to as the 'Adoption scheme'. By November 1920, approximately 18 months after making its first international grant, *The Record* could already report that:

The 'Adoption' Scheme, whereby the individual subscriber of 2S.[shillings] a week, or an equivalent monthly or yearly sum to the S.C.F., provides a daily meal for a specific child in the famine area, has proved immensely popular, and is fast becoming a concrete

reality. The names and addresses of 1,000 Slovak children, of 1,500 Budapest children, and of a number of Serbian children, have been received and sent to the 'godparents' with all available detail (S.C.F., 1920b, p.21).

A follow-up article in December 1920, noted strong support in Britain from individuals, Women's institutes, Girl's Friendly Societies, Brotherhood meetings, congregations and staff of shops and offices. Within a short period of time S.C.F. sponsorships had grown and included 451 children in Serbia, 2,000 in Slovakia, 2,000 in Budapest (Hungary) 350 in Leipzig (Germany) and 800 in Dvinsk (Baltic Provinces) (S.C.F., 1920c, p.45). By January 1921 S.C.F. could announce with some satisfaction that 'The adoption scheme is going forward rapidly...' and 'The promises of adoption number 15,045' (S.C.F., 1921a, p.60).

Writing in 1922, Eglantyne Jebb attributed development of the adoption system, (now known as child sponsorship) to S.C.F. in Britain, with the first adoptions taking place in S.C.F. funded projects in Austria and Europe in 1919 and 1920. Offering her readers the insight that '...twelve hundred specially necessitous children were fed by the society of Friends under the Adoption Scheme, and five hundred more by various institutions selected by the International Commissioner' (Jebb, 1922, p.20) she also took pains to point out that 'The adoption system, which was first initiated by the Save the Children Fund, was widely copied by other organizations, the merit of the scheme consisting in the fact that individual donors could, if they wished, interest themselves in individual children' (Jebb, 1922, p.19). Significantly, Jebb's account indicates that S.C.F.'s Adoption Scheme was already successful enough to have, within two years, been replicated and adapted by various other organizations providing relief in Europe.

It seems likely that the copying of the 'Adoption Scheme' referred to by Jebb may be attributed to two factors if we are given room to speculate. Firstly, competing fundraisers noted S.C.F.'s success and adopted the fundraising technique. Secondly, as S.C.F. worked with other organizations and institutions that had complementary non-S.C.F. income streams, these partners began their own 'adoption' programmes. A good example is the Society of Friends (Quakers). A letter from Friend's volunteer Mary Houghman to Miss E. Sidgwick refers to '...one of our early adoptions in Vienna, about August 1919 to 1920...' (Houghton, 1922a). Though Houghton attributes early funding of 'adoptions' to the S.C.F., and refers to a 'joint adoption plan', by 1922 the Friends in

Vienna had developed their own 'adoption' programme and started '...a special American branch of our Adoption Scheme by which children carefully chosen from amongst the needy families without regard to nationality, religion, or class, receive monthly food parcels worth about \$2' (Houghton, 1922b, p.2).

While the Friends were recruiting sponsors in the USA, S.C.F. publications promoted 'adoptions' worldwide. In a short piece of writing titled 'The Empire and the Save the Children Fund' support is recorded from Australia, New Zealand and Canada (S.C.F., 1922a, p.143). In 1923 S.C.F.'s 'Overseas Department' was praised for:

making great headway with the 'adoptions' scheme, and there are now subscribers scattered all over the world who are bearing a part in this most effective method of help. In South Africa, particularly, the scheme seems to have attracted schools and institutions (S.C.F., 1923, p.149).

Awareness of adoption or child sponsorship, was also evident in the USA in the early 1920s through the Quakers and those who received S.C.F. publications. Although we cannot be sure that the S.C.F. programme was being referred to directly, in December 1921 *The Record* reported that the president of the United States of America had '...issued an appeal to the American people to contribute to the relief of the children of Central Europe who are facing starvation. He announces that he will adopt 20 of these children as his own temporary wards' (S.C.F., 1921a, p.61). It may well have been that President Wilson, the 29th president of the United States of America, was an early child sponsor though further inquiry is needed to confirm the nature of his 'adoptions' and links to S.C.F. or the Society of Friends.

