

Dark Side Of Nixon's White House

Washington

A psychiatrist on the White House staff from 1971 to 1973 says the inner group around Richard M. Nixon deeply mistrusted the motives of other people, viewed concern for people's feelings as a character flaw and could not respect loyal opposition or dissent.

"Dissent and disloyalty were concepts that were never sufficiently differentiated in their minds," said Dr. Jerome H. Jaffe. "That really was the tragic part. To dissent was to be disloyal. That is the theme that recurred again and again."

Jaffe was director of the White House Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention and served as special consultant to the President for narcotics and dangerous drugs. He now is chief of psychiatric research at New York State Psychiatric Institute and is professor of psychiatry at Columbia University.

His views of his White House years appear in an interview published in *Psychiatric News*, a publication of the American Psychiatric Association. Jaffe said he was not speaking as a psychiatrist but just as someone who had been there.

He said the White House environment was ruthless and there was pride in its ruthlessness.

"The administration admired people who could be cold and dispassionate in making personnel decisions," Jaffe said.

"To make concessions to people's feelings, to recognize that a particular objective was not worth destroying people in the process of its attainment, was not something that elicited any admiration. Such a Concern was viewed as a fatal flaw."

Jaffe said he remembered the day when Egil Krogh, an assistant to John Erlichman, was assigned to set up what came to be called the plumbers unit, which, among other things, broke into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

"He was with me that day, looking troubled as we drove away from San Clemente," Jaffe told *Psychiatric News*. "He never told me what it was that troubled him. He was so impressed with the importance of his assignment and its utmost importance for national security and the need for secrecy."

"If only he had felt that I could be sufficiently trusted maybe that whole break-in episode might have been avoided. But at no point did the inner White House group ever feel sufficiently comfortable with outsiders to take them really into their confidence," Jaffe said.

"That was really the irony of the whole situation. They deeply distrusted the motives of other people and were unable to believe that people could rise above selfish motives."

Jaffe also told *Psychiatric News*: "Behind all of what they did was the idea that the people of the Nixon administration could accomplish something. They were not entirely selfish people."

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