

Trump's 'Enemy of the People' Rhetoric Has Led to Police Assaults on Reporters

Maybe you have seen the footage of TV reporters and their crews being targeted and even arrested while covering the demonstrations and rioting which followed the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer.

I'm waiting for someone to suggest that assaults by police officers on reporters displaying press credentials is the logical and inevitable result of President Trump's declaring that the mainstream media are the "enemy of the people."

As a long-time journalist myself, the CNN program "**Reliable Sources**" (Sunday at 9 a.m.) is a must-watch for me, and their nightly email newsletter is a must-read. You can subscribe to it at cnn.it/Reliable.

Here's an excerpt from the Tuesday, June 2nd, Reliable Sources newsletter:

The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker [says](#) it has counted 211 "press freedom violations" since the start of the George Floyd protests, which in some cases have led to riots. The group's records show "33+ arrests, 143 assaults (118 by police, 25 by others), 35 equipment/newsroom damage."

This huge total # of infringements is partly a reflection of the sheer scope of the unrest... but it also an indication of something sinister at work. Many of the affected journalists have said they felt targeted. Tuesday's letter to Minnesota authorities ad-

dressed that: "In every case that we are aware of, there are strong indications that officers knew the journalist was a member of the press."

Words matter, especially from the President of the United States. Since 32% of the general population is Trump's "base," which accepts as truth what their "great leader" says, it only makes sense that 32% of police officers, more or less, are part of his base, too, and have blindly accepted Trump's statement that journalists (except from Fox News, of course) are the enemy of the people. It makes sense that *some* of those pro-Trump police officers would feel justified in attacking a journalist who embeds himself or herself in a demonstration. It only makes sense that a paramilitary officer would feel justified in attacking or arresting an "enemy of the people."

We saw this same dynamic at work earlier in Trump's reign. His anti-immigrant and anti-minority "dog whistles" emboldened white supremacists and other alt-right members to come out of hiding and participate openly and blatantly in such demonstrations as the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, where they carried torches and chanted "Jews Will Not Replace Us!" These people always existed in society, but it was only when the President of the United States started "speaking their language" that they felt comfortable making their feelings known.

I mentioned the Charlottesville rally in last week's "Talking Turkey" column and got several emails and a few letters from Trump supporters, one of whom made a point of defending Trump's statement that there were "many fine people" among the alt-right and white supremacist demonstrators. Here's a paragraph from Jane W.'s email:

When you refer to the statement about "many fine people" during the Alt right and Antifa demonstrators' in Charlottesville what do you think these peoples' "day jobs" were? These demonstrators may have carried around their "torches" when they were demonstrating – but probably were wearing business suits and holding very important positions and jobs in their communities ([fine people](#) to those that work with them and know them—they probably don't know their "dark" side)? I would bet that among these demonstrators there were upstanding citizens in their communities, maybe they were leaders, business men, church goers, PTA officers, teachers, city council members – [fine people](#) respected by their communities when they are living their daily lives. (Remember the democrats KKK when very prominent men would dress up and terrorize and kill colored people – wearing hoods, of course so they were not recognized, but undoubtedly considered "fine people" when their robe and hood was off.)

Yes, and some of them may have been police officers -- very fine police officers, when among fellow white people. And that's the problem, isn't it?



Talking Turkey



By JIM SMITH