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By Popular Demand

A "land of milk and honey," at once "fertile, productive, happy," with lychees hanging from the trees – this was the first impression of China as recalled by one of the first American visitors to the country in the 1970s. Susan Shirk would go on to become deputy assistant secretary of state, helping oversee US China policy under President Bill Clinton. In June 1971, she was still a young graduate student – one of fifteen who made up the first ever delegation of graduate students studying China to travel to the People's Republic. This was an unprecedented opportunity: the group had been researching China from within the British colony of Hong Kong and, like a generation of American scholars of China before them, could hardly have hoped to experience the People's Republic in the flesh.[1]

The circumstances of Shirk's visit to China reveal the tensions evident in Sino-American people-to-people contacts before President Nixon's February 1972 summit visit. Shirk and her fellow graduate students were members of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, the organization founded in 1968 to protest US involvement in the Vietnam War and the government's policy of containing China (see the Prologue). Their request to visit the PRC had been accepted while so many more had been ignored because of their record of criticizing Nixon's stance toward China. And yet their visit was one that helped realize the sea change in relations between the United States and China achieved in 1971 – and would most likely not have happened had it not been for the secret communications between the two governments that predated their trip.

[1] Author interview with Susan Shirk, Beijing, China, December 17, 2017.

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Sino-American people-to-people contacts and high-level diplomacy were thus mutually dependent before the Nixon–Mao summit. In 1971, transnational contacts proved a (sometimes) effective backchannel for communication between the two sets of leaders, while also offering proof to a nervous Nixon of American popular support for ending the containment of the PRC. Indeed, between 1969 and 1971, the initiative for a new US China policy often came from beyond the White House, whether through public lobbying by prominent academics or through visits to China that cast ordinary Americans such as Shirk as unofficial diplomats.[2] Even once early exchanges like Shirk's visit had helped build the burgeoning Sino-American diplomatic ties that resulted in the Nixon–Mao summit, Beijing continued to invite Americans who had been historically critical of the Nixon administration's domestic and foreign policies – a cause for alarm within the US government in 1972 and a demonstration of the limits of US governmental control over the relationship between Chinese and American societies.

A CHANGING CONSENSUS

As discussed in the Prologue, both the Chinese and US governments had intermittently made unilateral proposals for beginning exchange contacts between their two societies during their long, wary truce following the Korean War. Upon entering office, Nixon and Kissinger soon ordered that the long-standing suggestion of restarting government-endorsed exchanges be reiterated to the Chinese government, a proposal that elicited no immediate response from Beijing.[3] During his first year in office, Nixon was, however, lukewarm about encouraging broader people-to-people contacts with the PRC, just as he rejected any immediate departures elsewhere in US China policy.[4] One State Department suggestion for restarting such contacts – that the government remove all remaining official restrictions on travel to the country – was declined by the president in March 1969.[5]

[2] Paul Pickowicz, another then-graduate student who traveled alongside Shirk, noted in his diary on June 22, 1971, "We are unlikely diplomats (having never considered these sort of implications at the outset of our venture) – yet diplomats we are now." Paul Pickowicz, *A Sensational Encounter with High Socialist China* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2019), 25.

[3] Elliot Richardson to Kissinger, undated, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 19.

[4] Lorenz M. Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos to History: Sino-Soviet-American Relations, 1969," *The China Quarterly* 210 (June 2012): 381; Talley, *Forgotten Vanguard*, 25.

[5] Richardson to Kissinger, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 19.

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In practice, these restrictions were hardly in effect anyway. Nixon was to later make great fanfare about his decision to ultimately remove the ban on travel to China, realized through a gradual easing of restrictions from July 1969 and an eventual ending of all restrictions in March 1971. "I called the signals myself," the president told Senator Carl T. Curtis in November 1971. Historians have also given Nixon credit: Chris Tudda identifies Nixon's easing of trade and travel restrictions as the means by which the president encouraged Mao's own reciprocal signaling through people-to-people contacts, including, ultimately, the invitation for the US table tennis team to tour China.[6] The State Department's internal communications make clear, however, that Nixon's lifting of the travel ban was a change in nominal policy only: even before the first removal of restrictions in 1969, the government had been validating the passports of "virtually anyone" wishing to travel to China for anything more consequential than tourism. (The famous prohibition on travel to "Mainland China" contained in American passports did include the caveat that such travel was permitted – if "specifically validated … by the Department of State.") More than 300 prospective visitors, including congressmen, journalists, academics, and medical scientists, had received US official authorization to visit the PRC since 1957. Only a fraction of these had been able to visit China – but this was due to Beijing's refusal to grant them entry, not because of any restrictions from their own government in Washington. As explored in the Prologue, the real barrier to greater people-to-people contact before 1971 was the stark contrast in *who* the two governments wanted to travel between their countries: Washington waived its restrictions on travel to the PRC for all but its most implacable domestic political critics – the only Americans to which a revolutionary PRC state extended invitations.[7] Meanwhile, Nixon would admit in April 1971 that the relaxation of restrictions on trade with China was "mostly symbolic": no one expected any great increase in commercial interactions before the Sino-American political relationship changed substantially.[8]

During and after his time in office, Nixon presented the decision to go from containing to engaging the PRC as the product of closed-door discussions in the West Wing and daring decision-making on his part. As Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argues, both men were able, by jealously

[6] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, viii, 205.
[7] NSSM 69, July 14, 1969, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 18; Pickowicz, *A Sensational Encounter*, 8.
[8] Talley, *Forgotten Vanguard*, 28.

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controlling the historical record, to shape early historical narratives about their China initiative – to create "a myth" that they were the "only individuals who could have realized" this change. Historians have been more critical about Nixon's claim that this was a bold and novel policy departure that originated from the White House: Tucker, Margaret MacMillan, and Evelyn Goh have been among those who have argued that, in MacMillan's words, Nixon deserves the credit – "but not all of it."[9] Yang Kuisong and Xia Yafeng report that Mao himself subscribed to the view that Nixon single-handedly drove the change in US China policy, with the chairman believing in 1970 that the US president "had dared to adopt the policy of rapprochement with China" and that doing so was "defying the political climate and sentiment in his country."[10]

However, an examination of historical sources from beyond the government record shows clearly that the removal of restrictions on trade and travel with China – the first steps toward rapprochement – was, far from an audacious shot in the dark, a change that had, since the late 1960s, been loudly advocated by influential American voices outside of government.[11] One venue at which this advocacy took place was a "national convocation" on China policy held in New York by the National Committee on US-China Relations two months into Nixon's term. The convocation, the then-largest event organized by the three-year-old National Committee, featured thirty-four speakers and attracted 2,500 attendees, representing fifty major corporations and twenty-four universities, as well as 200 journalists. The Hilton hotel, where it was hosted, claimed that they had never held an event with more press coverage.[12]

Similar to previous National Committee events, the convocation was carefully tailored for an audience drawn from the centrist American public and policymaking circles. Thirty-four speakers included America's most esteemed scholar of China, John Fairbank; Senator Jacob K.

[9] Tucker, "Taiwan Expendable?," 109, 112; MacMillan, *Seize the Hour*, 5; Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China*; Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 58–59.

[10] Yang and Xia, "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente," 404; Huang Hua, *Memoirs*, 219–23.

[11] As the previous discussion of the historiography suggests, this has been recognized if not explored by historians. Xu Guoqi says that the NCUSCR had "quietly laid the groundwork for a reexamination of the U.S. China policy." I conclude this advocacy was more loud than quiet. Xu, *Chinese and Americans*, 247. See also Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 31–32.

[12] "The China Talkers and the Absentees," *Washington Post*, March 23, 1969; NCUSCR Program Summary, 1968–1969, NCUSCROC; Kerpen, "Voices in a Silence," 170.

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Javits; John D. Rockefeller III; Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Harrison Salisbury; and the conservative commentator William A. Rusher. Virulent anti-Communist conservatives such as "the unofficial dean of the Taiwan lobby" Congressman Walter Judd and Maoist sympathizers like Felix Greene were equally shunned, while a State Department representative was invited to offer the government's perspective – and to ensure that the officials in Foggy Bottom received a firsthand account of the event.[13]

In the convocation's dinner address, Senator Ted Kennedy called for what the *Washington Post* described as the "customary bag of liberals' demands for exchanges, [and] ending bars on travel and nonstrategic trade" as a precursor to more fundamental shifts in US China policy – although not at the expense of a continuing relationship with the ROC government on Taiwan. Fairbank agreed that "the best thing" the Nixon administration could do was to adopt Senator Kennedy's proposals, while the former US ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer argued that there also needed to be a fundamental shift in how Americans were educated about China, away from "culture-bound" and "fundamentally racist" assumptions fit only for a "19th-century world." The conservative Rusher offered some dissent, defending US containment of China, but the vast majority of opinions voiced and the huge public turnout for the event together offered "evidence … that American public opinion on China has outrun American policy," the *Post* concluded. This was further demonstrated by a Gallup poll from two months prior that recorded that most Americans favored the United States "going along" with the PRC being seated at the UN if this was voted for by other countries.[14]

The convocation confirmed the National Committee as the most prominent American public organization concerned with US-China relations. The group was not alone, however, in advocating change in Washington's China policy: Kazushi Minami has shown how the League of Women Voters had, since 1965, increasingly taken an interest in China, organizing a number of conferences from 1966 that, while not on the

[13] "The China Talkers and the Absentees," *Washington Post*; NCUSCR Program Summary, 1968–1969, NCUSCROC; Talley, *Forgotten Vanguard*, 41.

[14] "Sinologists Praise Kennedy Initiative," *Washington Post*, March 22, 1969; "The China Talkers and the Absentees," *Washington Post*; David D. Perlmutter, *Picturing China in the American Press: The Visual Portrayal of Sino-American Relations in Time Magazine, 1949–1973* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 189.

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scale of the NCUSCR's national convocation, nonetheless attracted hundreds of attendees. After 1969, the League dropped its previously neutral stance on US China policy and instead channeled the changing views of its 160,000 strong membership to actively advocate for the United States opening exchange contacts with the PRC and ultimately normalizing relations with Beijing.[15] Meanwhile, the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars hosted conventions in Philadelphia in 1968 and Boston in 1969 at which the radical left-wing academics involved in the organization denounced the US government's approach to the PRC in more strident terms than employed by the speakers at the NCUSCR's national convocation.[16] The shifting public discourse on China was a death knell for what had previously been the foremost nongovernment voice on China policy in the 1950s and early 1960s: the Committee of One Million. In the week of the NCUSCR's convocation, the ever-more-incredibly named organization closed its offices in New York and arranged for phone calls to be redirected to its director's personal telephone, while its chief money raiser packed up shop and moved to London.[17]

Herbert Levin, a National Security Council (NSC) staff member for East Asian affairs from 1970 to 1971, recalled in an oral history interview that "at that time the scholars took the lead" in shaping public discourse on China. Within the White House, Kissinger was, Levin claimed, glad that nongovernmental organizations such as the National Committee were, through their judicious appeal to the political center, helping to "split the domestic conservative opposition" to an official approach to China that Washington felt they could not yet openly make.[18] Kissinger was happy to take a back seat as the NCUSCR advocated engagement with the PRC in part because Nixon had made clear that, while he wanted Kissinger to "plant [the] idea" in academic communities that the president was interested in rapprochement, he had also warned him in 1969 that "this should be done privately and under no circumstances get into the public prints from this direction."[19]

[15] Kazushi Minami, "'How Could I Not Love You?': Transnational Feminism and US-Chinese Relations during the Cold War," *Journal of Women's History* 31, no. 4 (2019): 14–17.

[16] Lanza, *End of Concern*, 31–33.

[17] "The China Talkers and the Absentees," *Washington Post*; Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 37.

[18] The National Security Council Project Oral History Roundtables: China Policy and the National Security Council, interview by Ivo Daalder and I. M. Destler, April 11, 1999, 9.

[19] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 8.