Unfortunately, it is not clear whether the original idea for promoting 'adoptions' of individual, war-affected children through a system of monthly donations originated with S.C.F. British staff, one of the S.C.F.'s many partners or with other charitable organizations. Members of the early S.C.F. executive committee included Catherine Booth, a Brigadier in the Salvation Army, and Ruth Fry, a representative of the Quakers. When the International Save the Children Union was formed and based in Geneva, it was with the strong support of Etienne Clouzot, Head of Secretariat, the International Committee of the Red Cross. While Jebb herself claimed that S.C.F. invented the 'Adoption Scheme' it may well be that her knowledge of its genesis was incomplete. Nevertheless, in the absence of other claims prior to 1920, the

British Save the Children Fund should be cautiously accorded credit for pioneering CS in the post-World War One period.

How did it function?

Children who were sponsored in the early years by S.C.F. were referred by various relief agencies active in each country. The December 1920 edition of *The Record* reassured readers in Britain and its Dominions that:

The administration abroad is in the hands of the various relief agencies, viz., the Serb-Croat-Slovene Association for Child Welfare, Lady Muriel Paget's mission to Czecho-Slovakia, Action Lodge Famine Relief Fund in Budapest, the Committee for Feeding Undernourished Children in Leipzig, and Lady Muriel Paget's Mission to Eastern Europe (S.C.F., 1920c, p.45).

S.C.F. encouraged European-based relief missions to select needy children and forward lists to the UK where appeals for funding in general and adopters in particular had already been made (see advertising below in Figure 2.4). Eager to explain how needy children were identified, Record staff wrote:

Each child has been selected through the schools by the relief workers, in itself no light task, and the fullest possible particulars have been forwarded for the god-parents. Everywhere the school-teachers have given ungrudging assistance (S.C.F., 1920c, p.45).

It is noteworthy that in Serbia most of the children selected for sponsorship were in orphanages and orphan homes, or were orphans living with family members. Although sponsorship of orphans provided daily meals at home or in institutions, it was reported that 'In Slovakia the feeding is done chiefly in the school-kitchens of the villages... We have photographs showing the children watching the cook or happily grouped in little picnic parties...' (S.C.F., 1920c, p.45).

In 1920 and 1921 the first sponsorship advertising became evident in S.C.F. publications as an alternative to lump sum donations for unspecified needs. An example of this can be seen below where donors were given the option of choosing the nationality of their godchild and making a commitment to weekly or monthly support prior to receiving child details by mail. At this point in time it appears that

SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND. Adoption Form.

To THE LORD WEARDALE,
Chairman of Committee of Save the Children Fund (Dept. H.),
26, Golden Square, Regent Street, London, W.1.

I, the undersigned, wish to adopt child/children*
and hereby pledge myself to send £5 4s. to cover one whole year
(2s. a week ; 8s. 8d. a month) for each child.

Name

Address

If you desire to help a child of any special nationality please write country here

N.B.—Acknowledgment of this form to be taken as a receipt until the whole amount is paid up, when full receipt, acknowledgment and letter from god-child will be sent. Instructions how to send weekly or monthly contributions will be sent with the first acknowledgment.

* Please strike out word not wanted.

Figure 2.4 1920 S.C.F. Adoption Form

Early adoption form referring to beneficiaries as a 'god-child' (S.C.F., 1920c, p.46)

godparents provided a cash payment first, and were later sent details of a specific child. In some sources this was referred to as 'pairing' (Gilmore, 1922, p.1).

A letter from S.C.F. staff to children in Britain and its dominions illustrates the basic mechanism of sponsorship:

My Dear Boys and Girls, ...No doubt you know all about our 'adoption' scheme. What you do is to pay 2S. a week, which provides a little boy or girl with a good meal each day for a week. Those people who promise to pay their 2S. regularly for a whole year become 'god-parents' and they write to the little children they are saving. At Christmas some of the 'god-parents' sent presents to their 'adopted' sons and daughters and they replied very nicely... (S.C.F., 1921c, p.176).

S.C.F. in Austria

The conclusion of World War One with an armistice in 1918 and subsequent Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, resulted in an end to the devastating Allied naval blockade in the North Atlantic. Sympathy for Austria ran deep in S.C.F. publications. The May 1921 edition of *The Record* featured an article by Sir Phillip Gibbs entitled 'By Austria's

Deathbed. An Impression of Vienna' (S.C.F., 1921e, p.199). In it he wrote 'It is a ghoulisn thing to sit at the deathbed of those Austrian people, as I have done, studying the symptoms of this mortality, watching the death agony...' In his descriptive assessment Gibbs described a babies' clinic as 'filled with haggard, anemic women who had brought their terrible little babes, all scrofulous and boneless, for medical examination...' and remarked on the '...bewildering contrasts between reckless luxury and starving poverty, between gaiety and despair...' (S.C.F. 1921e, p.200). Appalled by the impact of the blockade and trade restrictions, Gibbs also expressed sympathy for a doctor who was living on cabbage soup while persevering with a suit dating from before the war.

