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Abstract: This article examines the pivotal role that Gotō Kōji (1906-1972), president of the Japan Table Tennis Association (JTTA) and Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA), played in paving the way for Sino-U.S. rapprochement in 1972. Gotō made it possible for China—which was waging the Cultural Revolution, banning Chinese table tennis players from competing at international tournaments, and executing Chinese table tennis world champions and persecuting their coaches—to participate in the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, in March-April 1971. Were it not for Gotō’s initiative, Premier Zhou Enlai could not have deployed “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” in 1971 and President Richard Nixon would likely not have visited China in 1972.

Mr. Gotō Goes to Beijing: The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy

Mayumi Itoh

Introduction

Forty years ago, in February 1972, U.S. President Richard Nixon (1913-94) visited the People's Republic of China (PRC; "China" hereafter), opened the "bamboo curtain," and ushered in détente in East Asia through the Sino-U.S. rapprochement. This epoch-making diplomatic breakthrough is generally referred to as Ping-Pong Diplomacy, because the series of exchanges between members of the American and Chinese table tennis teams that took place at the thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan in March-April 1971 ("Nagoya World's" hereafter) paved the way for Nixon's visit to China. Nevertheless, a mostly unknown and forgotten fact is that China almost did not participate in the Nagoya World's. Without the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World's, Nixon would not have visited China in 1972. Without the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World's, China and the United States would not have ended the "ice age" in their relations in 1972. China had no diplomatic relations with Japan at that time, either. Japan concluded a peace treaty with the Republic of China (ROC; "Taiwan" hereafter) in 1952, when the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty came into effect. Then, why and how was the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World's made possible? This article examines the reasons and processes behind the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World's.

* * *

China's participation in the Nagoya World's was attributable to Gotō Kōji 後藤 鉀二 (1906-72), president of the Japan Table Tennis Association (JTTA) and Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA). Gotō was also president of a private electrical engineering school, Aichi Institute of Technology Meiden High School 愛知工業大学名電高校, in the metropolis of the central region of Japan, Nagoya. This school is incidentally the alma mater of "Ichirō" Suzuki 鈴木 一朗 (b. 1973) of the Seattle Mariners. As an educator, Gotō encouraged physical education. He believed that sports not only helped build physical strength but also the mental strength of students, nurturing a rich humanity in young hearts and minds. He believed that sports taught students discipline and a code of conduct to become responsible citizens in society. Through teaching physical education, Gotō became a civic leader in sports—not only in table tennis but also in badminton, baseball, fencing, kendō, sumō wrestling, and swimming—and he promoted sports as a tool for building friendship and peace in the world.¹

¹ This article is based on this author's book, *The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Forgotten Architect of Sino-U.S. Rapprochement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Hashimoto Shigezō 橋本繁蔵, "Supōtsu no ōgi ha mugen" スポーツの奥義は無限 (Endless secrets of sports), in Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku kankō iinkai 後藤鉀二先生追想録刊行委員会, ed., *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku* 後藤鉀二先生追想録 (Recollections of Gotō Kōji) (Nagoya: Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku kankō iinkai, 1975), pp. 152-54; "Nenpu" 年譜 (Chronology), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, pp. 539-46.

Chinese Table Tennis Circles

Meanwhile, China had launched the unprecedented ideological campaign known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The Chinese Communist Party of (CCP) not only banned all sports teams at every school but also persecuted sports instructors and players, labeling them as bourgeois. It also banned players from competing internationally in order to eradicate foreign influences. The Beijing National Stadium became empty. The Cultural Revolution hit the table tennis circles hardest because China had been a world champion. In 1959 China defeated Japan in men's singles—the four-time consecutive world champion in that category since 1954 (the championships became biannual events in 1957). Then in 1961 China defeated Japan in the men's team event—the five-time consecutive world champion in that category since 1954. China won again in both men's singles and men's team in 1963, and then won five world titles in 1965. Nevertheless, China did not participate in the world championships in 1967 and 1969 due to the Cultural Revolution. World-class players were executed, while coaches were imprisoned.²

The situation in Chinese table tennis circles however began to change in 1970. As the brutal initial phase of the Cultural Revolution took a heavy toll on the domestic front as well as on external relations, some Chinese leaders, such as Premier Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898-1976), began to reevaluate the impact of the ideological conflict. *People's Daily* reporter Qian Jiang 錢江 (b. 1954), who had played table tennis at school until it was banned in 1966 and spent his banished life in a desert in the northwestern region of China from 1971 to 1977, states that only Zhou had the power and will to salvage the disaster in the table tennis community in China. Upon realizing the tragedy inflicted upon the players, Zhou decided to protect the first-class players and had them live in the National Sports Committee building until it became safe to return them home. Qian writes that Zhou was already looking to the future and contemplated the reentry of China's table tennis to the world scene at a time when the ultraleftists were rampaging through the country.³

According to Qian, Premier Zhou instructed table tennis players to resume training as early as October 1969. China then sent its table tennis team to Kathmandu, Nepal in June 1970 for tournaments to commemorate its king's fiftieth birthday—this was the Chinese team's first foreign tour since the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. China also participated in the Scandinavia Tournaments in November 1970. Thus, China's preparations for a comeback in world table tennis took off in full swing.⁴

Impediment to China's Participation in Nagoya World's

In turn, Gotō, as the chair of the organizing committee for the Nagoya World's, believed that world table tennis championships without China, the three-time champion from 1961 to 1965, would not constitute a real world championship. Japan took many world titles in 1967 and 1969 only because China did not participate in them. Gotō

² Qian Jiang 錢江, *Bei-Chū gaikō hiroku: Pinpon gaikō shimatsuki* 米中外交秘録：ピンポン外交始末記 (Secret record of Sino-U.S. diplomacy: An Account of Ping-Pong Diplomacy), trans. Kanzaki Isao 神崎勇夫 (Tokyo: Tōhō-shoten, 1988), pp. 9, 11.

³ Ibid., pp. i-ii, 9-10.

⁴ Ibid., p. 209.

wanted to make the Nagoya World's true to its name. In addition, Gotō wanted to make peace with China. He had been conscripted into the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) in August 1937 and his unit was stationed in Shanxi province in China until December 1939. Gotō had personally opposed the war with China and had not hesitated to argue that the higher echelons of the IJA launched the war with China for the sake of achieving their own glory and promotions at the cost to the rest of the Japanese (and the Chinese). Gotō even accepted local Chinese people into the table tennis training group he had organized for his unit. As some Chinese became stronger than the Japanese, Gotō hosted Sino-Japanese friendship tournaments in 1939 at the war front. From these wartime experiences, Gotō came to believe that sports should transcend ideological and political boundaries: the “principle of separation of politics from sports.” Nevertheless, inviting China to the Nagoya World's was not a simple act. In fact, there was an insurmountable impediment to China's participation in the Nagoya World's: the “two Chinas” issue.⁵

“Two Chinas” Issue and International Table Tennis Circles

The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) admitted China as “PRC, China” in 1952. ITTF President Ivor Montagu (1904-84, from England; first ITTF president, 1926-67) accepted China because he was politically progressive and a member of the left-leaning World Peace Council. China also joined the Table Tennis Federation of Asia (TTFA) at its founding in 1952. Nevertheless, when the first Asian Table Tennis Championships were held in Singapore in November 1952, Singapore—then part of Malaysia—boycotted China's entry there. Then, the TTFA admitted Taiwan, as “ROC, China,” and Taiwan participated in the second Asian Table Tennis Championships in Tokyo in September 1953. In protest, China withdrew from the TTFA in 1953, but China remained in the ITTF.⁶

When Taiwan applied for admission to the ITTF, as “ROC, China” in 1957, both China and Taiwan claimed that they alone represented the legitimate China Table Tennis Association (CTTA). China, however, had applied first and had been a member since 1952. Taiwan's application therefore was rejected. Taiwan made applications repeatedly afterward but they were rejected each time. The ITTF was willing to admit Taiwan as “Taiwan,” but not as “ROC, China.” Thus, an anomalous situation arose in the international table tennis circles regarding China: China was a member of the ITTF, but not the TTFA. Taiwan was a member of the TTFA, but not the ITTF. China continued to participate in world championships, whereas Taiwan continued to participate in Asian championships.⁷

⁵ Itō Seiji 伊藤清次, “Gotō bunken-taichō-dono” 後藤分遣隊長殿 (Dear Platoon Sergeant Gotō), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, pp. 6-8.

