

CHINA RIVALING BRITISH IN CRACKDOWN ON CRITICAL JOURNALISM

The American press is (rightly) outraged by the news that Chinese officials showed up unannounced to “inspect” Bloomberg’s Chinese bureaus.

In what appears to be a conspicuous show of displeasure, Chinese authorities conducted unannounced “inspections” at Bloomberg News bureaus in Beijing and Shanghai in the final days of November, *Fortune* has learned. The visits followed media reports that Bloomberg cancelled a year-long investigation on financial ties between a Chinese billionaire and government officials.

[snip]

Details of the inspections, conducted on the same day at the news bureaus in Beijing and Shanghai, are sketchy. It’s unclear how many officials were present or what government agency they represented. Different sources say, variously, that the visits were characterized as “security inspections” or “safety inspections.” But journalists inside Bloomberg view the appearance by civil government officials (they weren’t police) as an act of intimidation—precisely the reaction Bloomberg was eager to avoid.

And David Cameron told his Chinese hosts he was unhappy that Bloomberg reporter Robert Hutton was excluded from a joint press conference with him and Li Keqiang.

Downing Street has protested to the Chinese authorities about a “completely

inappropriate" decision to bar a British journalist from a press conference in Beijing with David Cameron and his Chinese counterpart, Li Keqiang.

No 10 raised "deep concerns" on two occasions with Chinese officials after the foreign ministry excluded Robert Hutton, a political journalist with the US wire service Bloomberg, from the event at the Great Hall of the People on Monday.

Really, though, Cameron might have instead offered the Chinese tips about how satisfying it is to force a transnational journalistic outlet to destroy its hard drives with a power drill when shadowy figures show up in the name of "security." For all the outrage directed at China, after all, the UK is not above aggressive censorship of damning information about its own government.

While the home of the Magna Carta chooses to use such persecution when a newspaper threatens to expose that it is really a surveillance state, the "Communist" leaders in China need to squelch stories of their own enrichment and corruption. But both are engaged in a similar paranoid suppression of news stories that goes to the heart of the fictions mobilized to rationalize their rule.

Which makes it rather telling that the Chinese example is getting so much more attention.