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DENVER, COLO.
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S. 352,306

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NOV 21 1965

Facts Would Clarify Dominican Debate

WE don't know with whom the fault lies — or whether it is anyone's exclusive burden — but the American people are being cheated in the handling of facts on the rebellion in the Dominican Republic.

It's not only a case of "managed news" on the part of the Johnson administration but also on the part of the administration's enemies.

When the Dominican revolt broke out last April, President Johnson sent in American Marines, later supplemented by an inter-American peace force. The reason announced first was to protect American lives; later the President said the revolt was directed by Communists from Cuba and needed to be forestalled.

Both contentions have been challenged, most notably by Sen. J. W. Fulbright, D-Ark., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Fulbright, for reasons not entirely clear, has fallen into a bitter personal feud with Thomas Mann, President Johnson's chief adviser on Latin America and a principle architect of U.S. intervention in the Dominican revolt.

We don't know precisely how great the Communist involvement was in Santo Domingo in April. Apparently it was fairly substantial. But was it substantial enough to warrant U.S. intervention? Here's where the question gets sticky.

This is also where the war of "managed news" (or propaganda) gets hottest. Argument involves testimony taken after the Dominican affair by Senator Fulbright's committee.

The State Department says the Foreign Affairs Committee agreed that State Department testimony was to be secret by mutual agreement.

But on Nov. 13, information reported to be actual testimony before Fulbright's group, appeared on page one of the New York Times. Invidious quotes concerning rebel leader Juan Bosch were attributed to Thomas Mann.

About the same time, other testimony leaks claimed the CIA had evidence Bobby Baker, the much-investigated U.S. Senate aide, had had financial dealings with supporters of Bosch.

THE administration, almost as if dueling back, now has put forth a State Department paper detailing Communist involvement in the April revolt and detailing the actions of Cuban Communists.

It's hard to make conclusions from these conflicts of evidence. The American public is being bombarded with two different points of view while the full story is being suppressed.

Originally, concealing soiled linen—if that is what it is — may have been wise. Giving Communist propagandists delicate information to distort is dubious at a time of crisis.

But we wonder, now, if suppression is still wise. Part of the testimony apparently has leaked out. We cannot tell if it is fair and unbiased unless we see the whole report.

It's possible that disclosure wouldn't settle the issue. But all the facts would be on the table and the ensuing debate would at least be an honest one in the best traditions of representative government.