

# **A National Gift View of Preparations and Practice of Panda Hunting and Panda Diplomacy in the Republic of China**

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**Abstract:** In the history of modern Chinese diplomacy, “Panda diplomacy” is the most unique way of Chinese diplomacy practices since the 1950s. Although pandas have been documented in the past dynasties of China, and archaeologists have also found a complete skull of giant pandas in the tomb of Empress Dowager Bo of the Western Han Dynasty, but this unique rare animal has not aroused our too much attention. It was not until Western naturalists and missionaries were attracted by the mysterious and peculiar regional natural scenery and human culture in the southwestern frontier, who rushed into this mysterious land to explore the world that had never been cherished, and accidentally discovered the enigmatic creature of “giant panda”, that the legendary history of the encounter between pandas and human beings for a hundred years was opened. In 1941, the giant panda was given to the United States as the highest standard of “national gift”, completing the first “panda diplomacy” in modern Chinese history. This paper will study the Preparations and practice of the first Panda Diplomacy to observe the history of pandas stepping into political waves from the deep mountains of Western Sichuan.

## **1. Introduction**

In 1941, the national government gave the giant panda to the United States as a “gift,” which was the first time the giant panda was linked to politics. On November 9, 1941, Soong May-ling, wife of Chiang Kai-shek, and Soong ai-ling presented a pair of giant pandas to the United States, namely “panda” and “pandi”. This is the beginning of giving pandas as an official gift between governments in recent history, Therefore, this is regarded as the earliest “panda diplomacy” in modern history. At that time, the news about the pair of giant pandas was published in Various national newspapers.

## **2. Organization of the Text**

### **2.1 Why Choose Panda as the National Gift**

Since the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, the two Soong sisters devoted themselves to the relief work of Chinese refugees in wartime China. During the crisis of China's national resistance against Japanese aggression, the United China Relief provided China with a large amount of medical equipment, medicine, food, and funds. The association launched a \$5 million donation campaign in March 1941, since March 1 solstice April 3, the donations up to \$14882225. Besides, the association and the China disaster relief association, which was initiated by Pearl Buck, also received a large number of donations at the same time. [1] To express her gratitude, Song May-ling presented the Autographed note to the members of the association. Besides, those who donated more than \$100 can also get one. Among them, President Roosevelt's wife is the first one to get this special gift. In addition to giving autographs, the two-song sisters are also looking for other appropriate gifts. Just then, they heard on the radio that Pandora, the only panda in the Bronx zoo in New York, had died. So, the most ideal gift for the United States would be a rare Chinese specialty, the giant panda. It reported that: The United China Relief has made great efforts to actively promote the relief work for the war refugee in China. The profound affection and friendship were well cherished. In appreciation of the association, Mrs. Jiang and Mrs. Kong gave a panda as a present.