As a consequence of the sympathies of key S.C.F. supporters like Gibbs, Austria's accessibility, close proximity to Switzerland, prevalence of capable relief missions and priority for allied food and medical aid, S.C.F. support for Austria in the period 1919–1923 was significant, with provision of £150,000 to the Society of Friends and £5,000 to the Vienna Emergency Relief Fund (S.C.F., 1920c, p.38). It is noteworthy that:

Vienna was the first place to receive the succour of the Save the Children Fund, the initial consignment of food – the very first consignment to be bought with British funds – being purchased in Switzerland in the early spring of 1919 (Jebb, 1922, p.18).

In her factual account of S.C.F.'s work in Austria, Eglantyne Jebb reported that the Friends were actively involved in provision of rations or meals, and '...had 70,000 of these children on its books in the winter 1920–21' (Jebb, 1922, p.18) most of whom were under the age of six. In addition to food distribution and child feeding, the Friends had partnered with an Austrian child welfare agency which operated 69 centres in Vienna, providing free medical consultations, crèches and food depots where mothers could purchase cheap rations.

Austria is also significant because it was one of the first sites, if not the definitive first site, for S.C.F. 'adoptions'. A letter from Miss Houghton, in the Friends Relief Mission Vienna, mentions an early sponsor in August 1919 (Houghton, 1922b), just three months after S.C.F.'s first cash grant to Austria. In a letter home from one of the Friend's Relief Workers, the writer explains that 'The idea of the "Adoption" Scheme originated with the "Save the Children" Fund who have given us a grant which enables us to adopt over 1,300 children, to which we have added various small grants and gifts from individual

"adopters", which have brought our numbers up...' (Friends volunteer, n.d., p.4).

Concluding that it would be impossible to continue feeding large numbers of Austrian children for a third consecutive year, when dire need existed elsewhere (for example Russia) Jebb observed that S.C.F. '...determined therefore to concentrate its assistance in two main directions: (1) Feeding a number of specially-selected cases of children through its 'adoption' system... (2) Subsidizing local institutions...' (Jebb, 1922, p.19). The support of local institutions was justified by observations that Austria already had noble institutions and welfare departments, but little funding. Although the word sustainability was not used, the issue was clearly one of temporary support until local organizations could once again sustain their activities on behalf of orphans, disabled children and the poor.

Jebb hinted at a unique feature of the Austrian Adoption Scheme when she wrote:

Vienna was a particularly suitable locality for the working of this scheme, partly because it was easier here than in less settled areas to keep track of children, and partly because there were so many who were specially suitable for 'adoption' in that they did not fall into any one of the recognized categories for relief (Jebb, 1922, p.19).

The question is, what was Jebb referring to when she mentioned adoption of children who did not fall into recognized categories and who were, in likelihood, not eligible for food distributed in the American or other food programmes? Clues to the nature of Jebb's special category are found in correspondence from Quaker staff in Austria. A 1922 Letter to S.C.F. supporters stated that 'An interesting feature of our work is that whilst a large number of our children belong to the working-class, the majority of them are drawn from the families of brain-workers, pensioned War invalids and State officials' (Houghton, 1922c, p.2).

One class-conscious Friend was quite explicit in her criteria for child selection, stating in a letter home:

I am so glad to be able to open my doors to all and sundry, making only such general distinctions as, that the children must come from decent families, keeping up standards of cleanliness, so that we need feel no scruples in letting them stand in the 'que' together, when they come along for their monthly Food Parcel (Friends Volunteer, n.d., p.4).

Excluding poorly dressed, lower-class children from the sponsorship programme so as not to offend middle or upper class children who required charity seems contrary to Quaker principles of non-discrimination. Rather than view this as evidence of systemic prejudice and lack of compassion, it is perhaps better understood as evidence that the 'Adoption Scheme' was promoted to affluent supporters sympathetic to the plight of educated Viennese who had fallen on hard times and whose children may not have been eligible for assistance under other feeding schemes. In correspondence to S.C.F. supporters it was noted that:

All the women have been personally visited and last winter it was possible to discontinue the rations to some children whose circumstances had improved and give them to others who were more needy. Almost half are children of widows, pensioners or invalids... (Houghton, 1922d, p.1).

