

THE KREMLIN very much wants a summit with President Nixon. That much is clear from its decision to grant the President two conspicuous hours in the company of their own "president," Mr. Podgorny, while the two were in Paris for the funeral of Georges Pompidou. Take away the time for translation and pleasantries, and two hours is very little. The two men conducted only a "tour of the horizon," touching all bases briefly—a formula precluding any real negotiating even if Mr. Podgorny were a Kremlin negotiator, which he is not. The Secretary of State, moreover, wasn't there.

General Haig went even further. Alluding to American press reports about the supposedly disappointing results of Dr. Kissinger's last trip to Moscow, he said it was also clear from the Nixon-Podgorny meeting that "Soviet leaders were pleased with the progress of discussions" conducted by Dr. Kissinger. It had already been known from grumbling in the Soviet press that the Kremlin, as well as the White House, wished to chase the sour taste left by the Kissinger trip. It was an extra fillip for Mr. Podgorny and Mr. Nixon to serve the same purpose.

In Soviet-American annals, there have been few stranger spectacles than to see Mr. Nixon and his ostensible adversaries in the Kremlin joining hands in order to keep the June summit on track. But there it is. It is, in brief, a vivid demonstration of Soviet interest in dealing with Richard Nixon. The Russians cannot be oblivious to the domestic uses to which a beleaguered President can put such a demonstration. Indeed, this particular sort of exploitation is already under way. Speaking to reporters on the way home from Paris, General Haig and Ronald Ziegler played a veritable symphony on the theme that the Nixon-Brezhnev talk proved the continuing viability of the Nixon presidency.

This is, of course, not so. That the Russians are so avidly interested in dealing with Richard Nixon, however, sharpens the question of why. Is it because they consider him a soft touch? The possibility cannot be excluded. We assume Mr. Nixon would keep a sharp eye out for it. Most Americans, we believe, would sooner have Mr. Nixon make no further agreements with the Rus-

sians, than make a bad one. We would hope the Russians understand American politics sufficiently to know that any effort to exploit Mr. Nixon could badly backfire on them. One cannot be sure.

There is, though, another possibility and one which in our common anxiety and uncertainty, we should not exclude either. That is simply that the Russians, having made a basic policy decision to test detente with Mr. Nixon, wish to go on with it. They could have decided that Mr. Nixon would be more immune than a "liberal" to domestic political attack from the right, and that he is a stable and mature figure with whom they could work out a new post-cold war relationship serving their economic needs on the one hand and balancing off the pressure from China on the other. They—or the detente faction apparently led by Mr. Brezhnev—could have decided this was an opportune if not an essential moment to slow the arms race. We do not say these are the only things on the Kremlin's mind, but they could be there.

It is objectionable to watch Mr. Nixon struggling to save his presidency by converting his foreign policy so transparently into a domestic instrument. It has its own risks for him, and for the country. But we would not like his foreign policy—which is, after all, the nation's foreign policy—to have to fail if a moment for a better more stable relationship with the Russians is in fact at hand. That is why the complexities, including the possibly hopeful aspects, of the Russians' own outlook must be weighed.

As for the Russians, they have just taken out insurance of sorts on the vagaries of American politics. Having openly rebuffed Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), the Democratic presidential hopeful they would least like to see in the White House, they have just invited to Moscow Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), another hopeful who represents for them a more palatable option. As in their approaches to Mr. Nixon, their invitation to Sen. Kennedy carries its own ambiguities. They can see, however, that Sen. Kennedy is plainly interested in equipping himself, by means of a Moscow visit, to become a substantial "liberal" critic of both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Jackson in foreign policy. Their invitation to the Senator suggests a long-term interest of their own.