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In addition to this role shaping public discourse on China, leading members of the NCUSCR had direct input into Nixon's incipient China policy through consultations. The most notable of these was an April 1969 day-long West Wing meeting between five prominent academics and Kissinger, attended by Nixon for an hour. Three of those at the meeting – Lucian Pye, Doak Barnett, and Edwin Reischauer – were board members of the National Committee, with Barnett then the chairman of the organization.[20] These meetings took place at the same time as internal government studies of China policy were putting forward many of the same arguments articulated by these academics, and while US allies were also urging Washington to take concrete steps to open a dialogue with Beijing.[21] Thus, Barnett was far from alone in suggesting to Kissinger in October 1969 that the United States remove American warships from the Taiwan Straits, relax trade restrictions, and establish a new communication channel with the Chinese beside the Warsaw talks. Nonetheless, Barnett's encouragement surely helped and, a month after he made these suggestions to Kissinger, patrols of the Taiwan Straits ended; three months later, trade in the areas advocated in the letter was permitted; a year later, the United States established a backchannel with the PRC through Pakistan.[22]

The origins of Nixon's early initiatives toward China are complex, with many ideas for "bridge building" dating back at least as far as the Lyndon Johnson era (see the Prologue).[23] Together, however, the public and private dialogue between American academics and policymakers in 1969 demonstrates that Nixon and Kissinger should be credited more with the execution than the invention of the moves that began rapprochement and that, even before the earliest signaling to Beijing, voices from outside of the White House and the State Department had contributed to policymaking toward the PRC.[24] As in the case of other innovative Nixon

[20] Barnett to Roehrich, February 5, 1981 [*sic*], "Kissinger, 1968–81," Box 106, A. Doak Barnett papers (ADBP), Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, United States (RBMLCU).

[21] Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos to History," 395.

[22] Barnett to Nixon, October 9, 1969, "Kissinger, 1968–81," Box 106, ADBP, RBMLCU.

[23] Lumbers, *Piercing the Bamboo Curtain*; Oyen, *Diplomacy of Migration*, 242.

[24] For just one example, see Reischauer to Kissinger, January 6, 1969, "Nixon, 1968–71," Box 106, ADBP, RBMLCU. Kissinger himself would later admit that "[f]or both sides necessity dictated that a rapprochement occur, and the attempt had to be made no matter who governed in either country." Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 729.

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policies – the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, the extension of Medicare, the introduction of Title IX legislation against sex discrimination – the president's genius was perceptively reading the shifting political ground of the 1960s and then enacting policy change that appeared bold in form but that the president was confident would have popular support across the political spectrum.

MIXED MESSAGES

While the Nixon White House weighed the suggestions of Ted Kennedy and senior NCUSCR members as a means to indicate to Beijing its interest in dialogue, Washington also sought to read Chinese intentions through the PRC's attitude to private American citizens. One early instance was the freeing of two American yachtsmen arrested in Chinese waters in December 1969. The US government was formally told of their release and Washington correctly guessed that this indicated that the action had been on the direct orders of Premier Zhou and Chairman Mao. Zhou and Mao had taken this step as a positive response to the US ambassador to Poland, Walter Stoessel, conveying to Chinese diplomats in Warsaw Nixon's desire to resume talks and in recognition of the easing of the US trade embargo on the PRC.[25]

The State Department also sought to gage Beijing's attitude to the United States by speaking to Americans who had been in direct contact with the Chinese leadership. It was to this end that Harry E. T. Thayer, a senior State Department officer who had served in Hong Kong and Taipei, interviewed one of the very few Americans who had been permitted entry to the People's Republic: Robert F. Williams. The Black civil rights activist had come to fame in the 1950s after leading a successful public campaign to free two young Black boys – aged seven and nine – imprisoned for rape after being kissed on the cheek by a white girl of similar age. Williams had been forced to seek refuge in Cuba in 1961

[25] The Chinese government had also earlier shown clemency toward another pair of American yachtsmen in July 1969. Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi [CCP Central Committee Document Research Office] (ZGZYWXYJS), ed., *Mao Zedong nianpu, 1949–1976* [Mao Zedong Chronicle, 1949–1976], vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2013), 274; ZGZYWXYJS, ed., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* [Zhou Enlai Chronicle, 1949–1976], vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), 336–37; Cline to Rogers, December 9, 1969, "POL Chicom-U.S. 7/1/70," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP; Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos to History," 395; MacMillan, *Seize the Hour*, 167.

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after the FBI launched a manhunt for him based on a framed-up kidnapping charge for sheltering a white couple in his home when they came under threat from a mob. Inspired by reading accounts of W. E. B. Du Bois's 1959 visit to China, Williams had himself traveled to the country, first for short visits in 1963 and 1964 and then, in 1965, for a longer relocation that only ended with his return to the United States in 1969. While in China, he had enjoyed close access to the PRC leadership (as well as a highly privileged, luxurious existence): Williams's correspondence with Mao dated back to 1962 and he claimed responsibility for the chairman's endorsement of Martin Luther King and the US nonviolent civil rights movement; previously, the *People's Daily* had referred to King as an Uncle Tom, a "traitor," and a "spokesman for the Nazi Los Angeles Police Chief, William Parker." Williams had spent more than two hours with Premier Zhou immediately before he departed China, which followed Nixon personally sending word that Williams would not be arrested upon his return.[26] (Williams' affection for China would continue until his death: he would be buried in 1996 in a Chinese-style Mao suit earlier presented to him by the chairman himself.)[27]

Thayer was personally unsure of the reliability of Williams's comments – in a thorough eight-page analysis, he described their four-hour conversation as "impressionistic" – but he nonetheless passed on to his superiors at the State Department Williams's claims that the Chinese felt "insulted" by the selective nature of the scaling back of travel and trade restrictions and how this cast the leadership as "beggars" to other governments in the Third World and left-leaning radicals in Beijing; this information may have contributed to the US government's abandonment of the remaining restrictions on travel over the following year.[28] In his book on contacts between Black radicals and China, Frazier wonders what consequences there were to Williams's conversation with Thayer. Williams had won the Chinese leadership's attention in the early 1960s through his advocacy of African American violence against the US government. Now, however, he "seemed wholly sincere in his desire to 'work for peace,'" and Thayer suggested that the government consider him as

[26] Lovell, *Maoism*, 280–81; Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 136–37, 140, 185, 198; Johnson, "From Peace to the Panthers," 242–46; Gao, "W. E. B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois in Maoist China," 77–79; "On the Platform with Mao Tse-tung: China Through the Eyes of a Black American Dissident," *New York Times*, February 20, 1971, 27.

[27] Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 212–13.

[28] Report on conversation, Thayer and Williams, January 12, 1970, SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP.

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a "possible channel" of direct communication with the Chinese leadership, even if he suggested "caution" in doing so. There is no evidence that Thayer or anyone else from the US government subsequently asked Williams to pass messages to the PRC leadership.[29]

Despite the US government's renewed interest in Sino-American people-to-people interactions, few Americans traveled to China in 1970. Perhaps reflecting their resentment at the partial travel ban reported by Williams, Beijing welcomed only a lone American visitor – John S. Strong – in the four months following Washington's relaxation of its travel restrictions in March 1970.[30] Strong had been born in China in 1948 and was the grandnephew of the late American Marxist Anna Louise Strong, who had lived in China for much of the People's Republic's existence and had died in Beijing the same month that travel restrictions were loosened, being buried in the Babaoshan Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery. Anna Louise Strong had spent decades communicating the CCP's message to the outside world: she had written one of the first English-language accounts of the party in the form of the bestselling 1928 book *China's Millions: Revolution in Central China, 1927*, followed by a 1959 celebration of the CCP's transformation of Tibet, *When Serfs Stood up in Tibet*, and then the regular "Letters from China" that was published from 1962 until her death.[31] It had been in an interview with her in 1946 that Mao had first coined the term "paper tiger."[32] The invitation of her nephew was in a similar mode, then, to those few Americans who had been invited to the PRC in the 1960s: he had been granted a visa in recognition of his family's political views.

Meanwhile, Beijing gave little away in its response to Nixon's efforts to restart Sino-American trade. The PRC was in fact quietly increasing its purchases of a range of US goods, from vegetable oil to advanced electronics. They were doing so, however, in ways that concealed their involvement, buying under the table in Hong Kong or through Japanese or European suppliers, and refusing to acknowledge that American products were reaching China. Indeed, the mainland authorities warned

[29] Ibid.; Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 195–98.

[30] American Consul Hong Kong (ACHK) to Department of State (DOS), July 21, 1970, SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP.

[31] Premier Zhou had personally visited Strong the day before she passed away, thanking her for all she had done for the Chinese people over her lifetime. ZGZYWXYJS, *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, 3:358–59; "Anna Louise Strong," *China Daily*, August 9, 2005.

[32] ZGZYWXYJS, ed., *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong on Diplomacy] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1994), 60–61.

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Hong Kong distributors of PRC-manufactured goods that if they were publicly found dealing with US firms they would be harshly sanctioned by Beijing.[33] Thus, while Beijing was prepared to occasionally release an imprisoned American or two, Chinese leaders opted to limit their signaling to their own chosen initiatives, rather than publicly embrace the openings offered by Washington.

Frustration at Beijing's subversion of US initiatives toward people-to-people contact encouraged Kissinger and Nixon to seek a secret high-level backchannel with the PRC leadership. However, while the White House used both the Warsaw talks and the Romanian and Pakistani leadership to communicate that the United States was prepared to negotiate political questions, Washington did not abandon their previous position that people-to-people exchanges were an important avenue of opportunity for Sino-American contact and should resume.[34] At the February 20, 1970 ambassadorial meeting in Warsaw – the 136th, and, as it turned out, last – the Americans directly responded to Chinese reluctance to allow exchanges, arguing that the United States and China "can and should" move forward on bilateral issues while "simultaneously" discussing Taiwan.[35] This was the first articulation of what was to become the US negotiating position toward exchanges until the 1978 normalization agreement: that exchange contacts were a parallel track in the Sino-American relationship that should move forward alongside diplomatic negotiations, rather than after major political agreements – in particular, normalization – as Beijing often demanded. It was also the basis of the emerging broader US position that any visit by an American official representative to China – suggested by the Chinese in this meeting – could not be exclusively to discuss Taiwan and must also include talks on issues such as renewing exchanges and trade.[36] In time, both of these strategies would bring success, but there were limited hints of this before the drama of ping-pong diplomacy.

[33] ACHK to DOS, July 21, 1970, "POL Chicom-U.S. 7/1/70," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP.

[34] Mircea Munteanu, "Communication Breakdown? Romania and the Sino-American Rapprochement," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 4 (2009): 615–31; F. S. Aijazuddin, *From a Head, through a Head, to a Head: The Secret Channel between the US and China through Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 22–34; Lüthi, "Restoring Chaos to History," 389–90.

[35] February 20, 1970 talks, in "A Résumé of the Warsaw Talks, 1955–1970," October 12, 1971, "POL Chicom-U.S. 4/1/71," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP.

[36] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 46–49, 56–58.

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THE MISREAD EDGAR SNOW MESSAGE

Before that breakthrough, however, there was one final signal sent through a people-to-people channel that has subsequently become widely remarked upon but also misunderstood. Kissinger claimed in his memoirs that "the inscrutable" Mao's decision to publicize a meeting between himself and the American journalist Edgar Snow with a picture of the pair alone atop Tiananmen Gate was "so oblique that our crude Occidental minds completely missed the point."[37] Certainly, Snow's interactions with Mao were intended to be a signal from the Chinese: the Christmas Day edition of *The People's Daily* not only included the picture of Mao with Snow but also the chairman's statement that, "People from all over the world, including the American people, are our friends."[38] Mao called the meeting and its publicity a "trial balloon" to test US interest in opening contacts with the PRC.[39]

Snow had long been, as Fairbank wrote, one of the "chief means through whom Mao and Chou tried to reach Americans." Ever since the publication of his world-bestselling *Red Star Over China* in 1937, Snow was the window through which many Americans encountered and made sense of the Chinese Communists. He had returned to China in 1960 and again in 1964 through 1965 before the final visit of his life beginning in 1970.[40] During Snow's 1970 to 1971 trip, Premier Zhou confided in Snow that the journalist's visit was also a means by which he and Mao could gain some insider understanding of the US government's intentions, just as the State Department had done with Robert F. Williams (although, in fact, Snow and the US government had long been frostily estranged). Snow was extensively quizzed by the premier against that frequent backdrop to Chinese foreign relations initiatives – a table tennis match, on this occasion between visiting North Koreans and their Chinese hosts.[41]

[37] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 698–99.

[38] "Mao Zedong zhuxi huijian Meiguo youhao renshi Aidejia Sinuo" [Chairman Mao Zedong Meets with American Friend Edgar Snow], *Renmin Ribao*, December 25, 1970.

[39] ZGZYWXYJS, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 592–94.

[40] Zhou Enlai's surname was romanized as Chou in the older Wade Giles system widely used at Fairbank's time of writing. John K. Fairbank, "To China and Back," *New York Review of Books*, October 19, 1972; Edgar Snow, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1972).

