

## Obama speech censored in China

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BBC News, Beijing

**China has censored parts of the new US president's inauguration speech that have appeared on a number of websites.**

Live footage of the event on state television also cut away from Barack Obama when communism was mentioned.

China's leaders appear to have been upset by references to facing down communism and silencing dissent.

English-language versions of the speech have been allowed on the internet, but many of the Chinese translations have omitted sensitive sections.

### Selective editing

China keeps a firm grip on the country's media outlets and censors their news reports as a matter of routine.

Like the rest of the world, it has been keenly following developments in the United States; President Obama's inauguration was front page news.

But the authorities seem not to want ordinary Chinese people to read the full, unexpurgated version of the president's speech.

In his inauguration address, President Obama said: "Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions."

That entire passage was retained for an English-language version of the speech that appeared on the website of state-run Xinhua news agency.

But in the Chinese-language version, the word "communism" was taken out.

President Obama's comments addressed to world leaders who "blame their society's ills on the West" also fell foul of the censor's red pen.

"To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history," the president said.

Once again, Xinhua included the passage in full in its English version, but the sentence was taken out of the Chinese translation.

Similar changes were made to versions of the speech that appeared on other websites based in China.

And websites were not the only media organisations that struggled to report some of the comments made by President Obama.

China Central Television, the country's main broadcaster, aired the speech live with a simultaneous Chinese translation.

But when the translator got to the part where President Obama talked about facing down communism, her voice suddenly faded away.

The programme suddenly cut back to the studio, where an off-guard presenter had to quickly ask a guest a question.

Censoring sensitive news reports is nothing new in China, where officials go to great lengths to cut critical material.

These officials appear a little nervous about the arrival of a new US President, who might not be as friendly to China as President George W. Bush.

As an editorial in the state-run China Daily put it: "Given the popular American eagerness for a break from the Bush years, many wonder, or worry to be precise, whether the new president would ignore the hard-earned progress in bilateral ties."

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/7841580.stm>

Published: 2009/01/21 11:45:51 GMT

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