

**Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo
Speech to the Wisconsin State Senate
“State Legislatures and the China Challenge,”
Wisconsin State Capitol, Madison Wisconsin**

September 23, 2020

Good morning.

I’m glad to be back in the Midwest. Looks like we’ll be playing some Big 10 football soon...anybody happy about that?

Senate President Roger Roth, thank you for inviting me.

To all the other distinguished members of the Wisconsin state legislature, friends from the business community, and others, thank you for being here. Thank you for your commitment to this great country of ours.

I also want to welcome local representatives from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago.

And this venue, my goodness. I would say it's the most magnificent building in the state of Wisconsin, but then you'd shout me down and say no, that's Lambeau Field.

A lot of people were kidding with me before I came out here...Mike, you know Wisconsin isn't a country?

I really am here on diplomatic business...to address something that happened back in February.

As Americans across this country were dealing with the pandemic from Wuhan, worried about their lives and livelihood, an email from Wu Ting, a consul at China's consulate in Chicago, landed in Roger's inbox.

Ms. Wu stated she was "responsible for China-Wisconsin relations."

The email included a draft resolution that she asked the Senator to pass – in this chamber – praising China’s response to the coronavirus.

Let me read you a few excerpts:

“Whereas China’s action has been critical to the global fight against the epidemic, and China has adopted unprecedented and rigorous measures for disease control and prevention . . .

....Whereas China has been transparent and quick in sharing key information of the virus with the WHO and the international community... “

Roger deleted the email because he thought it was a hoax.

A few weeks later, Ms. Wu tried again, to – as she put it – “follow up.” She helpfully “attached a revised version of the proposed resolution.”

Roger wrote a one-word response: “nuts.” Solid analysis.

The Chinese Communist Party knew how virulent the coronavirus was that originated in Wuhan. They censored and disappeared courageous whistleblowers and journalists who tried to sound the alarm. They allowed people from Wuhan to travel abroad.

Ms. Wu wanted Roger to whitewash the Communist Party’s culpability for a global pandemic that’s killed more than 200,000 Americans – and nearly one million people worldwide – and sent the world economy into a tailspin.

Roger didn’t take the bait. He led the passage of a resolution that explicitly stated “the Communist Party of China deliberately and intentionally misled the world on the Wuhan Coronavirus.”

But how many of you might have corresponded with Ms. Wu? Or maybe even worked with her? Would you know what the consulate in Chicago was doing, and why?

It's an uncomfortable set of questions, but they are important to confront. Because what happened to Roger is happening in statehouses all across this great country.

And that's why I'm here today.

In February, I delivered remarks to the National Governors Association about Chinese Communist Party influence operations inside the United States. National Security Advisor O'Brien, FBI Director Wray and Attorney General Barr have all talked about the problem, too.

I know what you're thinking: Plenty of countries try to influence our politics and our culture, and there's often nothing wrong with that, Mike. True. I'm not worried about Alliance Française ("Frah-n-SAY") in Milwaukee!

The Chinese Communist Party – or “CCP” for short – is different. The CCP has a much more sinister vision of engagement. The Party and its proxies aim to make Americans receptive to Beijing’s form of authoritarianism.

Now to be clear, I say “CCP” because I want to draw a distinction between China’s leaders and the Chinese people, who just want to live in freedom, peace, and prosperity...whose vibrancy is also evident in the many Chinese-American communities wonderfully woven into the fabric of America.

Let me give you another data point on the CCP’s aims.

In August, the General Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping, told a group of government economists and sociologists in Beijing, “We must actively develop cooperation with all countries, regions and enterprises willing to

cooperate with us, including states, localities and enterprises in the United States.”

As Secretary of State and the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, allow me to translate.

Xi knows that the federal government is pushing back against the CCP’s malign influence. He sees that here in the U.S., and increasingly, around the world. General Secretary Xi thinks you’re the weak link.

For him, “cooperation” and “opening-up” means the CCP wants to create arrangements that only benefit the CCP. We know that because for decades, the CCP deployed friendly language while stealing from our innovators, building military strength, and co-opting our elites.

Later in that same speech, General Secretary Xi in fact explicitly confirmed that the purpose of his entreaties is to put China “in an undefeatable and invincible position.”

The Chinese Communist party views itself as the true vanguard of Marxist-Leninist Thought, which proposes that communist countries like theirs must struggle – and prevail – against capitalist nations like ours.

This isn't the Cold War. It's different in kind. The CCP's effort is more sophisticated, multi-layered, and nuanced.

That's why we have to have a conversation in our state legislatures about this China challenge. It's as important in Wisconsin as it is in Washington.

The good news is that we're starting to have these conversations, and not a moment too soon.

CCP campaigns targeting state-level officials, and local interests, have been in full swing for years, and they're increasing in intensity.

Much of that activity revolves around pressuring state governments not to recognize, trade with, or otherwise engage with Taiwan.

But that's not all. In 2017, a California state senator proposed a bill merely expressing support for Falun Gong practitioners in America and in China. These are the folks who have suffered so tremendously under the CCP's crackdowns on religious freedom.

The Chinese consulate in San Francisco responded by writing a letter to the state legislature, denouncing Falun Gong as an "evil cult," and claiming the bill might, "deeply damage the cooperative relations between the State of California and China, and seriously hurt the feeling of Chinese people and the vast Chinese community in California."