⁶ Zheng Yueqing 鄭躍慶, “Pinpon-gaikō” to Gotō Kōji” 「ピンポン外交」と後藤鉀二 (“Ping-Pong Diplomacy” and Gotō Kōji), *Aichi shikutoku daigaku gendai shakai kenkyūka kenkyū hōkoku* 愛知淑徳大学現代社会研究科研究報告 2 (June 30, 2007), p. 36.

⁷ Ibid.; Mori Takeshi 森武, “Pinpon-gaikō: 71-nen Nagoya sekai taikai o chūshin ni” ピンポン外交: 71年名古屋世界大会を中心に (Ping-Pong diplomacy: Focusing on the 1971 Nagoya World's), *Waseda daigaku shakai kagaku tōkyū* 早稲田大学社会科学討究 35.102 (1989), pp. 645-46. Zheng's article (p. 36) states that China joined the ITTF in 1952, whereas Mori's article (p. 645) states that it was in 1953. The year 1952 seems to fit the other facts more accurately.

Gotō inherited this anomalous situation when he was elected as president of the TTFA in 1967. One of the first major tasks that Gotō undertook as TTFA president was to host the tenth Asian Championships in Nagoya, scheduled for April 1970, and he invited Taiwan to the championships. It was “natural” for Gotō to invite Taiwan to the Asian championships because Taiwan was a member of the TTFA, whereas China was not. He simply followed the precedent that had been practiced since 1953. Nevertheless, the *Xinhua* News Agency condemned Gotō as “reactionary” for doing this. Then, at a general meeting of the TTFA in Nagoya in February 1968, Gotō approved the resolution of the TTFA to recommend that Taiwan become a member of the ITTF as “ROC, China.” Again, Gotō’s action was in accordance with the precedents of the TTFA in the past which he was simply following. Nevertheless, China strongly denounced Gotō’s decision as having Japan join the conspiracy to create “two Chinas.” It was not until later in 1968 that the ITTF advisory committee added a new provision to its constitution, stipulating that only members of the ITTF could join its subordinate regional table tennis federations and participate in respective regional tournaments.⁸

Gotō Invites China to Nagoya World’s

In this context, Gotō and ITTF president H. Roy Evans (1909-98; second ITTF president, 1967-87) entrusted a message for China’s National Sports General Assembly to ITTF executive vice president Ogimura Ichirō 荻村伊智朗 (1932-94; ITTF third president, 1987-94), when he visited China in April 1970 to attend the Guangzhou Trade Fair. The message expressed their hope that China would participate in the Nagoya World’s. The logic behind the message was the facts that China was a member of the ITTF and that it was a world champion before it had stopped participating in the championships in 1967. Ogimura however brought back the negative report that China was still extremely bitter about the TTFA’s decision to recommend Taiwan’s admission to the ITTF. China would not participate in the Nagoya World’s unless the JTFA unequivocally took the position of “one China”—the PRC being the sole legitimate government of China. Thus, although China was interested in participating in the Nagoya World’s, it put forth its demand for its one-China policy as the prerequisite for the participation. This placed Gotō, as president of both the TTFA (where Taiwan was a member) and the JTFA, as well as the organizing committee chair of the Nagoya World’s, in a bind. Being caught in the “two-Chinas” issue, Gotō shied away from making clear comments on China’s participation.⁹

Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association and Gotō

Yet, China had a reliable ally in Japan. The Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, established in Tokyo in 1956, promoted China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. It was not a “front organization” of the CCP and had no official affiliation with

⁸ Mori, 215/645; “Rainen no sekai takkyū senshukun: Chūgoku sankā e doryoku” 来年の世界卓球選手権：中国参加へ努力 ([JTFA] will try to have China participate in next year’s Nagoya World’s), *Asahi shinbun*, May 27, 1970.

⁹ “Rainen no Sekai-takkyū-senshukun”; “Roy Evans, 88, Architect of Ping-Pong Diplomacy, Dies,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1998; *The Table Tennis Collector* 46 (Fall 2007), <http://www.ittf.com/museum/TTC46c.pdf>.

leftist political parties in Japan; however, it was supported by the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), and Japan's former prime minister and JSP chairman Katayama Tetsu 片山哲 (1887-1978) became the association's first president. Another pro-Chinese group created in 1950, the Japan-China Friendship Association, was supported by the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). The Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association was a less ideologically charged group than the Japan-China Friendship Association and promoted nonpolitical exchanges between China and Japan.¹⁰

Saionji Kinkazu 西園寺公一 (1906-93, grandson of prime minister Saionji Kinmochi 西園寺公望, 1849-1940)—who had lived in Beijing for nearly thirteen years from January 1958 to August 1970, acting as the “unofficial Japanese ambassador to China” in the absence of official diplomatic relations between China and Japan and became one of the executive directors of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association upon returning home—sent a “bomb letter” on the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World's from Beijing. In June 1970, he wrote to Nakajima Kenzō 中島健蔵 (1903-79), director-general of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, stating, “The JTTA is promoting Taiwan's admission to the ITTF. This move is undermining China's participation in the Nagoya World's. If the JTTA wants China's participation, President Gotō should clarify his position.”¹¹

Then, on August 25, 1970, the association's deputy secretary-general, Muraoka Kyūbei 村岡久平, went to Nakano Gymnasium in Tokyo to see Gotō. Gotō was there to preside over the first Japan National Middle School Table Tennis Championships. According to Muraoka, before Muraoka finished greeting him, Gotō told him off, saying, “It's no use trying to persuade me on China.” That was how the conversation between Gotō and Muraoka began. Despite this shaky start, Muraoka writes, the “Gotō-Muraoka team” was born from this initial encounter. In turn, according to Qian, when Muraoka asked if Gotō was planning to invite China to the Nagoya World's, Gotō said: “I have not decided yet. The *Xinhua* News Agency condemned me as ‘reactionary’ when I invited Taiwan to the 1970 Asian Championships.” Then, Muraoka told Gotō: “That's not a big deal. If only you contact China, all the problems will disappear.” Gotō just smiled back at Muraoka quietly.¹²

Nevertheless, things were not as simple as Muraoka suggested. Gotō had not made a final decision to invite China to the Nagoya World's. There was so much opposition to fend off. There were so many obstacles to overcome. The foremost and most formidable obstacle was the “two-Chinas” issue. In fact, it would cost Gotō his presidency of the TTFA.¹³

¹⁰ Mori, 215/645; Muraoka Kyūbei 村岡久平, “Shin dankai no Nit-Chū yūkō undō” 新段階の日中友好運動 (New stage in Sino-Japanese friendship movement), *Mail Magazine*, *Alter* 8 (April 10, 2008), http://www.alter-magazine.jp/backno/backno_8_2.htm.

¹¹ “Tsuyomaru Chūgoku sankā yōsei” 強まる中国参加要請 (Intensifying voices for China's participation [in the Nagoya World's]), *Asahi shinbun*, July 30, 1970.

¹² Muraoka Kyūbei, “Ketsudan to jikkō no hito” 決断と実行の人 (Man of decisions and action), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, p. 173; Qian, p. 13.

¹³ Qian, pp. iii-iv; Zheng, p. 38.

