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Kennedy's Eggheads Prove Valuable -- But Pros Still Run U.S.

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WASHINGTON — One of President Kennedy's brain-trusters read a chiding comment about eggheadism in government and wistfully retorted, "they forget that I was a soldier before I became a professor."



If he felt compelled to avow his credentials as a practical man of affairs, he knew that his critics were flailing at a stereotype and a myth.

True, the professors have been restored to grace in the Kennedy administration. But contrary to a creeping myth, they have not usurped the roles of the professional bureaucrats and politicians who make the wheels of government move.

The real levers of power still are held by the department heads, the cabinet officers with previous experience as governors, lawyers, wall street bankers, automobile executives and congressmen.

In fact, in the Cuban misadventure that stirred up a latent anti-intellectualism in the country, the Ivy League advisers to the President were perhaps the least implicated group in town.

The Cuban venture was in custody of the same military and intelligence professionals who handled it under the Eisenhower administration, which was not noted for its affinity with the academic community, even though it was headed by a former president of Columbia University.

President Kennedy's respect for the scholars around him has, if anything, been increased, not diminished. Ironically, the chief criticism of the professors in the White House mail has come from their former colleagues on the campus, motivated, either by frustration or envy or an inbred passion for dissent.

Harvard Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., for example, was burned in effigy in Cambridge in protest over the Cuban episode, a doubly ironic twist inasmuch as Schlesinger opposed the invasion attempt and won the President's admiration for saying so to advance and then lining up like a good soldier to take his lumps with the rest.

Walt W. Rostow, the versatile Massachusetts Institute of Technology authority on economic history and diplomacy, had nothing to do with Cuba.

MacGeorge Bundy, former dean of the Harvard faculty (a Yale man, incidentally), knew what was going on as the national security specialist in the White House but was no match for Allen Dulles and the joint chiefs of staff in the decision-making.

The notion that Schlesinger, Rostow and Bundy are resigning lagers, whispering mischief in the President's ear, is silly. It demeans the powerful, policy-formulating roles of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Treasury — Dean Rusk,

Robert McNamara and Douglas Dillon and other cabinet satchems.

The White House advisers ride herd on a variety of ap-

cial tasks for the President and serve as a magnet of ideas throughout the government. They contribute raw material to the creation of policy. But they are not in business for themselves.

Ever since the Roosevelt era, the so-called braintruster has been in bad odor, often pictured

as an impractical visionary, a pipe-smoking exile from the Ivy Tower, a bungler and a fool. It was patent nonsense then, it still is, only more so.

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