[41] Huang, *Memoirs*, 212–16; Ji Chaozhu, *The Man on Mao's Right: From Harvard Yard to Tiananmen Square, My Life Inside China's Foreign Ministry* (New York: Random House, 2008), 242; Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 58.

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Kissinger alleges that he was ignorant of the Snow signal until several months after it took place – by which time "we had had communications from Chou En-lai sufficiently explicit for our less supple minds to grasp" – and Harding is one of several distinguished scholars who repeats the idea that the State Department did not report on the meeting until April 1971.[42] This, however, is contradicted by at least three long memoranda circulated within that department in late December 1970 and early January 1971. These memoranda analyzed in detail the possible implications of both the content and symbolism of Mao's meeting with Snow. As they had over Williams's testimony and the release of American yachtsmen, government analysts diligently attempted to understand the meaning of changing Chinese behavior toward American citizens. Tudda claims that the arrival of two of these three memoranda on New Year's Eve meant that Secretary of State William Rogers missed them. This does, not, however, explain how a third memorandum, entitled "Did Chou tell Edgar Snow anything new about Taiwan?" and signed off by senior US government China watcher William Gleysteen, could have fallen under the radar: it arrived January 4.[43] (It is possible that only Kissinger was out of the loop: Nixon stated in his own memoirs that the White House, "learned of Mao's statement [to Snow] within a few days after he made it.")[44]

A simple reason that Mao's most important message to Snow – that Nixon himself would be welcome to come to China – was missed by Kissinger is that the journalist initially kept it to himself. Mao had revealed to Snow that he was planning to break the PRC's long-standing practice of inviting only American leftists to the country. Frankly admitting that, "One of our policies now is to prevent Americans from coming to China," Mao stated that, in the future, "Left, center, right – let them all come."[45] Snow's earlier talks with Zhou in November included other suggestions that Beijing was open to talks with the United States (albeit specifically to discuss US withdrawal from Taiwan) and accounts of these

[42] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 702–03; Harding, *Fragile Relationship*, 39, 394; Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China*, 177–79.

[43] ACHK to DOS, December 31, 1970, "POL 1 Chicom 6/1/70," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP; ACHK to Rogers, "POL 2 Chicom 9/1/70," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP; Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), "Did Chou Tell Edgar Snow Anything New about Taiwan?," January 4, 1971, "POL Chicom-U.S. 1/1/71," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP; Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 62.

[44] Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, vol. 2 (New York: Warner Books, 1979), 11.

[45] ZGZYWXYJS, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 592–94.

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discussions were immediately published abroad and included in the State Department's analysis.[46] Snow's long account of his talks with Mao, however, was rejected by *The New York Times* and took four months to appear in *Life* magazine. Chen Jian suggests that this delay was in part because, fearing the domestic consequences of Mao's criticism of Cultural Revolution excesses in the interview, the Chinese state initially prevented Snow from publishing a full account.[47] Mao had indeed told Snow to keep at least some of their conversation between them: he revealed to the journalist much of the content of Nixon's backchannel communications to Beijing, before saying, "We haven't published it, keep it secret!"[48] Mao should further shoulder some of the blame for mistakenly believing that Snow worked for the CIA or State Department.[49] In fact, either as a result of the Chinese insistence on secrecy or because of Snow's resentment from years of suspicion from American officialdom – Snow had been driven to move to Switzerland to avoid the challenges he had faced in the United States – the journalist did not even reveal the chairman's invite to Nixon when he was eventually, belatedly interviewed by the CIA in Geneva.[50] Even when, later in 1971, Nixon personally wrote a letter of thanks to Snow after the July announcement of the presidential visit to China, Snow ignored his letter, seeing Nixon's initiative as too long overdue to be worthy of his approval.[51]

Tyler and MacMillan both suggest that a critical reason for this missed connection was the government's lingering suspicions of left-wing Sinophiles such as Snow, a claim based in part on Kissinger's memoirs.[52] This prejudice unquestionably existed, as seen in the caution with which the radical Williams had been treated by Thayer. Yet, the State Department nonetheless recognized that the journalist must be taken seriously,

[46] Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan* [Zhou Enlai Biography], ed. ZGZYWXYJS, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2008), 1845–46; ACHK to DOS, December 31, 1970, "POL 1 Chicom 6/1/70," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP.

[47] Chen, *Mao's China*, 257.

[48] ZGZYWXYJS, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 593.

[49] Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China*, 177; Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 83; Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 124; Lovell, "Foreigners in Mao-Era China," 151.

[50] That Snow was interviewed by the CIA is reported by Tyler, based on correspondence with Snow's late wife, Lois. Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 86. Robert Keatley also repeated the claim that Snow was interviewed by the CIA in an interview the author conducted with him. Keatley met Snow before he himself traveled to the PRC later in 1971. Author interview with Robert Keatley, Washington, DC, United States, September 2, 2015.

[51] Huang, *Memoirs*, 217.

[52] Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 86; MacMillan, *Seize the Hour*, 172; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 725–26.

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as "Peking considers Snow an important vehicle for carrying Chinese views … to the West" – just as Thayer had made time to travel to Detroit to meet Williams.[53] What is a more likely explanation is that the *known* content of Snow's contacts with the Chinese was hardly news to the US government. Undisclosed to the public though this was at the time, the February 20, 1970 meeting in Warsaw had included a PRC suggestion that the United States send a senior minister or presidential envoy to China.[54] Snow was only one of the multiple channels through which the Chinese suggested starting such a dialogue, and, whether Rogers saw the memoranda about the journalist or not, he (not to mention Kissinger) would already have been aware that the Chinese had recommended the resumption of higher level talks.

The four-month delay in the release of Mao's suggestion of Nixon personally coming to China was, then, a partially missed signal, but Kissinger overstated how ignorant Washington was of the importance of Snow's interactions in Beijing – and completely misidentified why the most critical aspect of Mao's message – Nixon's invitation – did not reach the White House. In any case, Mao and his colleagues were also using Snow for another purpose: as a signal to the Chinese and American *people* that the diplomatic hostility between Beijing and Washington was easing.[55] Judged by this criterion, Beijing's signaling was more effective: Snow's *Life* article, when it eventually came out, further stoked American public interest in China in the same month as ping-pong diplomacy, while the historian Chen Jian recalls that, as an eighteen-year-old educated youth in Shanghai, he and his friends had all recognized that Mao's meeting with Snow – and its abundant press coverage within China – was significant, even as they remained unsure as to its precise meaning.[56] Meanwhile, grassroots CCP branches throughout the country were given the minutes of the Mao–Snow interview, beginning to prepare the party rank-and-file for the changes in Sino-American relations that were to come.[57] The most dramatic of these occurred just a few months later, in April 1971.

[53] ACHK to DOS, December 31, 1970, "POL 1 Chicom 6/1/70," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP.

[54] ZGZYWXYJS, *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, 3:348; "A Résumé of the Warsaw Talks, 1955–1970," October 12, 1971, "POL Chicom-U.S. 4/1/71," SNF1970–73PD, RG59, NACP.

[55] Huang, *Memoirs*, 212–16.

[56] Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 255–56.

[57] Xiong Xianghui, *Wo de qingbao yu waijiao shengya* [My Career in Intelligence and Diplomacy] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1999), 198.

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THE PING-PONG BREAKTHROUGH

The sensational tour of China by the American ping-pong team that took place between April 12 and 24, 1971, is the most documented event in Sino-American exchange contact in history. As soon as the possibility of the visit became clear, American news organizations clamored to secure coverage: one of the team, the Guyanese-born George Braithwaite (Figure 1.1), ended up traveling around the PRC with cameras around his neck from four different news organizations, including *Ebony*.[58] The players left China via Hong Kong, where some six hundred reporters had gathered to cover the conclusion of the tour.[59] The visit has hardly received less attention from historians. It is the centerpiece of Nicholas Griffin's popular 2014 book and features prominently in Xu Guoqi's account of the role of sports in twentieth-century Chinese diplomacy. The tour has also been the focus of much Chinese-language scholarship, including Qian Jiang's dedicated study *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu* [Little Ball Moves Big Ball]. It is, therefore, unnecessary to provide here another detailed account of the specifics of the trip. Instead, the following section seeks to make two important points regarding the visit that connect with the larger arguments of this book. First, Chinese sources are used to document the close involvement of the highest leaders in Beijing – Zhou and Mao – in the ping-pong initiative, something absent from earlier American accounts of the event. More broadly, this section provides a different perspective on the visit: as an opening episode in the Sino-American cultural exchange program. As the coming pages will show, the ping-pong diplomacy of 1971, while remarkable, was far from the last time that a cultural exchange – even a ping-pong exchange – would significantly influence the diplomatic relationship between China and the United States.[60]

By late 1970, the signaling employed by each government, as well as the Warsaw talks and the backchannel messages sent through Romania and Pakistan, had confirmed to both sets of leaders that a rapprochement was possible. At this point, Beijing decided to shift its focus away from high-level backchannels and to instead take a decisive step in the people-to-people channel. Mao had ordered that China pull out of the

[58] Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 207.
[59] Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 138.
[60] Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*; Xu, *Olympic Dreams*; Qian Jiang, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu: "Pingpang waijiao" muhou* [Little Ball Moves Big Ball: Behind the Scenes of Ping-Pong Diplomacy] (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1997).

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FIGURE 1.1 Premier Zhou Enlai greets George Braithwaite, a member of the US table tennis team, in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. Courtesy of the University of Hong Kong Libraries

Warsaw talks in June 1970 in protest at the March coup by the US-backed Cambodian general Lol Nol against the neutralist Prince Sihanouk and Beijing had then also suspended the Pakistani backchannel in February 1971 in further protest against the US military intervention in Cambodia.[61] While the Chinese objected to Nixon's escalation in Indochina, Chinese leaders still believed that US power was necessary to counter the imminent Soviet threat. They had continued to signal their interest in rapprochement through their treatment of private American citizens: James Walsh, an American Catholic bishop who had been arrested in 1958 for spying, was released on July 10, 1970, a month after the initial suspension of talks due to the bombing of Cambodia.[62] With those talks suspended, Mao and Zhou turned to the only remaining channel of communication available to them – people-to-people contacts – to kick-start rapprochement.

[61] ZGZYWXYJS, *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, 3:373; ZGZYWXYJS, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 584; MacMillan, *Seize the Hour*, 169; Gong, "Chinese Decision Making," 338–39.

[62] 'Wo zhuanzheng jiguan chuli waiguo fanren' [Foreign Prisoners Processed by Organs of our Dictatorship], *Renmin Ribao*, July 11, 1970.

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We now know that Mao and Zhou were deeply and personally involved in the seemingly spontaneous contact between the American and Chinese table tennis teams at the world championships in Nagoya, Japan in March and April 1971. Mao had ordered in February 1971 that the Foreign Ministry admit Americans to China in the near future: noting that 830 Americans had applied for visas since Nixon had entered office, Mao said that about thirty Americans should be allowed to come before the end of the year and again stated, as he had to Snow that, "effective rightist figures" should be allowed to come.[63] Chinese sources further reveal that, even before the PRC team had traveled to Japan, Zhou had briefed party officials that the American team might be invited to China soon. Mao and Zhou's participation in the decision for the Chinese team to travel and be involved in their first international sporting competition since the launch of the Cultural Revolution has now been well documented: it took Zhou's intervention to overcome Cultural Revolution prejudice that international sporting competitions were tantamount to collusion with imperialists and reactionaries, and even a late final instruction from the chairman himself to quell fears from within the Chinese Foreign Ministry about the political risks of PRC players attending a high-profile tournament at which Americans would be present. Mao instructed the team that they should be prepared for death in their daring journey to Nagoya – but added that it would be better if they did not die.[64]

Once both teams were at the championships in Nagoya, pleasantries were exchanged between some of the Chinese and Americans in the practice hall, while an American player sat next to a member of the Chinese team's delegation at a banquet and mentioned his aspiration for the US team to visit China, as other country's teams had been invited to do when they met the Chinese at the Nagoya tournament – comments quickly noted by Wang Zhaoyun, the deputy head of the delegation and an experienced diplomat.[65] United States Table Tennis

[63] ZGZYWXYJS, ed., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* [Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC], vol. 13 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1987), 211.

[64] ZGZYWXYJS, *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, 3:449–51; Jin, *Zhou Enlai zhuan*, 2:1847–50; Qian, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu*, 127–28; Li Gong, *Kuayue honggou: 1969–1979 nian Zhong Mei guanxi de yanbian* [Bridging the Divide: The Evolution of Sino-American Relations from 1969 to 1979] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1994), 77; Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 328–29; Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 128–29.