China's Position

China linked its participation in the Nagoya World's to the "two-Chinas" issue. China's position on this issue was clear and irrevocable. The Chinese government declared that it would not participate in the Nagoya World's unless the JTTA, the official host of the championships, acknowledged that China (the PRC) was the sole legitimate government of China. That was its absolute prerequisite. There was no room for the Chinese government to compromise on this condition. As far as China was concerned, there could not be "two Chinas" in international table tennis circles. Strangely enough, China insisted on this condition despite the fact that Taiwan was not invited to the Nagoya World's. Taiwan was not a member of the ITTF and thus was not qualified to participate in the world championships. Nevertheless, the Chinese government insisted that Gotō must "abandon" Taiwan in order for China to participate in the Nagoya World's. This meant that he must expel Taiwan from the TTFA.¹⁴

ITTF's Position

ITTF president Evans recommended that the TTFA follow the new ITTF rule adopted in its constitution in 1968—only members of the ITTF could join its subordinate regional organizations and participate in their tournaments. ITTF honorary general-secretary A. K. Vint (1908-93, from India) also recommended that the TTFA expel Taiwan, as it constituted a violation of the ITTF Constitution. However, removing Taiwan from the TTFA was not an easy task. A majority of the TTFA members were pro-Taiwan, including Japan and Singapore. To forcibly expel Taiwan from the TTFA would cause a furor among the members. The conventional "principle of separation of politics from sports" that had been employed by many international organizations could no longer offer a solution to this problem. Gotō, as president of both the JTJA and the TTFA, must make a difficult decision, based on his vision beyond the table tennis circles and insight into international politics.¹⁵

Gotō Makes the Decision

According to one of the executive directors and the captain of the women's team of the JTJA, Mori Takeshi 森武, who was deputy head of the JTJA's Sino-Japanese Exchange Section and had visited Beijing as captain of the Japanese team to the first Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments in 1962, Gotō was known to be a bold, decisive person, but he was also prudent and meticulous. Confronted with the most difficult decision he had yet to make, Gotō consulted on the Taiwan issue with many officials. He asked for the cooperation of ITTF President Evans and ITTF Executive Vice-President Ogimura. Along with Evans and Vint, Ogimura was in favor of inviting China to the Nagoya World's. In his own account, Ogimura visited Gotō's home twice in Nagoya in April 1970 at a time when Taiwan was participating in the tenth Asian Championships in Nagoya. Gotō agreed to see Ogimura on his second visit. Ogimura tried to talk Gotō into inviting China. After listening to Ogimura, Gotō told him, "I understand. You can tell them (ITTF top officials) that I am also hoping for China's participation in the

¹⁴ Zheng, p. 37; Mori, p. 646.

¹⁵ Zheng, p. 40; Mori, pp. 646-47.

Nagoya World's." According to Ogimura, that morning was *the* moment that Gotō made up his mind.¹⁶

Gotō also consulted with Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association officials, including Muraoka and Saionji. Saionji had met Gotō in Beijing in the summer of 1966 when Gotō visited Beijing for the first time in the postwar period as the head of the Japanese team to the Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments. When Saionji returned home in August 1970, he brought with him an important message from Chinese officials to Gotō. China wanted to participate in the Nagoya World's, but on the condition that the JTFA accepts China's position on the "two-Chinas" issue—"China would not be present where there was a Taiwan presence." Saionji writes that he talked the matter over with Gotō repeatedly, but Gotō did not give him a definite answer. Gotō was deliberating the issue prudently and working out feasible plans for realization. There were too many issues to be solved—not only political but also procedural (he did not have enough money to convene an ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA in order to expel Taiwan, just to mention one)—before Gotō could make a final decision. It was not until the end of December that Gotō relayed his decision to Saionji. Gotō called Saionji to invite him for a drink during his visit to Tokyo. Gotō then said to him: "You showed me your *gyotaku* 魚拓 [traditional Japanese art of fish printing/rubbing] at your house in Beijing. The fish was huge. We cannot have world championships without China. Let's invite China."¹⁷

Thus, having consulted with many officials concerned, Gotō made up his mind. Gotō hoped to make the Nagoya World's a genuine world championship in substance, not in name only. Gotō also hoped to resume the Sino-Japanese Friendship Tournaments that were cancelled in 1967. For these nonpolitical reasons, Gotō decided to invite China to the Nagoya World's notwithstanding enormous difficulties. Thus, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association's interest in promoting nonpolitical exchanges with China and Gotō's interest in making the Nagoya World's a true world championship converged. Gotō decision was a godsend to Zhou who was contemplating a comeback of Chinese table tennis in the world scene.¹⁸

Gotō's decision meant that he accepted the "three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations" stipulated by China. They consisted of: 1) not to make policy that would be adversarial toward China; 2) not to join a conspiracy to create two Chinas; and 3) not to obstruct normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. Premier Zhou had laid out these "three political principles" originally in July 1958 to the JSP delegation in Beijing. After that, they became *the* criteria for the Chinese acceptance of Japanese delegations—official and unofficial—and ultimately the prerequisites for diplomatic normalization. This time, China made them a condition for its participation in the Nagoya World's, and Gotō finally decided to accept them.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid.; Ogimura Ichirō 荻村伊智朗, "Jinsei iki ni kanzu" 人生意気に感ず (A life of determination), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, p. 226.

¹⁷ Saionji Kinkazu 西園寺公一, "Pinpon-gaikō no umi no oya" ピンポン外交の生みの親 (Father of ping-pong -dDiplomacy), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, pp. 99-100; "Gotō kaichō ga hō-Chū ketsui" 後藤会長が訪中決意 (President Gotō decides to visit China), *Asahi shinbun*, January 12, 1971.

¹⁸ Zheng, pp. 35-36; Mori, p. 647.

¹⁹ Zheng, p. 38.

In retrospect, Gotō's decision seems reasonable because China was a member of the ITTF and was qualified to participate in world championships. Taiwan's membership in the TTFA should have been a separate matter from China's participation in the Nagoya World's. Nevertheless, the Chinese insistence on removing Taiwan from the TTFA as its prerequisite for its participation in the Nagoya World's put Gotō in a predicament. The complex political situation at that time made Gotō's decision nearly inconceivable or at least politically incorrect. The enormity of the difficulty Gotō faced is almost beyond comprehension, measured against the current standing of China and Taiwan.²⁰

Gotō Makes the Decision Public

Gotō made his decision public on December 19, 1970. He told reporters: I personally hope that China will participate in the Nagoya World's. I was impressed with the vitality of the Chinese people when I visited China in 1966. It has made a quantum leap from the time I was stationed in China during the war. I believe that normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China—that has a vast land area, rich natural resources, and a quarter of the world's population—is necessary in addition to resumption of exchanges in table tennis between the two countries. I will work with officials at the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association in order to realize China's participation. I am prepared to resign the presidency of the TTFA, as well as that of the JTFA, at any time, so long as the Nagoya World's succeed.²¹

Gotō really meant it. He was willing to sacrifice his positions for the sake of Chinese participation. Gotō chose the larger cause (China's participation in the Nagoya World's) over his personal interests. Gotō also stated to the reporters:

I would be happy to become *suteishi* 捨て石 [a sacrifice] if my visit to China would contribute in any way to cultural and sports exchanges between China and Japan, and eventually even in the slightest way toward the restoration of Sino-Japanese relations." The *Mainichi shinbun* summed it up by reporting: "JTFA president Gotō, who had hesitated to clarify his attitude on the issue of inviting China to the Nagoya World's in consideration for Taiwan, a member of the TTFA, has made up his mind. Gotō decided to expel Taiwan from the TTFA, in accordance with the ITTF Constitution, and invite China to the Nagoya World's. Gotō will seek cooperation from Nakajima Kenzō, director-general of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, and other officials for China's participation in the championships. Thus, Gotō opened a way for China, which was No. 1 in reality, to participate in the world championships after six years' absence."²²

Repercussions of Gotō's Decision

With Gotō's acceptance of the "three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations," the JTFA's invitation to China for the Nagoya World's was no longer a mere matter involving sports circles, but it had become a political issue. It was no longer possible to take a neutral stand on the "two-Chinas" issue. There were only

²⁰ Saionji, p. 100.

²¹ "Nanmon kakaeru Nittakkyō" 難問抱える日卓協 (JTFA beset with difficult problems), *Asahi shinbun*, December 20, 1970.