## **2.2 Hunting and Transportation of Panda as a National Gift**

Due to the rarity of pandas and the arduous task of hunting them, the national government urgently needs the help of professionals, while David Crockett Graham, director of the Museum of West China Union University in Chengdu, was recruited to help capture the pandas. He was selected with his professional conditions. He is a member of the American Society of cultural anthropology, folklore Association, Far East Institute, Royal Geographic Society, and a lifelong member of the New York zoological society. Pandora, the panda sent to the United States, was captured by him and temporarily kept in his Huaxiba(华西坝) home. After living on the Huaxiba for two months, the giant panda under the care of professor Roy Spooner, flew from Chengdu to Chongqing, where he took a boat from Chongqing via Shanghai to Hong Kong, and finally arrived in San Francisco, the United States, on June 9, 1938. The time of receiving the task was in early September 1941, and David Crockett Graham and his team knew that September was not the season to find giant pandas. To complete this mission, “70 hunters and 40 dogs worked in seven areas” to form the “largest panda hunting activity ever”. [2] It's not easy to catch a giant panda, but eventually they bought one from local people, and another team caught one. The one was caught on a grassy slope near a hot spring on October 13, that process of hunting is rather difficult. This panda is powerful and fierce, so few people dare to approach it. finally, there are seven groups of about 100 people took a day-night encircled and captured it. The united states were excited to learn that China would give pandas as a national gift. On September 23, 1941, the American zoology association arranged John Tee-Van to Chongqing to receive pandas on behalf of the Bronx zoo. On October 24, Tee-Van arrived in Chongqing via Lashio, Burma. On October 30, he flew to Chengdu to discuss with Professor Graham on design, transportation, and breeding issues. At noon on November 6, Tee-Van and Graham escorted two pandas and flew to Chongqing from Chengdu by Chinese airplane to discuss the details of the ceremony with the Chinese side. When the pandas arrived in Chongqing, more than one hundred Chinese and foreign journalists and zoology experts flocked to the airport to watch them, and the scene was sensational. Each panda was placed in a separate wooden cage. The male one is bigger and heavier, which weighs more than sixty pounds. The female one weighs about forty-eight pounds. Both pandas are black and white with thick and long hair, and their sparkling eyes like a fierce wolf dog. Although they have four broad palms that look like a bear, their heads move like a giant cat. The two pandas struggled in their cages and were photographed from various angles by photographers. Together with the panda, they have brought more than 100 bamboos and four bags of bamboo leaves and buds, which will be planted and researched in the United States as panda feed. After Tee-Van gets off the plane, the two pandas will be transported to the “Si En Tang” (思恩堂) pastor Lei Ruipu's(雷瑞璞) residence for storage. Within a certain day, they will be flying to Hong Kong and transferred to the flight Clipper to return to the United States.

## **2.3 A Gift Ceremony as a High-Level Diplomatic Event**

When everything is ready, the panda presentation ceremony is scheduled to be held at 4:45 a.m. on November 9, 1941 in Chongqing radio tower. The time node is selected because it is 4:45 p.m. on November 8, the US time, which is in the prime time of broadcasting. According to us radio, the scheduled program is the news of the grand ball game broadcast by various US radio stations, and the audience in the United States should be excited. The United States attaches great importance to this extraordinary event. “Columbia (CBS), one of the three major national commercial radio and television networks in the United States, makes a special live broadcast.” [1] The presentation ceremony was presided over by Mrs. Jiang and Mrs. Kong in person. At the same time, a brief introduction was given by the Far East representative of the American Columbia company, William Deng. It is said that the present presentation of pandas by Mrs. Jiang and Mrs. Kong is a manifestation of friendship between China and the United States. Then, Mrs. Jiang and Mrs. Kong delivered a speech successively. After that on behalf of the New York Museum and the United China Relief, Tee-Van accepted the pandas, and in response, he affirmed that this rare and lovely gift will be greatly appreciated by the American people. New York has made all kinds of

preparations so that we can protect these two pandas very well. By way of question and answer, Tee-Van and Dr. Graham of the University of West China will elaborate on the process of hunting pandas, the situation of panda producing areas, and the habits of pandas, etc.

After the ceremony, Song Ai-ling and Song May-ling hold a tea party at the official residence, to entertain foreign guests and photographers. Chairman Chiang Kai-shek attend the ceremony. Also, Guo Taiqi(郭泰祺), Minister for foreign affairs of the Republic of China, Dong Xianguang(董显光), Deputy Minister of propaganda of the Nationalist Party, and the others attended the ceremony. The panda present ceremony planned well by the national government. Through mass media's broad coverage and coverage, it has made remarkable achievements in China and the United States, Under the difficult and special background of the war of resistance against Japan, this event is of great diplomatic significance. Panda is also regarded as a "national gift", which is presented to the United States by the government and served as a goodwill ambassador, which is of extraordinary significance too.