[65] Eckstein, "Table Tennis Project" [handwritten notes], April 20, 1972, "Athletic Exchanges – Table Tennis (Ping-Pong) – History of Table Tennis Exchange," Box 3, Alexander Eckstein Papers (AEP), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan,

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Association (USTTA) President Graham Steenhoven pointedly observed to Song Zhong, general secretary of the All-China Sports Federation, that Nixon had lifted the ban on Americans traveling to China just two weeks earlier. Later, Steenhoven made explicit why he had done so: the Americans were "absolutely envious" of other teams invited to China while in Nagoya, ultimately including teams from Canada, the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and Colombia.[66] A Chinese account of the tournament records six friendly approaches from the US team and American journalists before the Chinese responded.[67] Mao was being personally kept abreast of these developments and asked the Chinese team to telephone in reports several times a day.[68]

The famous breakthrough followed when Glenn Cowan (Figure 1.2) boarded the Chinese team bus and was greeted by the senior Chinese player Zhuang Zedong, who presented him with a silk-screen depiction of the Huangshan mountains. The next day, Cowan reciprocated, gifting Zhuang a red, white, and blue shirt emblazoned with the three-pronged peace sign and the lyrics to the Beatles song "Let It Be." The invitation for the American team to visit China after the championships came shortly thereafter – despite further vacillation in Beijing over whether apolitical ping-pong players should precede further American leftist visitors, overcome when Mao had his head nurse telephone the Foreign Ministry at midnight on the night before the world championships wrapped up.[69] Appropriately enough given Mao's dire warning to the Chinese team, when the American delegation heard of their invitation, some worried that they might themselves die on their trip to China.[70] Two members of the team that had traveled to Nagoya declined the invitation to go on to China, including the best American player, Dal Joon Lee, a Korean-born American who still held the PRC responsible for his family's suffering during the Korean War.[71]

Ann Arbor, MI, United States (BHL); Zhaohui Hong and Yi Sun, "The Butterfly Effect and the Making of 'Ping-Pong Diplomacy,'" *Journal of Contemporary China* 9, no. 25 (2000): 435.

[66] Gong, *Kuayue honggou*, 78; Xu, *Chinese and Americans*, 241; Qian, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu*, 237.

[67] Ma, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry*, 329.

[68] Gong, *Kuayue honggou*, 78; Huang, *Memoirs*, 223.

[69] Gong, *Kuayue honggou*, 79–80; Qian, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu*, 198–99; Ma, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry*, 329–30; Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 133–34.

[70] Hong and Sun, "The Butterfly Effect," 440.

[71] Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 198.

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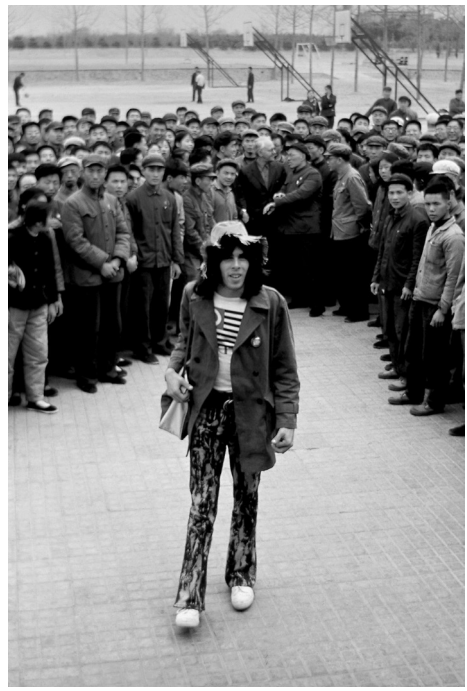

FIGURE 1.2 US table tennis player Glenn Cowan in Beijing. Cowan's long hair, colorful clothes, and breezy friendliness was a source of amused fascination for Chinese locals. Courtesy of the University of Hong Kong Libraries

The close involvement of the Chinese leaders in the initiative continued into the Americans' stay in China. Zhou drafted in some of China's top foreign policymakers to help oversee the visit, including Huang Hua, then vice minister of foreign affairs and soon to be China's permanent representative to the United Nations. Zhou told Huang that of the six table tennis teams invited to China following the Nagoya championships, the Americans were the most important and that their trip must be prioritized over all other work.[72] Zhou personally organized the team's itinerary – he wanted them to "get a good look at the new China" – including specially opening the then-closed Forbidden City for the visitors. The premier even munificently ordered that the Americans should be allowed to win a few of the matches against their Chinese opponents.[73] This was

[72] Qian, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu*, 236.

[73] Dunde Chen, *Mao Zedong Nikesong zai 1972* [Mao Zedong and Nixon in 1972] (Beijing: Kunlun chubanshe, 1988), 124; Qian, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu*, 236, 267–68.

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but one example of the "friendship first, competition second" approach the PRC had pioneered in its sporting diplomacy through the Cold War: China would ensure its opponents were given face, but the PRC's athletes must do so from a position of athletic strength.[74] Further reflecting this long-standing policy, the premier personally examined the remarks with which Chinese television commentators introduced the matches, ensuring they stressed friendship between the Chinese and American people.[75] The micromanagement extended to Zhou ensuring the Chinese program for the matches included an instruction – in bold typeface – that the American team should be applauded.[76] This may have been necessary: when another team of table tennis players from a former enemy visited China – the Japanese team sent to the 1961 world championships in Beijing – they received no applause from Chinese crowds, who instead cheered whoever was on the other side of the net – that is, until Chinese officials intervened behind the scenes.[77]

Zhou met with the US team, telling them of his hope that both the Chinese and American people would soon be able to pay friendly visits to the other, to applause from the players (Figure 1.3).[78] The premier even indulged questions from Cowan about his feelings about "hippie" culture in the United States: Zhou took the opportunity for what may have been a sideways comment on Chinese domestic politics, applauding young people finding their own truth – but then adding that building consensus was also important and that the young did not always express themselves in ways that were "mature."[79]

The White House was far less involved in the ping-pong initiative than were top Chinese leaders – and was remarkably uncertain as to how the trip would be received. Kissinger later praised the initiative of William Cunningham, a staff member at the US embassy in Tokyo for encouraging the team to accept the Chinese invitation – even though his only basis for doing so was Nixon's comment that the United States was open to athletic exchanges with China, made during one of the president's foreign

[74] Wang, "Friendship First."
[75] Song Shixiong, *Zishu: Wo de tiyu shijie yu ying ping chunqiu* [Autobiography of Song Shixiong: My Sports World and Days on Screen] (Beijing: Zuojia chuban she, 1997).
[76] Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 137.
[77] Wang, "Friendship First," 142.
[78] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 66.
[79] ZGZYWXYJS, ed., *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan* [Selected Works of Zhou Enlai on Diplomacy] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1990), 473.

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FIGURE 1.3 US table tennis player Olga Soltesz alongside Chinese ping-pong opponent Zhu Naizhen in Shanghai. Soltesz and Zhu struck up a friendship during the 1971 ping-pong visit – despite neither speaking the other's language. Courtesy of the University of Hong Kong Libraries

policy reports to Congress.[80] Nixon did then personally endorse the team traveling to the PRC – but on the proviso that the US government have no further direct involvement in what still seemed a risky venture.[81] In the wake of this endorsement, Kissinger waited anxiously for the American public response, concerned that allowing the ping-pong players to travel to the PRC might lead to anger at the White House.[82] He ordered US government personnel in Hong Kong and Japan to stay well away from the American players after they left China and traveled home via Tokyo.[83] Kissinger believed that the Chinese invitation, while a positive step, also contained a veiled warning that, if Beijing's overtures to the White House were rebuffed, the Chinese government would step up

[80] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 709; Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 201–02.
[81] Ruth Eckstein, "Ping Pong Diplomacy: A View from Behind the Scenes," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 2, no. 3 (1993): 327.
[82] Hong and Sun, "The Butterfly Effect," 441.
[83] Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 226.

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its efforts go under the heads of US leaders and directly appeal to the American people, as Hanoi was doing by stoking the anti-Vietnam War movement.[84] The Nixon tapes reveal that the president, while thrilled by the Chinese invitation to the team, still planned to remain "quiet and enigmatic about further moves" toward Beijing while the players were in China.[85] Nixon's response to the team's trip was so closely held that his own vice president, Spiro Agnew, publicly criticized the favorable American press coverage of the visit – angering Nixon so much that he considered removing Agnew from his re-election ticket.[86] Nixon and Kissinger need not have worried about the American public response: a Gallup poll conducted a few weeks after the ping-pong visit revealed a marked improvement in American impressions of the PRC and greater desire for engagement with Beijing – precisely the outcome the president would have hoped for.[87]

Amidst the rapturous American public reaction to the ping-pong visit, Nixon shed some of his inhibitions and offered a positive response to Beijing's action. On April 14, the day that Zhou personally welcomed the team to China, the US president announced the further relaxation of the restrictions on travel and trade between the two societies, promising to expedite visas for groups of Chinese visitors and permitting trade in an array of new goods.[88] The timing of the announcement was brought forward after Beijing's invitation to the American table tennis team.[89] The president also encouraged the Democratic Senator Mike Mansfield to accept an offer of travel to China extended via Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, then in refuge in Beijing, that had been sent while the ping-pong team was in the PRC.[90] The White House was thus continuing to make eager use of all channels of indirect communication with Beijing to respond to the ping-pong initiative – until, soon after the table tennis visit successfully concluded, on April 27,

[84] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 710.
[85] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 67, 180.
[86] Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 143.
[87] Hong and Sun, "The Butterfly Effect," 429–48.
[88] National Security Decision Memorandum 105, April 13, 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 116.
[89] Kissinger, *White House Years*, 712.
[90] Mansfield's visit ultimately took place in April 1972, having been deliberately delayed by the White House once Nixon expected to himself go to China. Don Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield: The Extraordinary Life of a Great American Statesman and Diplomat* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 393–96.

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the White House received Zhou's unexpected invitation for Kissinger to visit China.[91]

Though ignorant of Kissinger's invitation, the National Committee on US-China Relations had also rushed to welcome the ping-pong team's visit to China and to use the visit as the basis for beginning exchange contacts. The organization worked quickly to facilitate an invitation to the Chinese to send their own table tennis team for a return ping-pong exchange in the United States. The American team had decided even before they entered the PRC that they wished to invite their hosts to the United States and had hastily sought a sponsor with the resources and expertise to host what promised to be the highest-profile tabletennis event to ever be hosted on American soil. Officials at the US embassy in Tokyo had told Steenhoven that, although the departments of State and Justice agreed to the issuing of visas to a prospective visiting Chinese team, the funding for any return tour must come from a private organization. The USTTA was a private group but had nothing like the funds necessary to underwrite the visit: the American players were amateur athletes with day jobs, and the team collectively ranked twenty-third in the world (the Chinese men, in contrast, won gold at Nagoya; the women, silver). In line with other sporting delegations of political importance hosted by the PRC, the Chinese government had covered all the costs of the American team's visit to China – with the American players even raising the question of covering the expenses of changing their return flight date before they agreed to embark.[92] Fay Willey, a *Newsweek* journalist, heard of the predicament facing Steenhoven from the magazine's Tokyo bureau and urgently contacted Douglas Murray, vice president of the National Committee. With less than twenty four hours until the team's entry to China, Murray was able to quickly secure the NCUSCR board's backing and the organization's executive director, B. Preston Schoyer, cabled Steenhoven in Hong Kong to offer the organization's services co-hosting and funding the return ping-pong visit if the Chinese accepted the invitation.[93] Steenhoven, who had a day job at Chrysler,

[91] Jin, *Zhou Enlai zhuan*, 2:1850; Zhou to Nixon, April 21, 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 118.

[92] Shuman, "Learning from the Soviet Big Brother," 169.

[93] Willey to Arne [J de Keijzer], June 9, 1971, and Schoyer to American Table Tennis Team, April 8, 1971, "USTTA – Kaminsky – 1972," Box 15, National Archive on Sino-American Relations (NASAR), BHL; Qian, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu*, 243; Murray to Steenhoven, April 15, 1971, "Athletic Exchanges – Table Tennis (Ping-Pong) – Miscellanea," Box 4,

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later told the National Committee that, had the organization not got in touch, his invitation to the Chinese would not have been offered; deputy head of the team, J. Rufford Harrison, described the team as "completely reliant" on the NCUSCR.[94] The National Committee's offer was in retrospect both a recognition and a cause of the organization's prominence: Willey contacted the NCUSCR because of the profile and resources it had accrued since its founding in 1966, but the group's central role in future Sino-American exchanges grew out of its experience hosting the Chinese table tennis team.