²² "Taiwan nozoki Chūgoku maneku: Nagoya de hiraku Sekai takkyū Gotō kaichō ga ketsui" 台湾除き中国招く：名古屋で開く世界卓球後藤会長が決意 (President Gotō decides to remove Taiwan and invite China to the Nagoya World's), *Mainichi shinbun*, December 31, 1970.

two options: pro-China or pro-Taiwan. This meant that the JTFA would face vehement opposition from Taiwan and its allies regarding its membership in the TTFA. Consequently, Gotō's decision met with strong opposition from various groups, not only in sports but also in non-sports circles.²³

Opposition from Japanese Government

The Satō cabinet (November 1964-July 1972) was cold at best. Prime Minister Satō Eisaku 佐藤栄作 (1901-75) took a strongly anti-China position in the latter half of his administration, because his ultimate goal was the “reversion of Okinawa” from the United States—Satō made the utmost effort in supporting U.S. policy toward Taiwan. He also repeatedly refused the entry of Chinese officials to Japan. In this context, some officials in the Satō government, such as those in the Ministry of Education whose jurisdiction included overseeing all the amateur sports organizations in Japan, expressed opposition to Gotō's decision. They stated that it was inappropriate for the host country to seek the participation of a specific country. They also mentioned that it was inappropriate for a sports organization (the JTFA) to negotiate with China through a politically-minded organization (the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association)—this would be misconstrued as violating the “principle of separation of politics from sports.”²⁴

Opposition from Right-Wing Groups in Japan

In addition, Japanese right-wing organizations strongly opposed Gotō's decision. They had a history of violence. In October 1960, a seventeen-year-old right-wing sympathizer stabbed to death JSP chairman Asanuma Inejirō 浅沼稻次郎 (1898-1960) in Tokyo during a public debate by the heads of three political parties—the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the JSP, and the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP)—for the forthcoming general elections of the House of Representatives (HR). Also, in September 1971, another right-wing sympathizer stabbed Kōmeitō 公明党 (Clean Government Party) chairman Takeiri Yoshikatsu 竹入義勝 (b. 1926), causing him a three-month convalescence. These sporadic bouts of violence stirred up public fear of the far right, which was deeply etched into the national psyche. The activists' loud rallies, slanders, intimidating phone calls, and veiled threats of violence scared citizens at large, causing them to shun associating with those on the left, even the moderate ones.²⁵

This time their target was Gotō. They bombarded Gotō with threatening phone calls and mail at his home and his offices—at Meiden High School and at Aichi Institute of Technology. They said that Gotō's life would be lost if he did something they did not like. They threw stones at his house. The Aichi prefectural police took the matter

²³ Zheng, p. 39.

²⁴ Armin H. Meyer, *Assignment Tokyo: An Ambassador's Journal* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), pp. 25-62; “Sekai takkyū sankā e Chūgoku iyoku shimesu” 世界卓球参加へ中国意欲示す (China expresses its willingness to participate in the Nagoya World's), *Asahi shinbun*, January 22, 1971.

²⁵ Waki Yasumitsu 和木康光, *Sōzō to ningensei: Nagoya denki gakuen 90-nen no ayumi* 創造と人間性：名古屋電気学園90年の歩み (Creativity and humanity: 90-year history of Meiden Academy) (Nagoya: Meiden Academy, 2002), pp. 245-46; Martin Fackler, “New Dissent in Japan is Loudly Anti-Foreign,” *New York Times*, August 29, 2010.

seriously and provided a plainclothes police officer as bodyguard for Gotō. His frail wife, Suzuko すゞ子, became sick and was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. His grandchildren were afraid to go outside. Nevertheless, Gotō did not yield to these intimidations and threats. He was determined to make the Nagoya World's a genuine world championship.²⁶

Opposition from Sports Associations

Some officials of Japanese sports associations expressed their support of Gotō's decision, stating that it was welcome for China—Japan's giant neighbor with a quarter of the world's population—to participate in the Nagoya World's. A couple of officials at the Japan Sports Association stated that Japan should promote sports exchanges with China more actively. For instance, a world-record swimmer and a Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) executive member, Furuhashi Hironoshin 古橋廣之進 (1928-2009; JOC president, 1990-99), stated that it was natural for Japan to promote sports exchanges with China regardless of the political situation and that it would also be beneficial to learn techniques from the Chinese. Nevertheless, they were in the minority. Others, including some officials at the Japan Sports Association, expressed reservations, citing the same reasons as those of the government. The *Asahi shinbun* reporter, Watanabe Kunio 渡辺邦雄, states that officials in sports circles who should have been supporting Gotō were actually sabotaging his efforts. In fact, there was even opposition from within and some members of the JTFA opposed Gotō's decision.²⁷

Opposition from Abroad

Unsurprisingly, Taiwan strongly opposed Gotō's decision. South Korea, fearing the admission of North Korea into the TTFA, followed suit. Even some officials at the ITTF opposed it, stating that China's nonparticipation in the Nagoya World's should not affect the championships. Thus, Gotō faced opposition both from within and without the JTFA, as well as at home and abroad. He was confronted with thick walls of impediments and obstructions. Nevertheless, nothing would deter him once he made up his mind. It might have appeared that Gotō had succumbed to the pressures of China and the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association; however, that was not the case. Gotō was not the type of person to be pressured into doing something against his will—he would prove this during his negotiations with the Chinese in Beijing.²⁸

²⁶ Waki, pp. 246-48; author interviews with Gotō Haruko 後藤治子 and Gotō Yoshiki 後藤芳樹, August 3, 2010.

²⁷ "Sekai-takkyū: Sanpi uzumaku Chūgoku sankā" 世界卓球：賛否渦巻く中国参加 (World Table Tennis Championships embroiled with support and opposition), *Asahi shinbun*, February 1, 1971; Watanabe Kunio 渡辺邦雄, "Yowane mo haita wanman kaichō" 弱音も吐いたワンマン会長 (Even President Gotō had weak spots), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, pp. 363-66; Zheng, p. 39.

²⁸ Waki, pp. 245-46; Gotō kaichō to tairitsu" 後藤会長と対立 (Confronting President Gotō), *Asahi shinbun*, December 26, 1970.

Preparing for Trip to Beijing

Toward the end of December 1970, Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association deputy secretary-general Muraoka obtained the information that China was considering participation in the Nagoya World's, hoping to talk with Gotō. Muraoka immediately went to Nagoya on December 29, 1970, to inform Gotō of this news in person. There, Muraoka urged Gotō to visit Beijing and negotiate directly with the Chinese officials. Gotō agreed. Then, Gotō and Muraoka wrote a draft for the agreement between the CTTA and the JTJA that would be on the table for the meeting in Beijing. Gotō was ready to leave for Beijing as soon as the association received a telegram from China to invite him.²⁹

However, China delayed sending the formal invitation to Gotō, whereas the deadline for the application for the Nagoya World's was February 5. Finally, the association received a telegram from China on January 15, 1971, which stated that Zhou would like to spend the Chinese New Year (January 27) with Gotō. As soon as the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs's permission to visit China came through, Gotō left Nagoya with his secretary Oda Yūsuke 小田悠祐, on the morning of January 24, to join Muraoka and Mori of the JTJA, in Tokyo. Gotō wore a hunting cap, glasses, and a mask, in order to foil rightwing groups. Then, they headed to Haneda Airport in the afternoon. There, Gotō instructed JTJA Secretary-General Yotoe Ikuji 四十栄伊久治, who came to the airport to see them off, to contact Singapore (where the secretariat of the TTFA was located) and call for an ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA. Thus, they embarked on the uncharted trip to China in order to settle the terms for China's participation in the Nagoya World's: one of the toughest negotiations he had ever engaged in during his life.³⁰

China Prepares for Gotō's Visit to Beijing

As of January 27, 1971, China had not applied for its entry in the Nagoya World's. They had yet to work out the terms for its participation. That was the purpose of Gotō's visit. The opening of the Nagoya World's was March 28. They had only ten days left to apply. Song Zhong 宋中, general-secretary of China's National Sports General Assembly, was appointed acting president of the CTTA in late January 1971 in order to prepare for the meeting with Gotō. Song was suddenly charged with a new task with which he was unfamiliar. The only consolation he had was that one of the directors of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), Wang Xiaoyun 王晓雲, was also charged with the task of negotiations with Gotō. Wang was a specialist on Japan—being one of the deputy general-secretaries of the China-Japan Friendship Association and one-time head of the Liao Chengzhi 廖承志 Office of Sino-Japanese Memorandum Trade in Beijing—and had many Japanese acquaintances. Song had known Wang since the wartime. They had fought against the IJA together.³¹

²⁹ Mori, pp. 647-48; Qian, pp. 13-14.