Unfortunately, the California State Senate bowed to the CCP pressure campaign and shelved the proposed bill.

That's just one example. The reality is that most every state legislature in the country has probably received a letter from the CCP like Senator

Roth's... as part of coordinated propaganda campaigns. The Chinese consulate in New York, for instance, is very politically active.

Then there is the next level down – CCP influence and espionage campaigns at the municipal and city level.

Just this week, the Department of Justice charged an NYPD officer and Army reservist with allegedly acting as an illegal agent of China. He is accused of reporting on the activities of Tibetans living in the United States back to the CCP. He even provided CCP officials with access to senior-level NYPD personnel through invitations to official events. He told his handler that officials in Beijing, “should be happy...because you have stretched your reach into the police.”

And all over America, Chinese sister-city programs – like the ones in Door County, La Crosse, Milwaukee, and Richland Center – fall under the authority of something called the Chinese People's Association of Friendship with Foreign Countries. That group is part of China's United

Front Work Department – the CCP’s official overseas propaganda tool. It’s one of the CCP’s three “Magic Weapons,” in the words of Chairman Mao, along with “armed struggle” and “party-building.” In other words, it’s not so friendly to American interests.

The federal government can’t police every bit of this predatory and coercive behavior, and the beauty of our American federal system is that we don’t have to. Protecting American interests requires vigilance, starting with you – and all state legislators, regardless of party.

Know that when you are approached by a Chinese diplomat, it is likely not in the spirit of true cooperation or friendship.

Know that if you are offered a trip to China when pandemic travel restrictions are lifted, you should ask who is paying for that trip, and if they are linked – directly or indirectly – to the CCP.

Know that these approaches could happen from Chinese nationals or Americans working with CCP-linked interests.

When you're in your districts, alert local officials, too.

And there's a lot you can do in this very chamber:

- You can pass laws to codify closer cooperation with federal agencies in IP protection, investment screening, and counter-infiltration operations.
- You can ignore CCP threats, and encourage mayors and businesspeople to engage with a free and democratic Taiwan.
- As I told the nation's governors, you can scrutinize your state pension funds. As of its last public report, the Wisconsin Retirement System is invested in China Mobile and China Telecom. Both are state-owned giants that are an integral part of

China's Orweillian surveillance system. Do you want your teachers, firefighters, and policemen invested in those kind of activities?

- You can also work to ensure your state colleges aren't improperly influenced by CCP-linked organizations like the Confucius Institutes, and that pro-democracy students from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan studying in Wisconsin aren't harassed and threatened by pro-Beijing elements on campus.

Telling the truth about China isn't partisan. It's principled. And it protects our people.

Remember Ms. Wu at the consulate?

On April 2nd, she forwarded a letter from her husband, the Consul General in Chicago, to the District Director of a great Wisconsin Congressman, Mike Gallagher.

The letter is full of CCP propaganda and disinformation about the pandemic, just like the one to Senator Roth.

But what really caught my eye was her declaration, “We are firmly opposed to racial discrimination and xenophobia against the local Chinese community and stigmatization of China and the Chinese people over the virus.”

America’s righteous anger at the CCP over its handling of the coronavirus has nothing to do with race, and everything to do with citizens dead, children kept from school, and jobs lost. The CCP knows this.

The CCP thinks it can drown out American cries for accountability with shouts of racism.

It wants to foment the kind of strife we've seen in Minneapolis, and Portland, and Kenosha.

That's disgusting. We can't let that happen.

And we won't. I'm always an optimist about America.

Beijing's best-laid plans are no match for American determination.

The Trump Administration rejects the idea Beijing is destined for hegemony. No top-down totalitarian regime can ever best the ingenuity, will, and power of the American people.

We know our system is more attractive to others. We don't force allies to heel; they join with us freely because they know we stand for freedom.

We won't allow the CCP to interfere in our domestic politics. We've put restrictions on Chinese diplomats that mirror the ones American diplomats are subject to inside China.

We confirm American business is successful above all because of its moral standards. We've warned our businesses and universities to make sure they aren't unwittingly supporting the mass human rights abuses happening in Xinjiang province right now.

We won't roll over for Beijing to steal its way to the top. Right now the FBI opens a China-related IP theft case about every 10 hours. We just revoked visas for more than 1,000 Chinese nationals suspected of raiding our intellectual property on university campuses.

We'll protect our kids from the CCP's malign influence. We've formally designated the Confucius Institute's U.S. headquarters as a foreign mission, and encouraged universities to shutter their doors quickly.

And right now the State Department is reviewing the activities of two United Front Work Department organizations operating in the United States: the U.S.-China Friendship Association and the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification.

Our concerns include their apparent attempts to exert influence on groups across the public sphere, including schools, business associations, local politicians, media outlets, and Chinese diaspora groups.

The Trump Administration is fighting to protect our wallets, hearts, minds, and our freedoms.

We public officials cannot be complacent in the CCP's campaign to fracture American society, and silence American voices.

Every one of us must stand up for our sovereignty, and for American values themselves.

Democrat or Republican, you have a friend in the Trump Administration to help you push back against the CCP's exploitation of our open society.

Let's do this together, for the American people, and the future of our great democracy.

Thank you.

God bless you.

God bless the state of Wisconsin.

And God bless America.