The Chinese players agreed to travel to the United States but did not commit to a date. Beijing was ready for the invitation: Zhou had spoken within the Foreign Ministry of the possibility of China's table tennis team traveling to the United States as early as 11 March, nearly a month before the Americans arrived. The premier argued that, as China's ping-pong players had already traveled to West Germany and to Japan before the establishment of diplomatic relations with Bonn or Tokyo, the lack of official ties with Washington should not prevent a ping-pong tour of the United States.[95] The return visit would ultimately be delayed until April 1972 – partially as a result of Beijing wanting to avoid sending their team while a rival ping-pong team from Taiwan was touring the United States (although Zhou also used the delay to encourage the team to practice their English before their US tour).[96] Nonetheless, China's acceptance of the invitation was a significant step in the resumption of people-to-people contact after the hiatus at the height of the Cultural Revolution.

Meanwhile, American journalistic travel to China resumed as a corollary of the first ping-pong visit: a trio of US journalists accompanied the team, the first American reporters to visit the PRC on behalf of politically centrist publications, as distinct from earlier visits by radical, left-leaning journalists and writers such as Edgar Snow, Anna Louise Strong, William Worthy, and W. E. B. Du Bois (see the Prologue). Beijing's earlier preference for journalists known to be sympathetic toward the PRC was being diluted, but still lingered: among the three journalists was John Roderick, an Associated Press reporter who had spent six months in the CCP base in Yan'an in the 1940s and who was personally known to Mao and

AEP, BHL; author interviews with Douglas Murray, New York, United States, September 9, 2015, and Jan Berris, New York, United States, August 15, 2015, and June 19, 2019.

[94] Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 150; Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 215.

[95] Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 127–28.

[96] Qian, "Zhou Enlai xu xie 'pingpang waijiao' huazhang," 47.

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Zhou.[97] In the month that followed, Robert Keatley of the *Wall Street Journal* and Tillman Durdin of the *New York Times* also both traveled to China individually, with Durdin returning to the country from which he famously reported on the Sino-Japanese War – including with some of the first reports of the 1937 Nanjing massacre. (Keatley's visit had an unexpected significance: his then-wife, Anne Keatley, traveled with him. Anne was a staff member of the CSCPRC and used her presence at a meeting between her then-husband and Zhou to present a letter from her employer proposing that China work with the CSCPRC on scientific exchanges. Zhou did not immediately respond to the letter, but later recalled that meeting as the moment that he became aware of the CSCPRC and its interest in exchanges with China.[98]) The first exchange delegation of American journalists would be sent by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in October 1972, with the Chinese sending a reciprocal delegation to the United States in May 1973 (Chapter 3).[99]

Ping-pong diplomacy was also closely covered by PRC state media – including on television. This was not the first time that Chinese audiences would have experienced positive news coverage of Americans: the politically radical American "foreign friends" that visited or lived in China had often been featured in Chinese media. Sidney Rittenberg, one of the foremost Americans living in China, had even had his speeches broadcast throughout China during the Cultural Revolution (although this influence had prompted jealous enemies, including Jiang Qing, to have Rittenberg imprisoned, where he languished even while his country's table tennis team toured China).[100] The televising of the American team's visit similarly contained a clear political message. Internal Chinese documents discussing the coverage of the team's visit to Shanghai explained to local cadres – surely as surprised as Americans at the Chinese central government's sudden invitation to a US national sports team – that the PRC distinguished between the American people, toward whom China was friendly, and the US government that set the country's hostile policy toward the PRC (the document quoted both Mao and Zhuang Zedong in stressing this distinction). If the ping-pong visit was still internally framed

[97] Hong and Sun, "The Butterfly Effect," 442; ZGZYWXYJS, *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan*, 469–75; Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 213.
[98] NFTNC, Vol. 1, No. 3, Summer 1971; Anne Keatley to Handler, July 21, 1971, "1971 – General," CSCPRCP, NAS; author interview with Robert Keatley.
[99] *NFTNC*, Vol. 5, No. 2, July 1975.
[100] Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China*, 155, 163–65.

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in terms similar to those of earlier visits by the radical American political activists discussed in the Prologue, there were nonetheless surely some among the Chinese who witnessed the ping-pong tour – whether on television or by other means – and wondered if the event might not indicate some change the PRC leadership's stance toward the US government, as well as its people.[101]

When Nixon himself traveled to Beijing in February 1972, Mao looked back on the extensive American efforts to restart Sino-American contact through people-to-people contacts: "if one counts the time since you put forward your suggestion at Warsaw it is less than two years. Our side also is bureaucratic in dealing with matters. For example, you wanted some exchange of persons on a personal level, things like that; also trade. But rather than deciding that we stuck with our stand that without settling major issues there is nothing to do with smaller issues. I myself persisted in that position. Later on I saw you were right, and we played table tennis." The chairman's words were a fitting epithet on the initial failure and ultimate success of the American and then Chinese initiatives to restart Sino-American relations via exchange diplomacy.[102]

THE FIRST AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC VISITS TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

In May, the same month that the American journalists Keatley and Durdin toured China, scientific exchanges began with the visit of Arthur Galston and Ethan Signer to the PRC – the first American scientists to visit China since the outbreak of the Korean War.[103] The invitation of Galston and Signer ahead of any of their American scientific colleagues showed how Beijing's earlier preference for critics of the US government was lingering: Galston had become vocally critical of US foreign policy after discovering that his doctoral research on soybean fertilizers had, without his

[101] "Shanghai renmin guangbo diantai! Shanghai dianshitai!" [Shanghai People's Broadcasting Station! Shanghai TV!], April 16, 1971, Folder B92–2–1485–7, SHMA.

[102] ZGZYWXYJS, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 595; Memcon: Mao, Nixon, et al., February 21, 1972, FRUS, *1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 194.

[103] The American physician George Hatem lived in China throughout the Mao period and wrote and spoke about the country. Galston and Signer were, however, the first American research scientists to visit the country and the first to do so on a visit framed as a scientific exchange. Sigrid Schmalzer, "Speaking about China, Learning from China: Amateur China Experts in 1970s America," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 339; Hooper, *Foreigners under Mao*, 25.

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knowledge or consent, been used as the basis for the development of the notorious defoliant Agent Orange, while Signer was an active member of the left-leaning, anti-Vietnam War organization Science for the People.[104] Although Signer believed that Zhou Enlai had, during a two-and-a-half-hour meeting, indicated that future invitations would also be dictated by the politics of the guests, Galston admitted to the Committee on Scholarly Communication that Chinese leaders had, in fact, made clear that they planned to host American scientists with a broad range of political persuasions, rather than limiting invitations to politically active leftists. Galston also reported to the CSCPRC on his return that the PRC would soon begin sending medical and natural science delegations to the United States. "Another three years and you may be tired of Chinese visitors," Chinese leaders had joked.[105]

Galston was deeply impressed by what he witnessed in China. The Cultural Revolution – still officially proceeding in 1971, though in a less chaotic phase than in the late 1960s – had included a strong emphasis on the practical application of science to the immediate needs of those in society, particularly those most in need of its benefits. Basic and theoretical scientific research had been eschewed, with scientists pushed out of their laboratories and down into the countryside.[106] In his reflections on the trip published soon after his visit, Galston praised many of "the innovations of the Cultural Revolution." At a time of increasing awareness of environmental degradation in the United States – it had been less than a decade since the publication of Rachel Carson's landmark book *Silent Spring* – Galston applauded the Chinese as the world's best recyclers – citing, for example, their production of monosodium glutamate (better known as MSG) from sweet potatoes – and claimed that their applied science had led to the production of chemical growth enhancers for broad beans that exactly paralleled the cytokinins used in the United

[104] Arthur Galston, *Daily Life in People's China* (New York: Crowell, 1973), 1–3; Schmalzer, "Speaking about China," 316; Li Mingde, "Zhong Mei keji jiaoliu yu hezuo de lishi huigu [A Historical Review of Sino-American Science and Technology Exchanges and Cooperation]," *Meiguo yanjiu*, no. 2 (1997): 144–47; He, *Dangdai Zhong Mei minjian jiaoliu shi*, 131. The PRC's initial favoring of American left-wing scientists, and the tendency of these scientists to praise Cultural Revolution science, was reflected in contacts between the PRC and British scientists, too. See Agar, "It's Springtime for Science," 11.

[105] Schmalzer, "Speaking about China," 313, 319; Meeting between Galston and CSCPRC members, June 9, 1971, "1971 – General," CSCPRCP, NAS.

[106] ZGZYWXYJS, ed., *Zhou Enlai xuanji* [Selected Works of Zhou Enlai], vol. 2 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), 473.

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States. These had, Galson claimed, "arisen independently on the basis of farmers' lore, rather than from the laboratory."[107]

There was acute American public interest in what the two scientists had seen: as soon as they got back on US soil, they were guided to a room packed with reporters, and in the weeks that followed the *New York Times* published an array of articles on their visit, with two on the front page. Galston, who had become the chair of Yale's botany department after training at Cornell and Caltech, elaborated on these articles with a book-length account of the trip that was published in 1973. He also claimed to have given some one hundred talks in the first year after his trip, to high-school and college students, political and church groups, among others; he later told historian Sigrid Schmalzer that his "life as a scientist was wrecked for a year."[108]

Soon, other visitors – particularly those with no scientific training – would echo Galston's praise of Chinese applied science. Audrey Topping was the Canadian-born American wife of the journalist Seymour Topping and one of the *New York Times* journalists who had covered Galston and Signer's visit. She picked up another of the threads of Galston's account of Chinese science when, based on her own personal experiences in China later that year, she celebrated the PRC's use of acupuncture. The PRC had been showcasing acupuncture as a uniquely Chinese treatment since the 1950s – the treatment had been praised by Soviet cultural exchange visitors as early as 1951 – and now it was a prominent feature in early American visits to China (in spite of the relatively low number of Chinese medicine doctors proficient in the technique before the 1970s).[109] Commenting on PRC claims that they were now able to perform surgery on patients anesthetized only with acupuncture, Topping proclaimed, "It was true – the only anesthetic we saw used was acupuncture needles." Topping even went as far as repeating, with no critical commentary, the claim that acupuncture was also responsible for restoring some hearing capacity to 90 percent of the deaf patients treated with the technique. Topping described acupuncture as "an ancient Chinese medical practice" that has

[107] Galston, *Daily Life in People's China*, 53, 49.

[108] The *New York Times* articles feature on the newspaper's front page were "U. S. Biologists in China Tell of Scientific Gains," May 24, 1971 and "Peking Aiming Research at China's Special Needs," June 7, 1971. Galston, *Daily Life in People's China*; Schmalzer, "Speaking about China," 320.

[109] Su, "Diplomatie de La Médecine Traditionnelle Chinoise En République Populaire de Chine"; Fang, *Barefoot Doctors and Western Medicine in China*, 100–101.

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been enhanced by the addition of Mao Zedong Thought: a miracle of Chinese revolutionary science. In the years to come, acupuncture would soon become a craze among an American public looking for an ancient panacea to treat the malaise wrought by high-modern living in the United States: Galston, the first American to report on the treatment, even began declining invitations to speak on the subject if the hosts were not also prepared to listen to his views on China and its people more broadly, and Susan Shirk also grew annoyed that acupuncture was the first thing that interviewers would ask her about when discussing her 1971 trip.[110]

In contrast to the popular enthusiasm for China's revolutionary science, many elite American scientists showed immediate skepticism toward Galston's claims. Philip Handler, the distinguished president of the National Academy of Sciences who had in 1970 pioneered cooperation with the Soviets in space research, commented that Galston "appears to be extending himself in order to find aspects of Chinese science of which he can speak with approbation and admiration." Handler believed that, contrary to Galston's judgments, the Chinese use of makeshift gibberellin hormones would lead to "disaster," as they had in the United States, and that the use of human excrement as fertilizer was hardly the "great accomplishment" that Galston claimed.[111] Handler's most scathing criticism was for Galston's celebration of acupuncture. Handler concluded that, while "fascinating," the use of the treatment as an anesthesia for surgery was "of dubious clinical merit" and as a technique to treat deaf-mutes was "outrageous and clearly unsuccessful." In an early comment that anticipated his later stance on the relative value of scientific exchange with China, Handler concluded his judgment of Galston's account: "On balance, it is clear that the Chinese have far more to learn from Western science than vice versa. Let us by all means foster communications – but

[110] Audrey Topping, "Return to Changing China," *National Geographic Magazine*, December 1971; Schmalzer, "Speaking about China," 320; author interview with Shirk. He Hui also highlights Topping's analysis of China as uncritical and part of the so-called "China fever" of the early 1970s. He, *Dangdai Zhong Mei minjian jiaoliu shi*, 125–27. For later Chinese admissions about the efficacy of acupuncture anesthesia, see Paul U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 360–66.