³⁰ Zheng, pp. 37, 39; "Gotō Nittaku kaichō: Chūgoku e shuppatsu" 後藤日卓会長: 中国へ出発 (JTJA President Gotō departs for China), *Asahi shinbun*, January 25, 1971.

³¹ Qian, pp. 11-12.

Gotō Arrives at Beijing

Meanwhile, Gotō and his team arrived at Beijing Airport at night on January 25. Because there were no direct flights to Beijing at that time, the four flew to Hong Kong on the evening of January 24. They arrived at Hong Kong the next morning. Then they took the Kowloon Railway and crossed the border between Hong Kong (then under British jurisdiction) and China. Officials of China's National Sports General Assembly, including Hong Lin 洪林, welcomed them at the border. Then, they switched to a high-class sedan, provided by the government, from Shenzhen to Guangzhou, and flew from Guangzhou to Beijing, arriving late at night. It took more than two days from Tokyo to Beijing, whereas it currently takes only three hours. It was an arduous task, both physically and psychologically, for the 64-year-old Gotō, who used a cane to walk.³²

CPAFFC executive director Wu Xiaoda 吳曉達 and CTTA acting president Song greeted the Japanese delegation at Beijing Airport. Upon arriving at the Peking Hotel on the night of January 25, Gotō handed over to Song the Japanese draft of the "Outline of the Meeting concerning Friendship Exchanges of the Table Tennis Circles between China and Japan" (the "Outline" hereafter). The Chinese side immediately translated the draft into Chinese. The draft of the Outline had four points: 1) the JTТА shall invite the Chinese national table tennis team to the Nagoya World's; 2) the JTТА shall promote exchanges between Chinese and Japanese table tennis circles in adherence to the "three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations"; 3) the Chinese team shall tour Japan after the Nagoya World's and the Japanese team shall tour China at a later time; and 4) the JTТА shall not admit Taiwan's team to the Nagoya World's and shall "straighten out" the TTFA—meaning expelling the Taiwan Table Tennis Association from the TTFA.³³

Meetings Between CTTA and JTТА

First Meeting: January 27

The first meeting between the Chinese officials and the Japanese delegation took place at the Peking Hotel on January 27, 1971. The four Japanese—Gotō, Muraoka, Mori, and Oda—met six Chinese officials, including CTTA acting president Song and CPAFFC director Wang. At the meeting, Gotō stated that when he became president of the TTFA, the anomalous situation regarding Taiwan had existed for fourteen years—Taiwan had been a member of the TTFA since 1953. China then withdrew from the TTFA in that year. The TTFA therefore allowed Taiwan to participate in the Asian championships. It was not until 1968 that the ITTF added a new provision to its constitution, stipulating that only members of the ITTF could join its subordinate regional federations and participate in their tournaments. Gotō stated that it was difficult for the JTТА to alter the long-time practice because the Japanese government had recognized Taiwan as the legitimate government of China. The JTТА received funding from the Japanese government and it could not go against the government policy. Gotō then stated that China however should participate in the Nagoya World's. In order to make this

³² Zheng, p. 39; "Gotō Nittakkyū kaichō ra no Pekin iri" 後藤日卓球会長らの北京入り (JTТА President Gotō and others enter Beijing), *Asahi shinbun*, January 27, 1971.

³³ Zheng, pp. 39-40; Qian, p. 183; "Gotō Nittakkyū-kaichō ra."

happen, he would do his best to correct the anomaly and “straighten out” the TTFA.³⁴

In return, Wang thanked Gotō for visiting Beijing, risking his life. However, Wang stressed that the political issue must be overcome first and that the “three political principles” must be adhered to before China made a decision to participate in the Nagoya World’s. The first meeting appeared to have proceeded smoothly. Gotō already accepted the most critical condition for China in the Outline—to acknowledge the “three political principles.” Gotō also pledged that he would remove Taiwan from the TTFA. Nevertheless, their subsequent meetings stumbled.³⁵

Second Meeting: January 28

Given that the both sides had agreed on the general principles, the purpose of the second meeting on January 28 was to work out the specific wording of their agreement. However, the Chinese officials presented Gotō with their counter-draft, which had the “three political principles” as the first paragraph of the Outline, instead of the second paragraph. The Chinese draft also had in the first paragraph the statements that Taiwan was an integral part of China and that it was a province of China. The Japanese draft of the Outline had already clearly stated the adherence to the “three political principles” in the second paragraph, which defied the Japanese government policy on China. Gotō had already made a risky and “politically incorrect” decision to go against the Japanese government and agree to the Chinese demand. Gotō had already made the utmost conciliatory gesture in order to facilitate China’s participation in the Nagoya World’s. Gotō did something no other Japanese could have done at that time. Nevertheless, the Chinese officials insisted that the “three political principles” be stated in the first paragraph of the Outline and that the reference to Taiwan also be added in the first paragraph. They appeared preoccupied with dogmatism and formality.³⁶

Gotō saw neither the need for the “three political principles” to be placed in the first paragraph nor for the reference to Taiwan in the Outline. He believed that politics should not become the forefront of the agreement. He wanted to tone down political expressions in the Outline. After all, this was an agreement on a sports event, not on politics. Gotō was not a politician or a diplomat representing the Japanese government. He came to China to discuss a table tennis event, not politics or diplomatic relations. Yet, the Chinese officials insisted on imposing their principles and formality. Gotō’s patience and tolerance with the Chinese officials reached their limit.³⁷

Third Meeting: January 29

On January 29, Gotō called in sick, stayed in his hotel room, and refused to see

³⁴ Zheng, pp. 40-41; Mori, p. 648; Qian, pp. 17-19; “Nitchū takkyū kaidan: Nagoya taikai ni sankā yōsei” 日中卓球会談:名古屋大会に参加要請 (CTTA-JTTA meeting requests participation in the Nagoya World’s), *Asahi shinbun*, evening edition, January 28, 1971. Zheng’s article (p. 40) and the *Asahi shinbun* state that the first meeting took place on January 27, whereas Mori’s article (p. 648) states that it was on January 26, and Qian’s book does not specify the date. Zheng’s information is based on Mori’s journal of this trip (which Zheng obtained from Mori personally), and it states that the meeting began on January 27.

³⁵ Zheng, pp. 40-42.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 42; Qian, p. 20.

