

Most of the World Reacts to Ford as Unknown Quantity

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Ford was received by most of the world yesterday as an unknown personality who was welcomed because he filled a troubling vacuum in distracted American leadership.

The departure of President Nixon evoked regret in many capitals caustic criticism to others, and gloating from a few, notably Hanoi and Havana. Mr. Nixon's fall from power particularly caused some apprehension in Arab nations, which had hailed his even-handed policy in the Middle East, and more uneasiness in South Vietnam, where a general military alert was ordered as a precaution against heavier Communist attacks.

President Ford's swift assurance that Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger would maintain the continuity of American foreign policy, however, generally achieved its intended calming purpose. The transfer of control in the White House, dramatic news in almost every world capital, directly affects national interests across the globe.

Several Western leaders publicly commended the example of the American system's ability to emerge from the Watergate-impeachment tumult with its democracy intact. Danish Prime Minister Poul Hartling said, "Only in a society with a free press and a strong sense of justice it is possible to experience a political development as the one the world has now witnessed."

There were no jarring sounds from either Moscow or Peking as the United

States changed presidents.

The Soviet Union, which had braced itself for insulation from Mr. Nixon's fate by emphasizing that U.S.-Soviet detente policy transcends personalities, told its people yesterday, in explaining who the new President is:

"Gerald Ford has spoken in favor of normalization in Soviet-American relations and has positively evaluated the results of the Soviet-American summit talks."

China, in a Peking broadcast, reported the change in the American presidency without comment, but noted that Mr. Nixon said in his farewell address: "We have unlocked the doors that for a quarter of a century stood between the United States and the People's Republic of China."

From Peking, John Burns of The Toronto Globe and Mail reported:

"Although Mr. Nixon was heralded during his February, 1972, visit as the man

who had abandoned the 20-year-old U.S. policy of isolating and containing China, senior officials intimated in their private remarks to diplomats then and since that they regarded Henry Kissinger as the real architect of the turnabout in Washington's attitude."

Kissinger plans to visit China this fall. Diplomats from China as well as the

Soviet Union and other nations were given assurances by Kissinger at the White House yesterday that basic U.S. foreign policy will remain unchanged.

Within six months, power has changed hands in four principal Western nations: Britain, West Germany, France and now the United States. As a result, President Ford, while the least experienced of all, will be dealing with an essentially new constellation of Western leaders.

Many national leaders yesterday sent friendship messages to both President Ford and Mr. Nixon. Some also publicly expressed deep regret over the former President's departure.

"I think it's a shame," said Peruvian President Juan Velasco Alvarado, the army general who has ruled Peru for six years, "because Nixon gave himself for his country."

"We don't forget," said former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in a statement, recalling that Mr. Nixon sent an airlift to Israel during the Arab-Israeli war last October. "He has been a faithful friend and had done great things to strengthen the country."

"If Kissinger was resigning," said one Israeli official privately, "it would be an earthquake. But Nixon's departure is not likely to have a major impact on Israel."

Many Arab nations, however, openly expressed concern that President Ford, an outspoken supporter of Israel, might tilt U.S. policy in a more pro-Israel direction during current, critical negotiations for a durable peace in the Middle East.

Arab nations must rely on "their own strength" while waiting to see if American policy shifts under President Ford, said Lebanese Prime Minister Takieddin Solh. A Jordanian newspaper, Ad-Dustur, said: "The continuation of the Nixon policy on the Arab question is in the balance."

From Havana Radio came a bitter condemnation of Mr. Nixon as "a personal enemy of Cuba and its revolution . . . who has drowned in the dirty waters of Watergate."