## **2.4 Panda Transportation to the United States and the Response from All Walks of Life**

The two pandas were taking with American Special envoy John Tee-Van left Chongqing by Air China flight at 3 p.m. on November 14, 1941, and arrived in Hong Kong that night. "I am very grateful for your kind assistance in receiving the panda in China," he said in an interview at the airport. "I visited Chongqing and Chengdu and got a good impression, And I firmly believed that China has a bright future." [1] Two days later, they flew from Hong Kong to Manila, the Philippines, and transferred to the US on the "President Coolidge" ship. Finally, A pair of pandas given by the wife of chairman Chiang Kai-shek and the wife of vice Executive Administrator Kong arrived in New York on December 30, after 30000 miles of travel, they were not affected by the war, and sent a special Christmas gift to the American people. Although the panda is still lively after a long journey, it is a lack of bamboo shoots to feed them in daily life, the zoo authorities are deeply troubled.

After the panda was transported to the United States, the domestic newspaper media continued to pay attention to the panda trends. On March 30, 1942, The United China Relief held a year-old celebration program for the pandas. People all over the United States are Warmly welcome the rare Pandas given by Mrs. Jiang, and their warm attention is unprecedented. On April 29, the association also launched the American children's naming competition with the New York society of biology. The male is called Bandi, and the female is called Banda. Their name was nominated by an 11 years old Colombian girl called Namsai. One of the prizes is a three-day trip to New York. At that time, a naming ceremony will be held for the two pandas in the Bronx Zoo. Namsai will be invited to participate in the ceremony and become the mother of the two pandas. This way of interaction has led to the surge of panda fever in the United States. A lot of American teenagers are fanatically like celebrating festivals. Especially the modern girls, decorate themselves in the form of a panda, which was all the rage for a while.

The American media also pay close attention to the pandas. Time magazine published on January 5, 1942, introduced the situation of the panda's transportation to the United States under the title of "Conveyed Panda" in the column of natural science, It refers to the very important international background of the "panda diplomacy", which has gone through a dangerous journey for the pandas, "First arrived on the west coast by way of the Pacific Ocean where Japanese submarines stormed." On the 12th of the same month, Life Weekly also titled "the first appearance of a baby giant panda at the Bronx Zoo", and listed it as one of the five theme events. These sentences are printed in the published panda photos, marked that "A baby giant panda, one of two pandas that Chinese government presented to the American children, made its first appearance at the Bronx Zoo." [1] Just a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, two major American magazines simultaneously reported the news of the Chinese panda, unintentionally spreading a picture of mutual goodwill between China and the United States.

### 3. Summary

Panda diplomacy between China and the United States in 1941, is the first “panda diplomacy” in modern Chinese history. Pandas are rare among Westerners in the Republic of China, so some Countries are constantly sending men to hunt and smuggle pandas out for profit. “The National Central Research Institute has reported that the panda production in Western Sichuan is gradually scarce due to excessive hunting if we don't ban the indiscriminate hunting in time, this precious animal will be in danger of extinction. My government will report accordingly and the other provincial authorities should also be informed immediately. On one hand, we should strictly forbid to harm and ship panda abroad, On the other hand, we should notify foreign diplomatic missions in China of that foreign organizations were not allowed to hunt without restrictions after.” [3] This time it was an innovation in the diplomatic of the national government. The attitude has changed from forbidding Westerners to hunt pandas to present panda as a national gift on our initiative. Taking the panda as a “national gift” has strengthened the understanding and interaction between the people of China and the United States in the form of official diplomatic gifts from the government, This kind of friendly diplomatic means and methods has brought a desired diplomatic effect by extensive media coverage and warm public interaction between the two countries. Finally, the national government successfully consolidated its relationship with the United States government. Especially after the Pearl Harbor incident, China continues to get help to fight alongside the United States against Japanese imperialism. The success of this “panda diplomacy” has laid the foundation for China to continue its panda diplomacy in the future. As the highest standard of “national gift”, the panda has been given the mission of “Diplomat”, This kind of diplomatic action with distinct political significance makes the gift of panda an important reference to mark the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

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