³⁷ Zheng, p. 42, Qian, pp. 20-21.

the Chinese officials. Consequently, their negotiations had deadlocked. Mori writes that he personally felt that the second paragraph of the Outline had already fully met the Chinese conditions. Mori also feared that if Gotō accepted all the unreasonable Chinese demands, he would be forced to resign his positions—both at the JTFA and the TTFA—after the trip; then, everything they had worked for thus far would be ruined. Therefore, in order to save Gotō from such a predicament, Mori volunteered to become a “hostage,” by remaining in Beijing alone after the Japanese delegation left and until Gotō expelled Taiwan from the TTFA. Mori suggested this idea to Muraoka, who conveyed this proposal to the Chinese side, through a Chinese interpreter.³⁸

Premier Zhou Intervenes

In the afternoon on January 29, the Chinese officials in charge of negotiating with Gotō were summoned to the conference room of the State Council, China’s supreme executive branch of government. Zhou had heard about the stalemate in the negotiations and called for a meeting. Zhou told the Chinese officials in charge: “You must support Gotō because he is a true friend of China. You must put yourselves in his shoes. Gotō came to China at the age of sixty-four, endangering himself. Gotō promised that he would submit a motion to ‘straighten out’ the TTFA. No ordinary person could do such things.”³⁹

Then, Zhou asked Liu Chun 劉春, director-general of the Asia Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, how many countries were in Asia. Liu answered that the Asia Bureau was in charge of twenty-two Asian countries and that the West Asia Bureau was in charge of the rest of the countries in Asia. Zhou said: “My question was how many countries were in Asia in total.” Liu could not answer that. Zhou was already thinking about establishing a new table tennis organization for Asia, to replace the TTFA. He then stated that even if Gotō proposed to remove Taiwan from the TTFA at the ad hoc general meeting, his motion would be rejected. Gotō therefore would have to establish a new table tennis organization for Asia. Counting his fingers, Zhou said: “Eighteen countries and regions would support establishing a new organization, whereas at most sixteen would oppose. Therefore, a new organization could be established.”⁴⁰

Zhou then said to the officials: “Gotō’s draft outline is well written. I understand that he had been hoping to visit Beijing for a long time. Yet, you are imposing unreasonable conditions on him. Don’t be too ‘left.’... You guys always want to be more ‘left’ than me.” Zhou was clearly searching for a change in China’s foreign policy. He told the Chinese officials to look at the substance and drop the formality, saying: “Gotō is not a representative of the Japanese government. Don’t give him a hard time. The three political principles can remain in the second paragraph, as stipulated in the Japanese draft. There is no need to move them to the first paragraph.” He also stated: “Gotō had already put the three political principles in the Outline. He promised to straighten out the TTFA. He also declared that Taiwan did not represent China. That’s enough.”⁴¹

Zhou told the Chinese officials to go and talk with Gotō immediately. He also

³⁸ Zheng, p. 41; Qian, p. 21; Mori, pp. 648-49.

³⁹ Qian, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 23-25; Zheng, p. 42.

told them that he would meet Gotō that night, after they worked out the specific wording of the Outline with Gotō. Song and Wu went to the Peking Hotel and told Gotō's secretary Oda that they brought good news. Then, Gotō came out of his room. They told Gotō through an interpreter that they would accept his draft. They also told Gotō that Zhou would meet him at the Great Hall of the People that night and that they would come to pick him up later. Thus, the meeting was resumed that afternoon and the wording of the Outline was resolved. With Zhou's intervention, the CTTA just made it by the deadline of February 5 for the entry application for the Nagoya World's.⁴²

In retrospect, Gotō accomplished something no other Japanese or Japanese delegation could have at that time. Others would have easily caved into the Chinese demands and changed the draft Outline for the sake of China's participation in the Nagoya World's. Nevertheless, Gotō stood his ground firmly in the face of the Chinese officials—he believed that the Japanese draft was fair and acceptable to the Chinese side. In fact, it was more than fair—it had already incorporated all the critical Chinese conditions. Gotō was a man of conviction, refusing to abase himself to the Chinese authorities. Zhou in turn understood that Gotō had already made the maximum concessions to the Chinese demands. Zhou was also impressed with Gotō's fortitude and straightforwardness. Therefore, Zhou, who had also a grand design in mind, decided to go ahead with Gotō's draft.

Meeting with Premier Zhou

Gotō and three other Japanese visitors were invited to the Great Hall of the People on the night of January 29 and met Zhou. The renowned poet/writer and China-Japan Friendship Association honorary president, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), who had studied in Japan during 1914-20 (or 1921) and spent his exile years in Japan during 1928-37, was also there. They talked for an hour and one-half until 11:00 p.m. During their conversations, Zhou thanked Gotō for his devotion to resuming the table tennis exchanges between China and Japan. He stated that the Chinese people supported his initiative at the TTFA. Gotō asked: "Does this mean that seven hundred million people support me?" Zhou replied: "Yes, they do."⁴³

Signing of the Outline

On February 1, 1971, Gotō (representing the JTJA), Muraoka (the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association), Song (the CTTA), and Wu (the CPAFFC) signed the Outline of the Meeting concerning Friendship Exchanges of the Table Tennis Circles between China and Japan. It stipulated: 1) the JTJA shall promote the development of international table tennis in adherence to the ITTF Constitution and straighten out the TTFA in accordance with the ITTF Constitution; 2) the JTJA shall promote friendship exchanges between the Chinese and Japanese table tennis circles based on the "three political principles concerning Sino-Japanese relations" (the CTTA expressed its respect and support for this); and 3) the JTJA shall invite the Chinese national team to the

⁴² Qian, pp. 25-27; Zheng, p. 43.

⁴³ Qian, p. 30; Zheng, pp. 43-44; "Shū shushō to kaiken: Gotō Kōji Nihon takkyū kyōkai kaichō" 周首相と会見: 後藤鉦二日本卓球協会会長 (JTJA President Gotō Kōji meets Premier Zhou), *Asahi shinbun*, January 31, 1971.

Nagoya World's to be held on March 28-April 7, 1971, in accordance with the principles stipulated above (the CTTA shall accept the invitation and send its team to Nagoya); 4) the Chinese team shall extend its stay in Japan after the Nagoya World's and tour Japan to engage in friendship tournaments, and the Japanese team shall reciprocate by visiting China later this year; and 5) the CTTA and the CPAFFC thank the JTTA, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, and other Japanese friends of China for their efforts to develop and promote friendship and solidarity between the Chinese and Japanese table tennis circles, as well as between the Chinese and Japanese peoples.⁴⁴

Aftermath

The Japanese mass media responded immediately. Japanese television stations repeatedly broadcast this news on the night of February 1, 1971. Major TV stations also contacted the JTTA office in order to obtain the right to broadcast the Nagoya World's. The *Asahi shinbun* reported: "The Japanese acceptance of the 'three political principles' opened the way for Sino-Japanese table tennis exchanges. This 'table-tennis formula' will become a norm for opening other exchanges between China and Japan in various circles, not only in sports but also in culture, economics, and others [areas]. In this sense, the JTTA set the precedent for Sino-Japanese exchanges after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution."⁴⁵

Zheng Yueqing 鄭躍慶, who was once a member of the Chinese national table tennis team, writes: "Gotō recognized the 'three political principles' as the foundation for promoting Sino-Japanese relations before the Japanese government did. Using the 'unofficial serve,' Gotō won great 'points' in achieving a quantum leap in Sino-Japanese relations as well as in Sino-U.S. relations."⁴⁶

* * *

Completing the tough negotiations with China successfully and securing China's participation in the Nagoya World's the way Gotō did was an accomplishment in itself. Nevertheless, it was only the end of the beginning. Nobody, including Gotō himself, at that time could have predicted the ramifications of his visit to Beijing. Only time would reveal the impact that Gotō's initiative had beyond the world table tennis circles and on world politics. What was clear at that time was that Gotō wanted to make the Nagoya World's a genuine world championship and that Gotō had succeeded in inviting China to the Nagoya World's. For this, he first would have to "straighten out" the TTFA. Another arduous trip and negotiations—even more difficult ones—lay ahead for Gotō.⁴⁷

Gotō Heads to Singapore

As soon as the Outline was signed on February 1, 1971, Gotō and his team headed directly for Singapore. While Gotō was in Beijing, he had the JTTA staff make

⁴⁴ Mori, pp. 651-52; "Kyō ni mo chōin: Nit-Chū takkyū kyōdō seimei" 今日にも調印: 日中卓球共同声明 (JTTA and CTTA to sign joint statement as early as today), *Asahi shinbun*, February 1, 1971; "Nagoya no sekai takkyū: Chūgoku sankā hongimari" 名古屋の世界卓球: 中国参加本決まり (Nagoya World's: China's participation becomes real), *Chūnichī shinbun*, February 2, 1971.

⁴⁵ Qian, pp. 28-29; "Sekai-takkyū: Sampi uzumaku."

