

The Angry Hangover

By JAMES RESTON

PHOENIX, Ariz., Oct. 28—The net of the China debate for President Nixon is that he has lost influence in the world and picked up popularity at home. This paradox is worth examining.

His pressure tactics at the United Nations in gathering votes for Taiwan, faithfully carried out by Ambassador George Bush, were deplorable and self-defeating. We now know what is meant in diplomacy by a bush-league operation, but let's face it: tough talk and rough tactics against other nations find a lot of sympathy in the United States today, and President Nixon now is standing higher in the popularity polls than he has for several months.

The burdens of the last 25 years overseas, the disappointments and tragedies of Vietnam, and the failure of our allies to carry their fair share of the financial load—to say nothing of their related social and economic problems at home—have produced a mood of disenchantment and even bitterness about the cost and complexity of world affairs.

The hostile reaction to the U.S. defeat in the China debate is only the latest symbol of this wider and deeper feeling of weariness and resentment at the price of American leadership in the world, and it will have to be handled with much more skill and sensitivity than the President demonstrated in the U.N. debate if it is not to lead to a major assault on the defense budget, the foreign aid program and the reorganization of the world's security, monetary and trade systems.

Not many Senators are likely to follow Barry Goldwater's advice that we should get out of the U.N. and kick it out of this country, for obviously this would turn the world organization over to the Communists and transform it into a powerful anti-American coalition.

Nor are we going to see a revival of the old discredited isolationist policy in the United States, for, aside from any other reasons, the U.S. now has vast industrial and commercial interests all over the world that cannot be protected by a policy of angry retreat.

But the mood of frustration at a time when the President is trying to make a careful and necessary re-

appraisal of our over-extended world commitments could easily compel him to pull away too far and in the process weaken the United States and threaten the delicate balance of power in the world.

Even the most casual analysis of Communist objectives will demonstrate that what they want more than anything else, have always wanted since the last World War, is the reduction of U.S. involvement in the world, and if possible the return of American isolationism.

This is the paradox of the present mood of disillusionment, for the angry minorities that want to get out of the U.N. or cut deeply into our defense budget and security commitments are proposing precisely what Moscow, and to a lesser extent Peking, would like to see. There is another danger in the present tough attitude of the Administration toward those who oppose its economic and political policies—particularly toward Japan and the Common Market countries. This is that these countries are not about to take the blame for what they regard as Washington's own blunders in Vietnam and elsewhere or for any mishandling of Washington's own economy, and they are now just powerful and independent enough to reject Washington's pressures and resent its self-righteous demands.

Besides, it is not at all clear that the U.N. hurt the U.S. or itself by rejecting Mr. Nixon's advice on Taiwan. Henry Kissinger, the President's security aide, is back from Peking saying there is now "an opportunity to make a new beginning" in the relations between the United States and China. One wonders how good that opportunity would have been if Mr. Nixon had succeeded in keeping Taiwan, a province of China, in the world organization with a separate Government against Peking's determination to unify that country.

It is easy to understand, then, the emotional outburst and the isolationist threats that followed the expulsion of Taiwan, but there are now great issues of world policy to be discussed and if the U.N. debate proved anything, it demonstrated that the U.S. is no longer in a position to pressure other nations—even its closest allies—into doing what they think is against their own national interests and the interests of world stability.