

Nixon's Russia trip still 'go'

By William Theis
Examiner Correspondent

WASHINGTON — It's not a "great debate" and probably won't become one, but the flapdoodle over whether Watergate - burdened President Nixon should keep his Moscow summit date next month seems to be helping no one.

Even those who would be happier if things were otherwise might as well face the reality: Nixon is going and the Soviet leaders are expecting him.

The Soviet welcome was reaffirmed Thursday when a Soviet parliamentary delegation had delivered to Nixon a "personal, private message" from Communist Chief Leonid Brezhnev. The White House said the President had no thought of canceling his trip.

And as much as the Russians are insensitive to their own internal strains, they likely would regard a Nixon cancellation as a greater evidence of American weakness and disunity than his appearance there under his Watergate cloud.

Nonetheless, there is a body of genuine opinion holding that summit deci-

sions should not be made while impeachment hangs over the President.

But to some others, there is more to it than that. There is concern about continuity of policy, of not slipping national moorings already damaged by Watergate, of preserving the office if not the occupant of the presidency.

Listen to Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.), the former vice president who almost beat Nixon for the presidency in 1968 and an early expert on both nuclear arms control and Soviet policy. He told this reporter:

"I believe that since the President said he is going, he should go. Obviously, he'll be accompanied by Secretary of State Kissinger, who is both responsible and knowledgeable. But the President is still President. And although there may be charges and countercharges, we can't stop the process of government.

"There will be those who will accuse him of trying to get the headlines, or of making a temporary deal just for his own advantage. I don't think that will be the case.

"First, the Senate would

see through it. Second, I don't think he or Kissinger would do it. And finally, at this point, I don't expect too much out of the conference."

Besides, Humphrey emphasized, Nixon is "at his best in the field of foreign policy" and wants to preserve his record in that area for its "place in history."