[111] Schmalzer highlights how Chinese farmers did in fact make enthusiastic use of chemical fertilizers – on those limited occasions when such fertilizers were available. Chinese demand for chemical fertilizer was sufficient that in 1973, a contract was signed with the US Kellogg Corporation to build ten large ammonia factories in China to produce fertilizer. Sigrid Schmalzer, *Red Revolution, Green Revolution: Scientific Farming in Socialist China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 7, 12.

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let us do it in full knowledge of the relative technological sophistication of the two societies."[112]

Galston later reported in an oral history interview that his medical colleagues at Yale had also been dismissive of his accounts of the use of acupuncture, growing "contemptuous or even angry and insistent that [he] was either lying or had been 'duped'." And, indeed, Galston had been deceived in many of his interactions in China: eight years later, he would discover that Loo Shih-Wei, an old colleague and friend who Galston had named on his visa application, had only finally been allowed to return from the countryside after the Cultural Revolution in order to receive Galston in Shanghai in a "Potemkin village" apartment that he had been forced by the Chinese authorities to pretend was his own. When Loo traveled to the United States in 1979 on an exchange of botanists that Galston had helped organize, a sobbing Loo explained that his "stolid" and "emotionless and distant" behavior toward Galston during his 1971 trip was a result of trauma from his suffering during the Cultural Revolution for being a Western-trained scientist interested in theoretical problems "not directly connected to the needs of the Chinese people."[113]

FELLOW TRAVELERS FAVORED

Revelations about the tightly controlled nature of scientific exchanges were still many years off in 1971, however, and, in the meantime, Americans grew excited by the prospect of following Signer and Galston to China. The possibility for doing so seemed all the greater when, on July 15, 1971, Nixon made his sensational public announcement that Kissinger had conducted a secret visit to the PRC and that the president himself would follow early the next year. In practical terms, Kissinger's first visit to China had little direct impact on developing exchanges. The trip was brief, and, in the interests of secrecy, Kissinger was accompanied by only a skeleton staff. His talks with Zhou were focused on discussing

[112] Among Americans, it was not only elite scientists that doubted aspects of Cultural Revolution science: the physician George Hatem, whose loyalty to Beijing was indicated when he became perhaps the first foreigner ever granted PRC citizenship, was privately angered by the use of, for example, chicken blood injections for a multitude of diseases. Hooper, *Foreigners under Mao*, 25. Handler to Todd, June 23, 1971, "1971" folder, CSCPRCP, NAS; Ethan Signer and Arthur W. Galston, "Education and Science in China," *Science*, January 7, 1972, 18; Galston, *Daily Life in People's China*, 182–85.

[113] Schmalzer, "Speaking about China," 320; Arthur Galston, "Shih-Wei Loo Remembered," *Plant Science Bulletin* 45, no. 2 (Summer 1999).

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shared geostrategic interests and drawing up arrangements for a second Kissinger trip and the subsequent Nixon–Mao summit. There were too few Americans in the party for counterpart talks between mid-ranking officials of the sort that would soon become the key channel for governmental negotiation of cultural and scientific exchanges. All the same, during his talks with Zhou, Kissinger applauded the American visits to China that had taken place since 1971 and made clear that he saw these as buttressing the high-level dialogue he and the premier had begun.[114]

If Kissinger welcomed people-to-people exchanges in the abstract, he and his staff were worried that they lacked the means to influence the ground game of these contacts. An internal government memorandum sent in May had explicitly suggested that it "should … be U.S. policy to try to move our [exchange] contacts more into a governmental plane or to involve the government in some appropriate way in people-to-people contacts."[115] The political dangers posed to the government by exchanges wholly outside their influence were underlined by Beijing's continuing preference for inviting political radicals to China. In spite of Mao's February 1971 proclamation that China should welcome rightists as well as leftists, the majority of the limited number of Americans that made it to China in that year were drawn from left-wing groups highly critical of the US government.[116] Delegations from the Black Panthers and the Black Worker's Congress had taken prominent Black radicals Huey Newton, Elaine Brown, and James Forman to China, and the PRC had also invited the Puerto Rican nationalist group the Young Lords, which had been drawing inspiration from Maoism since the 1960s.[117] 1971 also saw the Marxist William H. Hinton return to China after a long absence from the country that had been effectively imposed by the US government: the State Department had confiscated his passport in 1953 in retribution for his research in rural Shanxi on Communist land reform, later published – after a decade-long legal dispute with the US government over his research notes – as Hinton's globally bestselling 1966 book *Fanshen*.[118] His passport had not been returned until 1968.[119]

[114] Memcon: Zhou, Kissinger, et al., July 11, 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 143.
[115] Response to NSSM 124, May 27, 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 129.
[116] ZGZYWXYJS, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 592–94.
[117] *NFTNC*, Vol. 2, No. 1, November 1971; He, *Dangdai Zhong Mei minjian jiaoliu shi*, 112.
[118] Hooper, *Foreigners under Mao*, 31; Lovell, *Maoism*, 277–78; William H. Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966).
[119] Kerpen, "Voices in a Silence," 104.

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As part of their efforts to begin rapprochement, the US government had removed their objections to Hinton returning to China, as well as permitting other "foreign friends" to travel between the two countries: Joe Hatem visited his brother George, who had been resident in the PRC since 1949, while Sidney Shapiro, a naturalized citizen of the PRC since 1963, became the first of the handful of American long-term residents in the PRC to return to the United States to visit relatives.[120]

In addition to these personal avenues for arranging ad hoc exchanges, 1971 also saw the emergence of an organizational route into China for fellow travelers in the form of the US-China Peoples Friendship Association. Friendship associations were a long-standing mechanism employed by the PRC in their relations with Western countries: organizations similar to the USCPFA had been founded in the UK, France, and Italy in the 1950s and acted as a conduit of, for example, youth delegations to the PRC.[121] The US Friendship Association was initially a decentralized cooperative of self-governing local chapters, the first of which was founded in 1970; a national-level organization was not set up until 1974, by which time there were already some forty local constituent groups.[122] The USCPFA began arranging travel to China for its members from 1971. Susan Warren was a founding chair of a Friendship Association chapter, and this helped her return to China that year, visiting the country where she had sought refuge after being hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1957 and 1959 for editing *The Far East Reporter*, a New York-published Maoist magazine founded by the 1939 Yan'an visitor, Maud Russell, that regularly featured articles by American leftists resident in the PRC.[123] The influence of figures such as Warren contributed to the pro-Beijing political stance of the Friendship Association, as did the participation of earlier leftist visitors to China who had, as we have seen, been selected for their sympathy with the PRC regime, including Shirley Graham Du Bois and the Pan-Africanist Vicki

[120] Hooper, *Foreigners under Mao*, 31.
[121] Graziani, "Youth Exchanges," 202.
[122] Douglas P. Murray, "Exchanges with the People's Republic of China: Symbols and Substance," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 424, no. 1 (1976): 36.
[123] Transcript of oral history interview with Susan Warren, April 17, 1976, "Warren, Susan" folder, Box 9, Series 1, Oral History of the American Left collection, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York University, New York, United States (TLWLANYU); *NFTNC*, Vol. 2, No. 1, November 1971; Hooper, *Foreigners under Mao*, 31.

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Garvin, who had lived in China from 1964 until 1970.[124] The Friendship Association attracted Maoist sympathizers, some of whom claimed that totalitarianism in China was a "myth" and lambasted the US government for its continuing ties to the "the fascist Chiang Regime" on Taiwan "province" (while also applauding steps taken by Washington toward rapprochement with Beijing).[125]

Politics also lay behind Susan Shirk's aforementioned invitation to what Shirk called a "land of milk and honey." The young MIT graduate student traveled to China in June 1971 alongside Paul Pickowicz, David Lampton, and twelve other Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars-affiliated graduate students. CCAS had, by its own account, "consistently sought to challenge the Cold War myth about China" and had campaigned for the seating of the PRC at the United Nations – ultimately realized three months after their trip. Founded "in opposition to the senior 'blue ribbon experts' who have served as advisors to the United States government" on US policy toward China and Vietnam, CCAS had come out in favor of Sino-American normalization long before Nixon and Kissinger began publicly working toward that end. Fortune favored the bold: a speculative letter sent by the students from Hong Kong to the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries had been rewarded with the first invitation for a delegation of American university students of China to visit the PRC since the country's establishment in 1949.[126]

For a group founded in part "to develop a true understanding of the People's Republic of China," the visit was enormously exciting.[127] Their month in the PRC provided the young scholars with their first opportunity for direct encounters with the Chinese people they had spent years studying with little hope of direct encounter. They reveled in being "encouraged to wander off on our own," speaking the Chinese they had studied with locals over tomato picking and impromptu basketball games (when they could understand their accents and dialects),

[124] Minami, "How Could I Not Love You?," 18–19.

[125] "Statement of Principles and Activities," USCPFA, November 17, 1974, Folder 24, Box 17, David Sullivan US Maoism collection (DSUSMC), TLWLANYU; "National Office Report – 1/77–4/77," Folder 7, Box 1, USCPFAR, NYPLAMD.

[126] Author interview with Shirk; "Press Release: American Scholars Visit China," June 23, 1971, "Feuerwerker, Albert" folder, Box 5, NASAR, BHL; Pickowicz, *A Sensational Encounter*, 1–10.

[127] "Press Release: American Scholars Visit China," June 23, 1971, "Feuerwerker, Albert" folder, Box 5, NASAR, BHL.

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FIGURE 1.4 Chinese physicist Zhou Peiyuan meets with the 1971 Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars delegation of students during a visit to Peking University. Courtesy of Paul Pickowicz Collection, UC San Diego Library

as well as shooting enough home-movie footage to make a one-hour-long documentary upon their return home. Shirk recalls that she "felt like Queen Elizabeth," such was the friendliness of their hosts – and the speed with which the students were whisked from place to place. Kissinger's secret visit took place while the students were in China and, shortly after his departure, Zhou Enlai gave up some four hours of his time to discuss changing Sino-American relations with the visitors. (This was yet another example of signaling through the people-to-people channel: Zhou had the students tape-record the meeting and release the transcript once back home.) High-level access was accompanied by the chance to visit (selected) model units (Figure 1.4). Shirk was able to ask one peasant in northern China whether he enjoyed personal and civil freedom under the CCP: "Yes, now we have the right to love. We are free to work full-time, to have a secure home, to earn enough food." If the opportunities the visitors were given were exciting, the group was also conscious of the choreography of the trip (Figure 1.5). Pickowicz recalls that "enormous … thought" had gone into the "messages … communication." "The staging was meticulous. The script was detailed.

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FIGURE 1.5 Tea is served during a "short briefing" to the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars 1971 delegation. Courtesy of Paul Pickowicz Collection, UC San Diego Library

And we were the audience."[128] Impressions among the students were not uniform, however: Richard Bernstein later recalled that the first twenty-four hours in China was enough to change him from a Maoist sympathizer to "a lifelong anti-communist and devotee of liberal democracy," such was his distaste for the "pervasive odor of orthodoxy" and ideological conformity (Figure 1.6). He recalls being a "Menshevik minority" among the CCAS delegation.[129]

The CCAS visit sparked something of a sensation when the visitors returned to the United States. Nixon's scheduled visit to China had been announced while the students were in the PRC and now the American press and public were desperate to hear from anyone that had firsthand experience of the mysterious People's Republic (the level of American ignorance of China is suggested by the students explaining

[128] Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, *China! Inside the People's Republic* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 1, 6, 33; Hanchao Lu, "Versatility, Interdisciplinarity, and Academic Collaboration: Paul Pickowicz's Insights on Chinese Studies," *The Chinese Historical Review* 27, no. 1 (January 2020): 53–54; Pickowicz, *A Sensational Encounter*, 27, 41, 52, 63–65, 129–32; author interview with Shirk.

[129] "A Bridge to a Love for Democracy," *New York Times*, December 29, 2010.

