Gaslighting the Press

from Glenn Reynolds at Instapundit,

> *So things will change. The press's "insider" status – which it cherishes – is going to fade. (This is producing waves of status anxiety, as are many other Trump-induced institutional changes). And, having abandoned, quite openly, any pretense of objectivity and neutrality in the election, the press is going to be treated as an enemy by the Trump Administration until further notice.*
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> *In fact, Trump's basically gaslighting them. Knowing how much they hate him, he's constantly provoking them to go over the top. Sean Spicer's crowd-size remarks are all about making them seem petty and negative. (And, possibly, teeing up crowd-size comparisons at next week's March For Life, which the press normally ignores but which Trump will probably force them to cover).*
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> *Trump knows that the press isn't trusted very much, and that the less it's trusted, the less it can hurt him. So he's prodding reporters to do things that will make them less trusted, and they're constantly taking the bait. They're taking the bait because they think he's dumb, and impulsive, and lacking self-control – but he's the one causing them to act in ways that are dumb and impulsive, and demonstrate lack of self-control. As Richard Fernandez writes on Facebook, they think he's dumb because they think he has lousy taste, but there are a lot of scarily competent guys out there in the world who like white and gold furniture. And, I should note, Trump has more media experience than probably 99% of the people covering him. (As Obama operative Ben Rhodes gloated with regard to selling a dishonest story on the Iran deal, the average reporter the Obama White House dealt with "is 27 years old, and their only reporting experience consists of being around political campaigns." In*

Rhodes' words, "they literally know nothing.")

The counter-move for the press isn't to double down on anti-Trump messaging. The counter-move is to bolster its own trustworthiness by acting more neutral and sober, and by being more trustworthy. If the news media actually focused on reporting facts accurately and straightforwardly, on leaving opinion to the pundits, and on giving Trump a clearly fair shake, then Trump's tactics wouldn't work, and any actual dirt they found on him would do actual damage. He's betting on the press being insufficiently mature and self-controlled to manage that. So far, his bet is paying off.