⁴⁶ Zheng, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

arrangements to call the ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA in Singapore. It was scheduled for February 7. They flew to Guangzhou and arrived at Hong Kong by train on February 4. Anticipating that the TTFA general meeting would fall apart, Gotō wrote his letter of resignation in Hong Kong. There, Gotō was surrounded by various people who visited his hotel room frequently, acting suspiciously. Gotō was also surrounded by reporters. He told the reporters: “I have accomplished all the objectives of my visit to China. I will submit a resolution that Taiwan does not represent the government of China at the TTFA in accordance with the ITTF Constitution. The anomaly of the current situation at the TTFA has to be corrected. I will resign the presidency of the TTFA immediately if my motion is rejected.”⁴⁸

TTFA Ad Hoc General Meeting

Upon arrival in Singapore, Gotō was surrounded by more suspicious people who claimed to be reporters, visiting his hotel room. His team members suspected danger to the extent that they changed their hotel in secret at 3:00 a.m. Muraoka, Mori, and Oda guarded Gotō’s room, taking turns; however, Gotō did not get much rest. The ad hoc general meeting of the TTFA was convened in Singapore on February 7, 1971. Out of the twenty-three members of the TTFA, eleven members were absent. Those that were absent were India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Burma (now Myanmar), Syria, Israel, Australia, Hong Kong, and Macao. In turn, twelve members were present. They were Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Cambodia (the Lon Nol regime supported by the United States), Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, and South Vietnam.⁴⁹

Taiwan had a great stake in this meeting. The issue not only concerned its status in the international table tennis community but also that in the United Nations (UN). China had also challenged Taiwan at the UN, claiming its seat as the sole legitimate government of China. The outcome of the TTFA general meeting could significantly influence the vote on Chinese representation at the UN General Assembly in the fall of 1971. The world was therefore paying attention to the TTFA ad hoc general meeting. It was a matter of prestige and pride for Taiwan—the ROC that had been one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council since its inception. Under these circumstances, no sooner had Gotō’s meeting in Beijing ended than Taiwan engaged in groundwork with other TTFA members in earnest. While Gotō was obliged to go on a sightseeing tour, Taiwanese officials met other delegates in the hotel adjacent to the hotel where the TTFA meeting was scheduled, and diligently prepared strategies to defeat Gotō’s motion.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Mori, p. 649; “TTFA Must Solve Two Chinas Issue or Be Expelled,” *The Strait Times* (Singapore), January 22, 1971; “Gotō takkyū kyōkai kaichō kataru” 後藤卓球協会会長語る (JTFA President Gotō speaks), *Asahi shinbun*, February 5, 1971.

⁴⁹ Mori, p. 649; “Eleven Nations to Attend Crucial Table Tennis Meeting,” *The Strait Times*, February 5, 1971; Ōno Seizō 大野静三, “Ajia-takkyū-sōkai deno sensei” アジア卓球総会での先生 (Gotō at TTFA general meeting), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, p. 231.

⁵⁰ Ōno, pp. 232-33; “Ajia takkyū renmei sōkai: Taiwan jomeian tōrazu” アジア卓球連盟総会: 台湾除名案通らず (TTFA general meeting rejects motion to expel Taiwan), *Asahi shinbun*, February 8, 1971.

According to Ōno Seizō 大野 静三, a reporter for the Japanese public broadcasting network NHK, no sooner had Gotō submitted the “motion concerning the status of Taiwan,” pursuant to the ITTF’s recommendation, than the conference room was in a furor with hooting and shouting. Most of the representatives, led by that of South Vietnam, vehemently opposed the motion. They accused Gotō of bringing politics into the sports world. Gotō instead argued that it was Taiwan that had brought politics to the TTFA by remaining in the organization in violation of the ITTF Constitution. Nevertheless, some delegates, such as Malaysia and Iran, demanded that Gotō show the Outline of the Meeting between the CTTA and the JTJA. Gotō countered that the agreement between China and Japan on the Nagoya World’s had no direct relevance to the agenda before the TTFA general meeting. The shouting match between the pro-Taiwan representatives, including Lebanon and South Korea, and Gotō was so loud that the press corps in the next room could hear it. Most of the attacks were directed toward Gotō personally. Nobody listened to his reasoning, leaving Gotō isolated.⁵¹

Gotō Resigns

After three hours of this shouting match, Gotō’s motion went to a vote. It failed. Only Japan voted in favor, whereas ten were opposed and one (Singapore) abstained. Then Gotō stood up and stated: “Now that my motion has been rejected, I will not be responsible for the consequences.” He then handed over his letter of resignation from the post of TTFA president to the secretary-general of the Singapore Table Tennis Association (TTFA’s secretariat) and walked out of the conference room. All of these actions were expected. After Gotō had left the conference room, the ad hoc general meeting elected the representative of South Vietnam as the new president of the TTFA. Then, the meeting adopted an urgent motion to recommend the admission of Taiwan, as “ROC, China,” to the ITTF, despite the fact that there was no possibility for the ITTF to approve it. In fact, as the result of the TTFA ad hoc general meeting, ITTF president Evans stated, “Taiwan cannot join the ITTF under the name of China because it does not represent the whole area of China. Taiwan is violating the ITTF Constitution. It is regrettable that the TTFA passed the resolution that ignored our recommendation.”⁵²

The *Asahi shinbun* reported: “Aside from anti-communist countries, such as South Korea, whose position was obvious, other TTFA members were put in a delicate position by having to choose between China and Taiwan. In the end, however, the enthusiastic groundwork on the part of Taiwan and South Korea, which strongly argued for maintaining the past ties between the members and Taiwan, worked in its favor. Consequently, the TTFA ousted one of the powers in the table tennis world, Japan. Nevertheless, it would be almost impossible for the ITTF to admit Taiwan as ROC, because China had been its member. If JTJA president Gotō promotes a creation of a new table tennis association for Asia, as is anticipated, he will face insurmountable difficulties as hard as the ones he went through during this general meeting. He should

⁵¹ Ōno, pp. 232-33; “Ajia-takkyū-renmei-sōkai.

⁵² “Taiwan mondai de no kaichō jinin” 台湾問題での会長辞任 (President [Gotō] resigns over Taiwan issue), *Asahi shinbun*, February 8, 1971; “Goto Quits, Stages 2nd Walkout,” *The Strait Times*, February 8, 1971; “Kokusai takuren Ebansu kaichō kataru” 国際卓連エバンス会長語る (ITTF President Evans speaks), *Mainichi shinbun*, February 9, 1971.

expect considerable opposition to it, including from the Japan Sports Association president and some of the officials of the JTJA itself, who fear that creation of a new association would jeopardize Japan's relations with South Korea and Taiwan."⁵³

In turn, the *Xinhua* News Agency expressed the Chinese support for Gotō's effort to remove Taiwan from the TTFA, stating: "Gotō's actions were the right ones in accordance with the ITTF Constitution." Reporter Ōno meanwhile noted: "Being confronted with the difficult choice between China and Taiwan, Gotō chose China. That was *the* first pivotal step to change the course of history. After walking out of the conference room, Gotō told me in a shaken voice that he has never received such a ruthless grilling before." One would be hard pressed to imagine the difficulties of a Japanese representative *and* president of an international organization (the TTFA this case), who was attacked by the rest of the representatives and was isolated in its international conference, where he did not speak English. Having failed to remove Taiwan from the TTFA, it appeared that Gotō had lost in the battle over the "two-Chinas" issue. Nevertheless, history proved otherwise. As Ōno put it, "Gotō's decision and determination sowed the seeds of China's participation in the Nagoya World's, which bore the fruit of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement and the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. Gotō won the battle in the end."⁵⁴

Gotō Returns Home

Upon returning to Japan on February 9, 1971, Gotō received a loud "welcome" from rightwing groups at Haneda Airport, which was under heavy guard by the police. Reporters flocked to the airport. Gotō stated at a press conference there: "The TTFA meeting was not on sports, but was on politics. Representatives of member associations brought their government officials along and had them speak at the conference. The Lebanese delegation suddenly and unexpectedly came via Taiwan. Malaysian and South Korean government officials read out loud already printed statements." Regarding the meeting in Beijing, Gotō noted the fact that influential politicians in the ruling LDP, such as Fujiyama Aiichirō 藤山愛一郎 (1897-1985) and Miki Takeo 三木武夫 (1907-88), and those engaged in Sino-Japanese trade had already accepted the "three political principles." Gotō then stated: "I accepted the 'three political principles' because I realized that it would be impossible to promote sports exchanges between China and Japan without accepting them. I argued that it was a meeting on a sports event, not on politics. I was ready to go home when the Chinese officials insisted on including the reference to Taiwan in the Outline. I stood my ground as firmly as I could and succeeded in keeping the reference to Taiwan from the Outline. This was the utmost limit I could defend in the face of the dogmatic Chinese officials in the negotiations." Gotō also noted: "If the outcome of the meeting proves unsatisfactory, I shall resign the presidency of the JTJA; however, I am confident that the Nagoya World's will be the best championships you have ever seen."⁵⁵

⁵³ "Taiwan mondai deno kaichō jinin."