To illustrate the human dimension of the process for its readers, Record staff added a copy of a hand-written letter by a sponsored boy named Paul:

Dear Foster Parent No 4306, Many thanks for the kind gift of 524 Crowns You've been so kind to send me for Christmas Mama brought me a pair of boots from it. Father knows and loves Great Britain and Ireland he studied there for a year – I have got a little brother, two years old, his name is Laszeo Mother is often ill Father is art-teacher I am a pupil of a state grammar school of the 1 Class. I would like to know your children by name. I am dear Foster parents Yours very gratefully, Paul Baronski Budapest... (S.C.F., 1921c, p.176).

In this instance, it was clear to British readers that the sponsored boy was from an educated family adversely affected by post-war conditions. The report excerpt below indicates a strong bias in the Austrian Scheme. Though the terminology is dated, *Mittelstand* may be taken to refer to the families in the middle-upper classes, and of 1221 families supported, 981 were classified as such.

There were certainly procedures to eliminate inappropriate sponsorship. For example, a request by the Swedish Y.W.C.A. to find a sponsor for one Florian Richter was considered due to the fact that his father had been a doctor of medicine missing since 1915, presumed dead.

Statement made from Case Records in our Office.

		% of totals:
Total of families	1221	
MITTELSTAND:-		
No. of Mittelstand Families	981	
Professors & Teachers (included in figure)	128	
Widows	137	13%
Invalids and Pensionists	71	7%
Tuberculosis in family	184	20%
WORKING CLASS:-		
No. of Working Class Families	220	
Widows	48	25%
Invalids and Pensionists	16	6%
Tuberculosis in family	72	35%
Total of Widows (Middleclass and Working Class)	185	16%
" " Invalids and Pensionists	86	7%
" " Tubercular Cases	256	22%

Figure 2.5 Report of Save the Children Fund adoption scheme (Anon, 1922a, p.1)

However, an assessment based on a family visitation reported that the home was comfortably furnished, income was sufficient and the boy was in boarding school. 'In our opinion this is not a needy case and would not be helped from our funds' (Mission Der Freunde Mittelstand, n.d., p.1).

Documentation from S.C.F. archives indicate that sponsored children in Vienna received home visits from Friends who functioned as case workers whose task was to assess levels of family need. In 1922 the Friends reported to S.C.F. that 'Visits of Investigation paid to the homes of the children...' numbered 1,433, and that 350 most urgent cases should be supported during the following winter (Anon, 1922a, p.2).

A second important feature of the joint S.C.F. and Friends Austrian Adoption Scheme was its short-term nature. Unless in an institution, children received food parcels for periods typically around six months, with preference for support over the winter months. Institutionalized children received subsidized daily meals or fresh milk. While 12 month adoptions were encouraged, it seems that six month adoptions were more common. A 1922 letter from S.C.F. asked for information on the conditions of two adopted children, noting that 'They were six month adoptions, but the adopter awaits your view to decide whether to go on, or change to some more necessitous child elsewhere' (Anon, 1922b, p.1). However, in denying a request to use sponsor funding to support one child for the first six months, and another for the second

six months, an earlier letter from S.C.F. staff stated firmly 'With regard to substituting other children for the second six months, I am sorry we cannot agree to this. Our scheme provides for the feeding of the same child for one year and the foster-parents understood this from the beginning' (Anon, 1921 p.1).

It seems evident from the account above that the expectations of S.C.F. staff in the UK determined the length of support provided to individual children rather than the expert opinion of staff in Austria who preferred greater flexibility. It is notable that there appears to be no preference in early years for younger children or for the poorest of children. Another interesting feature of the 'Adoption Scheme' in Austria was the nature of tangible support provided to children through food aid and gifts. Food parcels funded by S.C.F. and distributed by the Friends seem to have been generous, as seen in this description:

It is an interesting sight to see our little family of children of all ages coming along with knapsack on back, or capacious bag in hand to fetch their precious gifts of milk, fat, sugar, cocoa, white flour, and rice, and last, but not least appreciated, a cake of good quality washing soap, treasures which it is utterly beyond their parent's power to buy in the open market, owing to the terrible depreciation in the value of the Krone (Anon, 1922c).

Not all children were assisted in this manner. Children in institutions benefited from food supplied directly to the institution, typically milk. The Friends had already experimented with importation of dairy cattle to supply milk to malnourished children in institutions, and in 1922 the Friends raised the issue with S.C.F. of appropriate support for older children, advocating for:

...a hot mid-day meal to such of the older children as are best fitted for this type of help, namely those who owing to advanced study had to be away from home all day and only take a little plain lunch (often just black bread) with them. The parents are delighted at the suggestion and these big boys and girls do not need fresh milk so much as plenty to eat at mid-day' (Anon, 1922f, p.1).

