Improbable Diplomats

In 1971, Americans made two historic visits to China that would transform relations between the two countries. One was by US official Henry Kissinger; the other, earlier, visit was by the US table tennis team. Historians have mulled over the transcripts of Kissinger’s negotiations with Chinese leaders. However, they have overlooked how, alongside these diplomatic talks, a rich program of travel and exchange had begun with ping-pong diplomacy. Improbable Diplomats reveals how a diverse cast of Chinese and Americans – athletes and physicists, performing artists and seismologists – played a critical, but to-date overlooked, role in remaking US-China relations. Based on new sources from more than a dozen archives in China and the United States, Pete Millwood argues that the significance of cultural and scientific exchanges went beyond reacquainting the Chinese and American people after two decades of minimal contact; exchanges also powerfully influenced Sino-American diplomatic relations and helped transform post-Mao China.

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Improbable Diplomats

How Ping-Pong Players, Musicians, and Scientists Remade US-China Relations

PETE MILLWOOD
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Abbreviations

ACLS American Council of Learned Societies
AFSC American Friends Service Committee
CAS Chinese Academy of Sciences
CCAS Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars
CCP Chinese Communist Party
CCPIT China Council for the Promotion of International Trade
CFR Council on Foreign Relations
CIA Central Intelligence Agency
CPIFA Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs
CPUSA Communist Party of the United States of America
CSCPRC Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People’s Republic of China
FAS Federation of American Scientists
FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation
IPR Institute of Pacific Relations
IREX International Research and Exchanges Board
MFN Most Favored Nation
MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NAS National Academy of Sciences
NCUSCR National Committee on United States-China Relations
NCUSCT National Council for United States-China Trade
NSC National Security Council
NSSM National Security Study Memorandum
PRC People’s Republic of China
List of Abbreviations

PRCLO  People’s Republic of China Liaison Office
ROC    Republic of China
SSRC   Social Science Research Council
STAPRC Scientific and Technical Association of the People’s Republic of China
UK     United Kingdom
UN     United Nations
US     United States
USCPFA US-China Peoples Friendship Association
USG    United States government
USLO   United States Liaison Office
USTTA  United States Table Tennis Association
ZGZYWXYJS Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi [CCP Central Committee Document Research Office]