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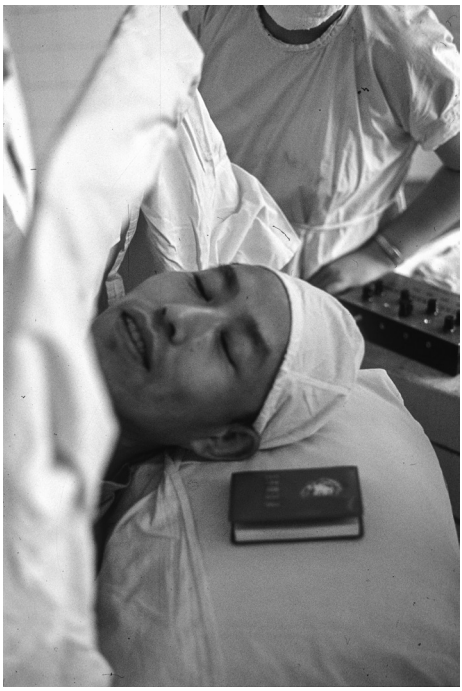

FIGURE 1.6 Surgery is performed with Mao quotations in close proximity during the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars delegation's visit to Beijing Medical College, Hospital No. 3, on July 16, 1971. Courtesy of Paul Pickowicz Collection, UC San Diego Library

what a Chinese dumpling is in their account of the visit). The fresh-faced students quickly became "academic celebrities" and faced a cascade of media interviews. They also found themselves on the opposite side of their own classrooms at MIT, Stanford, and Wisconsin, giving their eyewitness accounts of a China that their esteemed academic mentors had previously taught them only through books and outdated accounts. This lecture circuit was followed by the publication of a bestselling book-length trip report with a simple, effusive title: *China! Inside the People's Republic*. (The book was rushed out to be released before Nixon's trip; its hurried preparation was achieved in part by having much of the text written by CCAS members that had not been on the China trip.) The students' China visit had brought them fame unlike any had known before; for many of them, it would be the beginning of distinguished careers as recognized experts on the

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country.[130] They would not be the last Americans to quickly rise in prominence within the field of China studies because of their good fortune in securing scarce invitations to the PRC while many more senior professional scholars were passed over.[131] The visit also led some within CCAS to believe that, as the possibility of exchanges with China was realized, the organization might be able to leverage their trip to become, as Fabio Lanza writes, "the central conduit for exchanges with China."[132]

The US government was given its best opportunity yet to establish its influence over the exchange program and to address Beijing's favoring of leftist visitors like the members of CCAS and the Friendship Association when Kissinger made his second visit to China, beginning on October 20, 1971. In his talks with Chinese leaders, Kissinger took a personal interest in selling the benefits of expanding the program of exchanges to Zhou, stressing that Washington "considered progress in these fields [of cultural and scientific exchanges] not as a substitute for fundamental agreements but rather to give impetus to them." Kissinger also argued that greater people-to-people contact "would keep off balance those who wished to see the new U.S.-China dialogue fail."[133] This was a sincere concern of the White House: in the summer of 1971, the president still considered the right-wing pro-Taiwan China lobby "a considerable group" and worried they might "descend on me like a pack of little jackals" over changes to the White House's China policy.[134]

Although Kissinger reported to Nixon that the Chinese had only "unenthusiastically" agreed to a reference to promoting exchanges in the draft communiqué to be made public after the Nixon summit, the full record of his second visit suggests that important progress was made on that front.[135] The head of the Asian Communist Affairs desk at State, Alfred L. Jenkins, had spent hours discussing exchanges, both in the abstract and in practical detail, with leading Chinese foreign affairs advisor Xiong Xianghui, who had shown himself enthusiastically

[130] Pickowicz, *A Sensational Encounter*, 127–34; He, *Dangdai Zhong Mei minjian jiaoliu shi*, 127. Author interview with Shirk; author interview with Paul Pickowicz, by telephone, November 11, 2020; Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, *China!*, for the "dumplings" reference, see 54. See also Lanza, *End of Concern*.

[131] Schmalzer, "Speaking about China," 313.

[132] Lanza, *End of Concern*, 102.

[133] Kissinger to Nixon, November 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 164.

[134] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 74.

[135] Kissinger to Nixon, November 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 164.

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interested in the twenty-five specific exchange delegations proposed by Jenkins.[136] Wei Shiyan also concludes, based on the Chinese record, that the Jenkins–Xiong negotiations were a success.[137] PRC leaders had, however, refused to discuss arms control and "airily dismissed the subject of trade," the latter stance reflecting a May 1971 Chinese politburo decision not to allow significant trade before progress in negotiations over Taiwan was made.[138] Xiong also rebuffed Jenkins request that exchanges be conducted on a "semi-official" basis through "a government-to-government arrangement." Xiong insisted that exchanges continue on an ostensibly people-to-people basis – although Beijing in fact had no plans to cease their own close involvement in such contacts.[139]

The Chinese side had their own points to raise regarding exchanges. One sore spot was the recent tour of the United States by a table tennis team from Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China regime to Taiwan. The group – all purportedly Christians – had been invited by the evangelical Presbyterian and virulent anti-Communist Carl McIntire and had arrived in the United States in August for a two-month tour.[140] Zhou claimed that the visit had delayed Beijing's plan to send its own team for the return leg of the ping-pong exchange planned by the National Committee on US-China Relations and Xiong argued that the issuing of visas to the ROC visitors made the US government culpable for the tour going ahead, overriding NSC member John Holdridge's objections that the visit had been arranged by the same domestic enemies of rapprochement of which Jenkins had previously spoken. (Later, during the Nixon summit visit, Marshall Green of the State Department admitted

[136] Memcons: Xiong, Jenkins, Holdridge, et al., October 21, 1971, and Xiong, Jenkins, and Holdridge, October 22, 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. E-13, Documents 39 and 43; Xiong, *Wo de qingbao yu waijiao shengya*, 449–50.

[137] Wei Shiyan, "Jixinge di er ci fang Hua [Kissinger's Second Visit to China]," in *Xin Zhongguo waijiao fengyun* [Winds and Clouds in New China's Diplomacy], ed. Waijiaobu waijiaoshi bianjishi [Foreign Ministry Editorial Office on Diplomatic History], vol. 3 (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1990), 65.

[138] Memcon: Kissinger and Zhou, October 20, 1971, Remote Access Collection Program (RACP): NLC-26–17-7–2-5, Jimmy Carter Library (JCL), Atlanta, GA, United States; Yafeng Xia, "China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement, January 1969–February 1972," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 4 (October 2006): 17–21.

[139] Memcon: Xiong, Jenkins, Holdridge, et al., October 21, 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. E-13, Document 39.

[140] "Free Chinese Table Tennis Team to Visit Peru, U.S.," *News from China*, July 23, 1971, Folder 288, Box 30, Series 9, RG4, NCUSCR records, RAC.

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to Xiong that the US government's provision of visas had been an "error."[141])

Kissinger – ultimately incorrectly – concluded from the argument that the continued presence of a Republic of China embassy in Washington would not only prevent any visit to the United States by a Chinese leader but also the expansion of exchanges and trade before normalization brought an end to the formal US relationship with Taipei. Kissinger was right that this was a sensitive subject for the PRC, particularly in the wake of the Republic of China's ejection from the UN in October 1971: while a victory for Beijing, Premier Zhou and the PRC leadership believed that this victory might stoke a nascent Taiwanese independence movement that was anathema to the PRC.[142] Beijing's sensitivity on the issue of Taiwan was one reason that the Committee on Scholarly Communication had so far failed to gain Chinese attention: Galston reported to the organization that the ties between the National Academy of Sciences and Academia Sinica on Taiwan explained why the Chinese had favored another American scientific group, the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), for initial scientific contacts (although another good reason why the FAS had quickly established a relationship with Beijing was that Galston had recommended the organization to his hosts).[143]

The Federation of American Scientists was also preferable to Beijing on account of its greater distance from the American government and due to its political pedigree. Set up by scientists who had been involved in the Manhattan Project to lobby for nuclear disarmament, the group's criticisms of US government policy had been praised by Chinese state media since the 1950s.[144] The Federation lacked privileges such as tax exemption that were afforded to the National Academy because of its

[141] Kissinger to Nixon, November 1971, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 164; Memcon: Ji, Green, et al., February 22, 1972, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. E-13, Document 91.

[142] ZGZYWXYJS, *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, 3:494.

[143] Meeting between Galston and CSCPRC members, June 9, 1971, "1971 – General," CSCPRCP, NAS; Schmalzer, "Speaking about China," 324–25.

[144] "Meiguo Kexuejia Lianhehui zai huikan shang fabiao shengming zhengshi Mei zhengfu changqi yilai zhunbei jinxing xijunzhan" [Federation of American Scientists Issue Statement Offering Proof that the US Government has Long Been Preparing for Biological Warfare], *Renmin Ribao*, April 9, 1952.

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stature.[145] The proximity between the Academy and the state was not lost on the PRC government. The Chinese American physicist and Nobel laureate Chen Ning Yang visited the PRC in July and August 1971, meeting with Chinese leaders including Mao and Zhou. Upon his return, Yang told NAS Foreign Secretary Harrison Brown that his hosts had ruled out government-to-government scientific exchanges and that they saw the Academy as a government agency.[146] Then, during Kissinger's October visit, Chinese interlocutors had asked pointed questions about the level of government funding the Academy received.[147] In November, Chinese leaders told the visiting American physician Victor Sidel that a relationship with an institution that Beijing saw as more official than not would have to wait until after normalization.[148]

As 1971 drew to a close, Beijing's preference for left-leaning organizations as facilitators of exchanges remained, in spite of Kissinger and his colleagues' efforts during the October visit. The Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars that had sponsored Shirk's trip to China was in late 1971 organizing a second trip for thirty of its members – twice as many as had traveled on the first delegation – while the Committee for a New China Policy, an academic pressure group founded in 1968 by academic Daniel Tretiak to push for immediate recognition of the PRC and an end to US assistance to Taiwan, was putting together a delegation that ultimately traveled in January 1972. The continued Chinese interest in American leftists was not an exclusive preference: Beijing was aware that the US Table Tennis Association was working with the National Committee on plans for receiving the Chinese ping-pong players, while an early ally of the National Committee – the Quaker group the American Friends Service Committee – had also been welcomed to China in the autumn and was planning a future trip by a larger group.[149] As discussed in the Prologue, fellow travelers had been targeted for invitations to China in

[145] Audra J. Wolfe, *Freedom's Laboratory: The Cold War Struggle for the Soul of Science* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 95.

[146] Yang is also known by other romanizations of his name, including Chen-ning Yang and, as written in Pinyin, Yang Zhenning. Smith, "Role of Scientists," 122.

[147] Memcon: Xiong, Holdridge, and Jenkins, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. E-13, Document 43.

[148] "Scientists Vie for Peking Trip," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1971; Su Jingjing and Zhang Daqing, "Xin Zhongguo shouci fu Mei yixue daibiaotuan zhi tanjiu [An Exploration of New China's First Medical Delegation to the United States]," *Zhongguo keji shi zazhi* 32, no. 3 (2011): 396.

[149] *NFTNC*, Vol. 2, No. 1, November 1971, and Vol. 2, No. 2, February 1972; Kerpen, "Voices in a Silence," 161–62.

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the 1950s and 1960s in part in the belief that transnational political links could help ferment domestic revolution in the United States. This revolutionary ambition had been abandoned by the Chinese politburo in May 1971.[150] Now, invitations were issued as a reward for those Americans most vocally channeling Beijing's calls for the United States government to recognize the PRC regime. Meanwhile, China held out the possibility of exchange visits overseen by the government – or even with private groups considered by Beijing to be semi-official – for after progress had been made toward that end.

NEGOTIATING EXCHANGES AT THE NIXON–MAO SUMMIT

Nixon's February 1972 summit visit to China was an event of extraordinary scale and significance. Chinese documents from the local level offer a reminder of the extent of the preparations for the president's visit. A November 1971 memorandum from the Beijing Municipal Transportation Bureau complained of the challenges of sourcing some 270 automobiles to transport the vast entourage that would accompany Nixon: the entire Beijing municipal government's stock was not sufficient, and some cars had to be brought in from the city of Tianjin, nearly a hundred miles away. The task was made more difficult by the – presumably, politically motivated – requirement that all cars used in the visit be of Chinese manufacture.[151] Nixon would conclude his visit in Shanghai, where plans were simultaneously being made to temporarily supplement the pool of 125 local government drivers with another eighty that could be relied upon – both behind the wheel and ideologically. The president's visit was a red-carpet event of the highest order; indeed, the Shanghai local government found itself some 2,300 meters short of the velvet, velveteen, silk, and brocade needed for his elaborate reception. Some 382,500 yuan was going to be expended to prepare the city's government facilities for the reception – the equivalent of the average yearly income of nearly 1,300 Chinese citizens.[152] These

[150] Yang and Xia, "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente," 405.