It seems then that the S.C.F.-funded Joint Adoption Scheme provided three variations of support: daily milk rations for malnourished children; monthly rations for predominantly middle-class children in need

of temporary assistance; and in some cases daily midday meals, generally over a period of six months to 12 months. In some cases rations were supplemented with cod liver oil, boots and clothing.

A final feature of S.C.F. funded adoptions in Austria was the personal touch incorporated in experimentation with letter writing and gift giving. In the Austrian joint adoption scheme it appears that it was the Friends who actively pursued communication between godchildren and their adoptive parents. A February 1921 letter from the Friends in London to S.C.F. acknowledges receipt of a cheque from S.C.F. of £4,420 to cover the costs of 850 adoptions and concluded with this pointed advice to S.C.F.

We are posting to you to-day a further number of the cards written by the children who have been adopted. We feel that this may be very valuable in making more real the connection between the children, and those who have contributed towards their help. We have asked Miss Houghton, our representative in Vienna...to keep you supplied with reports as to its working, and to make the contact between the children and their 'god-parents', as they like to call them, as living as possible (Henderson, 1921, p.1).

Such correspondence seems to indicate that while S.C.F. originated the idea of sponsoring individuals, it was the Friends who played a very active role in nurturing ongoing contact between children and their adoptive parents, paving the way for monthly and yearly reports on child progress that became common in later years.

One such letter is as follows:

Dear Godparents, Thank you very much for your good gifts. They tasted very good, but I am sorry I have already started on the last parcel. I have two big brothers, and sometimes I gave them some of the cocoa to taste. My parents have an allotment in the Prater, and we shall soon have the first things grown in it. My school report is good. In Languages, Singing, Writing, General Deportment Drill, I got 'good'. In Arithmetic, Reading, Scripture, Home-work, Nature Study and Industry, I got 'Very Good'. I am in the fourth class, and I love reading. At home, they call me the Book-worm. Two years ago I was in Sweden, in Goteborg, where I had a good time. I am sending you two drawings. One is the little house father is building, and I am going to help him and then I am to have my own bed. Where do you live, dear Godparents? I am so glad Spring is coming,

and that the cold weather is over. With much love, Your thankful godchild (Austrian Godchild, 1922, p.1).

The formula of this letter is simple and much replicated. A salutary greeting is followed by, in various order, an expression of thanks, description of school achievement, polite question or two to the sponsor, commentary on weather or play activities and closing statement of gratitude. Remarkably, the contents are not dissimilar to millions of letters written to sponsors since.

By 1923 crises elsewhere had made it difficult for S.C.F. to justify a continuation of support for children in Austria. Letters exchanged between the Friends in Vienna and S.C.F. in Britain reveal pleas for ongoing assistance and launch of new appeals. By this time however S.C.F.'s attention had turned elsewhere and the Friends Relief Mission struggled to actively recruiting adopters. A January 30 1923 Letter to S.C.F. reveals that in a new fundraising drive a '...total of 500 children has been reached, a good many of these are covered by private adopters from America or Vienna, and some are paid for by the Mission' (Gilmore, 1923, p.1). As early as 1922 the Friends in Vienna had reported that adopters existed in '...England, America, Canada, or Australia...' (Anon, 1922c, p.1).

S.C.F. did not only sponsor children in mainland Europe. Referring to the 'adoption' of children in the British Isles in the photo-card adoption scheme, *The Record* (S.C.F., 1925, p.36) noted that names of British children were gathered from the Invalid Children's Aid Association and help usually consisted of sending the child away to the countryside or sea for a holiday, then rations of cod liver oil or milk, for the rest of the year. For example, 'A clergyman, in poor circumstances, was given five (pounds) to provide milk for a little ailing son... one donor gave ten (pounds) that that the mother of five children – herself tubercular – might go away with the youngest two children, aged four and two respectively, for a holiday'. The use of photographs in the British scheme resulted in some 'parents' taking '...great interest in selecting their children – not only by nationality but by personal circumstances and characteristics' (S.C.F., 1925, p.36).