⁵⁴ "Chūgoku ga Gotō kaichō no kōdō shiji" 中国が後藤会長の行動支持 (China supports JTJA President Gotō's action), *Asahi shinbun*, February 15, 1971; Ōno, p. 233.

⁵⁵ Zheng, p. 44; "Seiji sangensoku irezu ni wa Nit-Chū kōryū seiritsu senu" 政治三原則入れずには日中交流成立せぬ (Sino-Japanese exchanges are impossible without accepting three

After he returned from China, Gotō was bombarded with more threats, and police officers in plain clothes accompanied him on a 24/7 basis. It was highly unusual for the Japanese police to provide such protection to a civilian who was neither a politician nor a diplomat. Nevertheless, Gotō kept receiving intimidating mail at home and at the schools. Rightwing groups surrounded his house and schools, and shouted in front of the premises. Mori of the JTJA stated: “The police even called me and warned me not to let my children go outside after dark.”⁵⁶

Isolation of Gotō

Nevertheless, it was not only the rightwing groups that gave Gotō a hard time. As Mori noted, upon returning from China (and Singapore), he held briefing sessions with reporters in Tokyo on many occasions on behalf of Gotō, because Gotō lived in Nagoya. Mori explained the agreement between the JTJA and the CTTA to reporters and officials at many organizations, including the Ministry of Education and the Japan Sports Association. The attitude of most of them was cool at best, reflecting the Japanese government’s anti-China stance at that time. Mori wrote in 1989: “Those who are currently preaching Sino-Japanese friendship acted back then as if they were completely different people.” Muraoka adds that the Japan Sports Association was the harshest. The officials ganged up on Gotō and accused him of having appeased the Chinese government by accepting the “three political principles.”⁵⁷

Gotō’s Determination

Meanwhile, Gotō had only one and one-half months to prepare for the March 28 opening of the Nagoya World’s. Despite the intimidating threats and cold treatment from various circles, Gotō was determined to make the Nagoya World’s a success. Gotō told his staff not to worry, saying that the Taiwan issue at the TTFA would not affect the Nagoya World’s. The urgent task for the organizing committee of the Nagoya World’s was fundraising. The budget for the games was estimated to be ¥120 million (\$333,000) for the operation costs alone, excluding other expenses such as various facility fees. Yet, the Japanese government gave Gotō only ¥10 million for this major international sports event. It was extremely difficult for a single sports association (the JTJA) to cover the expenses. However, Gotō was confident, because the Chinese team was coming—he knew that a big ping-pong boom would come.⁵⁸

Gotō immediately engaged in a fundraising drive for the Nagoya World’s. Nagoya and the region surrounding this metropolis are full of entrepreneurship. The

political principles), *Asahi shinbun*, February 10, 1971; “‘Seiji’ ga kao dashi konran” 「政治」が顔出し混乱 (Intrusion of “politics” caused confusion), *Mainichi shinbun*, February 10, 1971; “Sekai ichi to taisen wa higan: Nit-Chū no kakehashi e oyakuni” 世界一と対戦は悲願: 日中の架け橋へお役に (Wish for matches with the world champion: To serve as a bridge between China and Japan), *Mainichi shinbun*, February 12, 1971.

⁵⁶ Author interviews with Gotō Haruko and Gotō Yoshiki, August 3, 2010; Mori, 220/650.

⁵⁷ Mori, p. 650; Muraoka, in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, pp. 173-74.

⁵⁸ Nakamura Kiyoshi 中村清, “Hankotsu seishin ni tsuranukareta shōgai” 反骨精神につらぬかれた生涯 (Life with anti-establishment spirit throughout), in *Gotō Kōji sensei tsuisōroku*, pp. 306-8.

headquarters of Toyota is located in a suburb of Nagoya, and there are hundreds of Toyota subcontractors in the area. The co-founder of Sony, Morita Akio 盛田昭夫 (1921-99), was from Nagoya. It is also the home of the internationally-renowned porcelain manufacturer, Noritake. Fired by Gotō's enthusiasm in the Nagoya World's, these corporations and the local newspaper *Chūnichi shinbun* 中日新聞 (which is circulated as the *Tōkyō shinbun* 東京新聞 in the eastern regions) agreed to make financial contributions. He also withdrew all of his disposable assets, including his wife's personal savings and his savings for the wedding of his youngest daughter, Yoshiko, to use them for the Nagoya World's.⁵⁹

* * *

The rest is history. China participated in the Nagoya World's and deployed "Ping-Pong Diplomacy" there, which paved the way for Sino-U.S. rapprochement. President Nixon flew to Beijing on February 21, 1972 and met Chairman Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893-1976) and Premier Zhou at the Great Hall of the People. However, one guest invited to the historic occasion was missing from the scene. Gotō died suddenly of a ruptured aortic aneurysm on January 22, 1972, at age of sixty-five. He was consumed with working on the creation of a new table tennis organization for Asia—the Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU). Owing to Gotō's groundwork, the ATTU was established in Beijing in May 1972. The ITTF executive meeting held at the Sarajevo World's in April 1973 decided to expel the TTFA, de facto acknowledging the ATTU as its legitimate subordinate organization representing Asia. The ITTF made this decision official at its biennial general meeting held at the Calcutta World's in April 1975. The ATTU has prospered to this day.⁶⁰

In conclusion, were it not for Gotō's initiative to go to Beijing and negotiate in person the terms of the Chinese participation in the Nagoya World's, China could not have participated in the world championships and Zhou could not have launched Ping-Pong Diplomacy there. As a corollary, without Gotō's decision, Nixon could not have visited China in 1972. It was Gotō's conviction and determination that made the unthinkable diplomatic breakthrough possible in 1972. For this reason, Gotō is referred to as the "father of Ping-Pong Diplomacy." To use Zheng Yueqing's analogy, Gotō, as the supreme commanding officer of the Nagoya World's, constructed the stage for a grand play, called Ping-Pong Diplomacy, in the most adverse conditions, which Zhou directed.⁶¹ Or, to quote a Japanese saying, *watari ni fune* 渡りに舟 (a ferry at the river crossing—jumping at a serendipitous chance), Gotō was the ferryman at the river. Zhou and Nixon got on the ferry and reached the shore of an open China. Zhou knew best how much Gotō had helped China by creating momentum for the Chinese comeback in the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ For the Chinese decision-making process in Ping-Pong Diplomacy at the Nagoya World's, see Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-Macro Linkage Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Zhaohui Hong and Yi Sun, "The Butterfly Effect and the Making of 'Ping-Pong Diplomacy,'" *Journal of Contemporary China* 9.25 (2000), pp. 429-48. See also: "A Brief History of ATTU," http://www.attu.org/news_about.php (January 17, 2011); "Ajia takkyū renmei o tsuihō" アジア卓球連盟を追放 ([ITTF] expels TTFA), *Asahi shinbun*, April 5, 1973.

⁶¹ Zheng, pp. 35-36, 49-50.

international community (China replaced Taiwan at the UN in October 1971) and called him a “well-digger for China”—following the Chinese saying: “He shall not forget those who dug the well when he drinks the water.” At the fortieth anniversary of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement, it is high time to set the record straight and give overdue credit to Gotō’s contributions.