[151] Revolutionary Leading Group of Beijing Municipal Transportation Bureau, "Guanyu wei yingjie Nikesong xu zengjia cheliang de biaoshi baogao" [Report on the Need to Increase the Number of Cars for Nixon's Reception], November 29, 1971, Folder 117–2–354, Beijing Municipal Archives, China (BJMA).

[152] Municipal Revolutionary Committee Office Machine Management Group, "Guanyu jiedai Nikesong zhunbei gongzuo zhong xuyao jiejue de ji ge wenti de qingshi baogao" [Report on Issues to be Solved in Preparation for Receiving Nixon], December 9, 1971, Folder B123–8–503, Shanghai Municipal Archive, China (SHMA).

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were hardly wasted efforts, however: hundreds of American reporters would accompany the president in perhaps the greatest media showcase of the People's Republic to a foreign audience since the country's founding. The pomp mattered most to the guest of honor: Nixon said that the sight of being "received by a million Chinese people" would have "a hundred times the effect" of any official communiqué agreed between the governments.[153]

The Nixon–Mao summit also had profound consequences for the burgeoning relationship between the people of the two countries. The visit occurred as the trickle of exchange visitors in each direction began to rapidly intensify: before the president's trip, only about ten American scientists had visited the PRC since Galston and Signer's first, May 1971 trip; by the end of 1972, around 100 had made the trip.[154] Moreover, the concurrent presence in the PRC of practically every US official that influenced the country's China policy provided an opportunity for extensive face-to-face negotiations with Chinese counterparts – including over exchanges. The American priority in the negotiations over people-to-people contacts was to take up where Kissinger had left off in October 1971 and convince Beijing to invite more Americans who would build support for rapprochement among the mainstream public, rather than courting the White House's domestic enemies. The US side tabled exchanges as a key point of negotiation at the summit even before the president's arrival: during a final January 1972 preparatory trip, General Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy, argued that, in light of the "major problem" of US domestic opposition to rapprochement, Nixon was concerned that the summit "succeed in both fact and in appearance." Haig thus asked that there "might be some strengthening of the positive aspects of the Joint Communiqué" set to be issued during Nixon's trip, to include "something that would give an immediate sense of accomplishment as a result of the visit, such as increased scientific or cultural exchanges."[155]

Negotiations over exchanges continued in the talks between Secretary of State Rogers and his Chinese interlocutors during Nixon's trip. These have been largely remembered as the kids' table discussions of the summit, a sideshow to give Rogers face while the president and Kissinger discussed the real matters of importance with Mao and Zhou.[156] The

[153] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, 128, 124.
[154] Smith, "Role of Scientists," 122.
[155] Memcon: Zhou and Haig, January 3, 1972, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. XVII, Document 183.
[156] Tudda, *Cold War Turning Point*, xiv.

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calculated exclusion of the secretary of state from the meeting with Mao was, of course, a major slight. However, the record of the counterpart talks suggests that much of the summit's substantive negotiations happened at Rogers's table. While Nixon and Kissinger talked with the chairman in philosophical terms and crafted a new discourse of strategic cooperation with Zhou, Rogers negotiated agreements for greater exchanges and trade that were the only tangible announcements included in the Shanghai Communiqué that capped Nixon's visit: no other aspect of that milestone document led directly to changes in Sino-American interaction, even if the expansive rhetoric of the agreement publicly confirmed Beijing and Washington's strategic marriage of convenience.[157]

Indeed, in the run up to the summit, Edward David, Nixon's top science advisor, offered a similar analysis of the role exchanges played at the summit: the White House "wanted to offer the Chinese something more than the geopolitical repositioning that would occur – something more tangible, more concrete." "Science cooperation [will] show the Chinese we are serious about some kind of enduring engagement," David told one of his aides, who worked with the CSCPRC's Anne Keatley to produce "some forty different initiatives" to suggest to the Chinese during the summit.[158] In the wake of the Nixon–Mao summit, Zhou told his colleagues that one benefit of the agreements made during Nixon's visit was an increase in access to the advanced scientific knowledge and technology of the United States – access that would come primarily through scientific exchanges.[159] Agreements on exchanges were also of much interest to Americans who wondered if they might be able to soon follow in Nixon's footsteps: the traveling American press corps that accompanied the president plied him with questions about the possibility of tourist visas and were excited when Nixon seemed to hint they might soon be granted (in the event, individual tourist visas would not be issued in large numbers for another half decade).[160]

[157] Lorenz Lüthi and Gordon H. Chang have also recently argued that the Nixon visit lacked substance. Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe* (Cambridge: University Press, 2020), 134; Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 228. For a discussion of the discursive purpose of these and other Sino-American summit meetings, see Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China*.

[158] Gerson S. Sher, *From Pugwash to Putin: A Critical History of US-Soviet Scientific Cooperation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019), 22.

[159] ZGZYWXYJS, *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, 3:515.

[160] MacMillan, *Seize the Hour*, 277.

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Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei was more forthcoming than he and his colleagues had been during Kissinger's October 1971 visit. Ji expressed interest in an array of sporting exchanges, including basketball, tennis, badminton, and gymnastics delegations, and said that a group of Chinese doctors were interested in becoming the first scientific delegation to the United States. Ji told Rogers that exchanges would grow faster than trade before diplomatic normalization but conceded that China and the United States could "carry out a very limited amount" of trade "on a non-governmental basis" before normalization, revising Beijing's previous reluctance to endorse any level of commercial exchange.[161] Ji also added a significant addendum to the principle that all exchanges must be on a nongovernmental, people-to-people basis, now saying that both governments "should assist in the process of improving people-to-people contacts." Rogers eagerly welcomed this change, and the US side lobbied the Chinese to consider some form of mutual permanent presence in each other's capital to provide just such government assistance with exchanges and trade. This idea was not taken up by the Chinese at this stage – but would later be accepted in the form of the establishment of liaison offices in 1973 (Chapter 3).

On the final day of the visit, Rogers sought to bolster US governmental influence over exchanges via a different route. Ji had previously asked for a recommendation for the best American group to coordinate exchanges and now Rogers explicitly sponsored the National Committee on US-China Relations. The NCUSCR had been recommended for this role to Kissinger before the visit by his closest aide, Winston Lord, as well as in lobbying from outside the White House by former NCUSCR chairman Doak Barnett. Ji was hesitant to accept Rogers's suggestion, responding that Beijing was concerned that "other friendly organizations will be unhappy" if the PRC agreed to work directly with the National Committee. Rogers said it would be "fine" if Beijing preferred another group, but Jenkins persisted, arguing that the exchange program needed a "central organization to help on the mechanics of visits" – both the second pingpong trip and other exchanges – or else a government body would be required. Convincing the Chinese to accept Rogers's recommendation of the NCUSCR as the primary US conduit for cultural exchanges would soon become an important goal for the government.[162]

[161] Memcon: Ji, Rogers, et al., February 22, 1972, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. E-13, Document 91.

[162] Memcon: Ji, Rogers, et al., February 28, 1972, *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. E-13, Document 107; Lord to Kissinger, undated, "China trade/exchanges – February 2, 1972–74

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Nixon's visit also saw agreement for one particular cultural exchange that would soon capture American popular attention. As one of his gifts for his hosts, Nixon presented the Chinese with a prime example of American fauna: a pair of rare white musk oxen, named Milton and Mathilda.[163] The Chinese internal report on the animals suggests appreciation for the diplomatic and scientific value of the gift – though the report does also comment that the particular musk oxen presented were not in optimal health. Whether because of the stresses of their travel to China or some other reason, they were missing patches of their fur, and weighed only 102 kilograms; Chinese care would quadruple that weight in four months. The musk oxen joined a menagerie of other animals presented to China as diplomatic gifts, which by 1974 included Japanese flamingos and penguins, Romanian bears, Canadian beavers, and British deer.[164] The noble American musk oxen were rather outshone, however, by the gift the Chinese presented in return: two giant pandas. Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing would travel to the US National Zoo in May. An internal Chinese report proudly commented that Theodore Reed, the director of the Zoo, told a visiting Chinese cadre, "Before the giant pandas arrived, the white tigers were the zoo's most valuable animal. Now that the Chinese have sent the giant pandas, the pandas have become the most valuable animals."[165] First Lady Pat Nixon reportedly had an equally positive, if less sober, reaction to the gift: when Zhou Enlai took a break between smoking Panda brand cigarettes at the opening banquet of the Nixon summit to point at the packet and tell her, "We will give you two," she allegedly screamed with joy.[166]

CONCLUSION

People-to-people contacts were central to the early moves in Sino-American rapprochement and the realization of the Nixon–Mao

July, 1973," Box 93, Kissinger Files – Country Files – Far East (HAKCFFE), Richard Nixon Library, Yorba Linda, CA (RNL); Barnett to Kissinger, August 21, 1971, "Kissinger, 1968–81" folder, Box 106, ADBP, RBMLCU.

[163] MacMillan, *Seize the Hour*, 236.

[164] Beijing Zoo, "Guanyu guoji liwu dongwu de jiankang zhuangkuang baogao" [Report on the Condition of Animals Sent as Gifts by Foreign Countries], April 28, 1974, Folder 98–2–378, BJMA.

[165] Committee of Beijing Municipal Bureau of Landscape Architecture, "Guanyu Meiguo song gei Beijing dongwuyuan de liang zhang bailaohu huapian de qingkuang bao" [A Report on the Two Paintings of White Tigers Given to the Beijing Zoo by the United States], May 22, 1974, Folder 98–2–378, BJMA.

[166] MacMillan, *Seize the Hour*, 147.

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summit. In lieu of other means of communication, both Washington and Beijing had sought to indicate their interest in dialogue through their approach to the other country's citizens, whether through lifting the long-standing US embargo on travel and commerce between the two countries or through the pomp with which Beijing received Edgar Snow. If these early messages had been garbled by decades of mistrust, there was nothing ambiguous about the ping-pong breakthrough of April 1971 that preempted Kissinger and then Nixon's first visits to China. People-to-people contacts also provided the earliest substantive agreements between the two sides: the Shanghai Communiqué pledges to begin exchange visits and restart trade were the only public evidence of the changed Sino-American relationship beyond the pageantry of Nixon's trip, at a time when the US press was critical of how Kissinger and the president kept practically every detail of their negotiations with Chinese leaders to themselves.

American actors beyond the US government made an important contribution to the changes in the Sino-American relationship before the Nixon–Mao summit. These changes were not, as they have often been portrayed, simply the result of secretive communications from heads of state to heads of state. In fact, many of the signals Nixon used to show his interest in negotiations with the Chinese were first advocated by people outside of the White House and State Department, both in private briefings and in public forums. Moreover, by traveling to China in April 1971, the American ping-pong team – without any instruction from their government – achieved in a week what the White House's backchannels and subtle posturing had failed to in two and a half years, finally moving Sino-American contacts beyond cryptic signaling and into face-to-face engagement.

Soon thereafter, PRC leaders opened direct talks with Kissinger. This tentative diplomatic dialogue was buttressed by people-to-people visits: 1971 saw American scientists, journalists, and political activists travel to China, as well as the delegation of graduate students in which Susan Shirk first traveled to China. Many of the Americans that traveled to the PRC were not endorsed (much less selected) by Washington. Indeed, most were, like Shirk's colleagues in the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, vocal domestic critics of the Nixon administration. This did not prevent their trips from contributing to the thaw between the two countries, however. As Shirk's traveling companion and fellow-CCAS member Paul Pickowicz later recalled: "when we started the trip, we saw ourselves as engaging in people-to-people diplomacy, but we never imagined that

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our trip would end on such a surprising and seriously diplomatic note," with the students answering questions at the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club about the Chinese government's changing policy toward the United States.[167] Still, the political leanings of the Americans invited to China irked the White House, and 1972 would see Washington push hard to convince Beijing to begin exchange contacts with nongovernmental organizations that were prepared to cooperate with, rather than lambast, the Nixon administration.

[167] Pickowicz, *A Sensational Encounter*, 134.

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