

A cordial welcome and a stern warning

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DAMASCUS — Flying in through an unintended security scare that caused tense moments aboard his presidential jet, President Nixon yesterday got a cordial welcome to Damascus, followed by the toughest lecture he has yet heard on the Arab requirements for Middle East peace from Syria's President Hafez Assad.

He had come from Saudi Arabia whose King Faisal too had emphasized Palestinians' wrongs and the problem of Moslem holy places in Jerusalem. But Faisal had added an extraordinary word of praise for the President and a warning to "anybody who stands against you." in the United States and out, as having "one aim in mind, namely the splintering of the world . . ."

Assad greeted Nixon with formal honors upon Air Force One's arrival at this third Middle East tour stop, rode with him through throngs of applauding citizens in the heavily-guarded capital, and then bluntly stated in an evening dinner speech what it will take to establish peace in the region.

"The only lasting and durable peace would be a peace that would terminate Israeli occupation, restore

the land to its (Palestinian) people, remove the grievances inflicted upon the people of Palestine and ensure them of their legitimate national rights," he said.

Palestinians "despair of the justice of man and international organizations," As-

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sad said, specifically blaming Israel.

"They (the Israelis) have forced the Palestinian people to follow a path not of

their own choice in order to remind the world of their existence, of their case," he said, referring to guerrilla action.

"No peace can be established in this region, unless a real and just solution is found for the Palestine question."

Assad also praised U.S. initiatives in attempting to mediate peace and Nixon responded, as he had to President Sadat of Egypt and King Faisal that he had "no instant solutions."

"You have indicated your concern about such matters as the Palestinians which we of course understand, your borders which we of course understand and your concern for other matters," Nixon said.

He said he and Assad today would "explore in greater detail all of the factors involved in the problems you have touched on tonight.

"I can simply state tonight that we do not consider the first step (the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement) to be the last step," he said. "It is a beginning and a good beginning."

Nixon said that a cultural exchange program with Syria was being re-established. But neither he nor Assad mentioned the resumption of diplomatic ties broken by Syria in the 1967 Middle East war. Syria has had close ties with the Soviet Union.

Earlier both United States and Syrian sources had said restoring of diplomatic ties would be set in motion during the visit.

American flags flew in this capital for the first time since 1967 for Nixon's arrival as the first American president ever to come here.

He received a hearty handshake from Assad.

Syrian officials first esti-

but did not show any of the frenzy of the millions of Egyptians at the start of the tour.

Nixon had given Saudi Arabia a promise of more military aid as he wound up his 24-hour visit in Jidda yesterday and King Faisal called on Americans to stand behind the chief executive in what the monarch described as his "almost unprecedented" quest for peace.

Faisal gave praise for Nixon's efforts to overcome "the problems and the blemishes that seem to mar the relationship between the United States and some Arab countries."

The King appeared to be referring to Watergate and the impeachment proceedings in Washington against Nixon when he said:

"But what is very important is that our friends in the United States of America be themselves wise enough to stand behind you, to rally around you, Mr. President, in your noble efforts, almost

unprecedented efforts in the history of mankind, the efforts aimed at securing peace and justice in the world."

"Anybody who stands against you in the United States of America or outside the United States, Mr. President, or stands against us, your friends, in this part of the world, obviously has one aim in mind, namely the splintering of the world, the wrong polarization of the world, the bringing about of mischief, which would not

be conducive to tranquility and peace in the world."

A senior White House official said when asked if he thought the King was referring to Watergate: "We would not want to characterize the King's remarks. He spoke very eloquently for himself."