As China was recovering from disease, starvation, and death that resulted from the authoritarian policies of the Great Leap Forward, Chinese officials looked outwards to heal Africa. From 1963 onwards, a steady trickle of Chinese doctors and nurses arrived in newly postcolonial Algeria. They provided health care for rural and suburban communities in local hospitals as a gesture of devotion to Third World solidarity through health diplomacy. Central to their health services until the mid-1980s was a practice and ideal that I call “Chinese socialist medicine”—which combined a body of hybrid and serviceable medical technology with a proactive approach to health care delivery. I argue that this form of socialist medicine enabled the Chinese missions to find a niche in the postcolonial medical landscape of Algeria where resources were limited. It served as a form of Maoist state soft power defined in contrast to other competing medicines in Algeria. It also posed an alternative to the Western- and Soviet-dominated international health care interventions in Third World countries. This history of China’s medical aid to Algeria sat at the crossroads where knowledge production and humanitarian concerns encountered politics and ideology.

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