Experimentation with sponsorship had not been without its difficulties. Key problems included ongoing confusion and miscommunication over lists of adopted children, discrepancies in payments made by godparents, difficulty in administering gift giving, concern that short-term sponsorships left children vulnerable in coming winters, a strong feeling that some families should pay a portion of the

costs of their food parcels to avoid the demoralization of dependency, and '...a good deal of disappointment on the part of some of the children at not having had any communication from their Adopter...' (Houghton, 1922c, p.5). The allocation of children by staff was sometimes problematic. In one case staff in the S.C.F. Allocation's department wrote 'The foster-parent has had a nice little letter from him but she is not pleased, because she declares we have given her a Jew, when she particularly desired otherwise' (Anon, 1922d, p.1). A subsequent family visit revealed that 'They are no Jews, but of Polish peasant type, and Roman Catholics...' (Anon, 1922e, p.1). The short-term nature of some sponsor support also provided challenges, with the S.C.F. Allocations Department observing in 1922 that 'we have not many...that we can safely allocate: since some fosterparents in these hard times, pay installments for a couple of quarters, and then cease' (Anon, 1922g, p.1).

Nevertheless, the Adoption Scheme was praised for its ability to mobilize funds, in a personal way in which 'Love has blessed the gift. The children look upon the English friends as true god-parents, and these links of friendship will endure, witnessing to the reality of international goodwill' (Houghton, 1922d, p.1). Further, Quaker staff noted that a fine piece of work had been accomplished by S.C.F. in supporting individual children in their homes 'which often proves to be a more satisfactory way of helping them – especially the younger ones – than by taking them out of their own surroundings' (Houghton, 1922c, p.4).

The S.C.F. CS programme endured the Great Depression and operated more or less continually until the outbreak of World War Two. In January 1937, with the specter of another world war looming, the S.C.F. publication (now referred to as *The World's Children*) stated that 'The total number of adoptions at April 30th, 1936, was 669. Of these 458 were foreign cases. 211 were British children from the distressed areas of South Wales and the North of England, and from poor districts in London' (S.C.F. 1937a, p.58). Internationally sponsored children came from Austria, Armenia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Turkey and Yugoslavia, suggesting that the programme had shrunk considerably from the 1920s yet maintained its geographic diversity. In Britain, S.C.F. staff relished the opportunity to encourage adoptive parents to provide an annual holiday for disadvantaged children, asserting that 'a holiday by the sea, or in the mountains or the open countryside, is little less than a glimpse of heaven' (S.C.F., 1937b, p.131).

Conclusion

The tumultuous period between the conclusions of World War One and onset of World War Two, a lack of readily accessible historical information, and the emergence of many new INGOs globally, may be partially responsible for well-intentioned though inaccurate claims about the origins of CS. However, while John Langdon-Davies and the Duchess of Atholl have been credited with founding CS to support displaced Spanish children in 1937 and 1938, it is more likely that the Duchess was already well familiar with foster parent schemes involving what we now refer to as sponsorship. In 1921 her husband, His Grace the Duke of Atholl, was preparing to take over as president of the British S.C.F. In a speech at Edinburgh at that time the Duchess of Atholl had expressed her pride in S.C.F.'s work, describing it as 'A task of Unprecedented Magnitude' (S.C.F., 1922c, p.105).

Debunking the claim that American J. Calvitt Clarke independently conceived the idea of child sponsorship as a tool for fundraising is also not difficult. CS had been publicized in the USA since at least 1921 via S.C.F. and the Society of Friends. According to CCF history Clarke was involved with the American Near East Relief programme until 1931 and had visited Armenia personally in 1924 at a time when S.C.F. was already sponsoring children there. As Co-Founder of Save the Children Federation (USA) in 1932 and southern Director from 1934–1937 it seems likely he would have been familiar with Save the Children literature, including sponsorship appeals, especially given that sponsorship was provided to children during the Great Depression in American Appalachia (Maren, 1997). Rather than being credited for inventing CS, it seems likely that J. Calvitt Clarke replicated an existing fundraising mechanism when he established CCF for the support of Chinese orphans.

CS was clearly used by S.C.F. and the Society of Friends in several European countries in the aftermath of World War One. In the absence of further information, S.C.F. and the Society of Friends should cautiously be credited as early pioneers of CS as a fundraising tool utilized to 'pair' international donors with disadvantaged children for the purpose of short-term provision of rations in post-conflict settings. Key ingredients of the early adoption scheme continue in CS programmes 90 years later, including monthly payments for the support of individual, identifiable children utilizing personal correspondence to encourage a sense of personal connection.

Acknowledgements

This chapter would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance provided by staff at the Cadbury Archives, University of Birmingham and Amy Bang from Save the Children.

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