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USSR-JAPAN:

**Soviets Make Show of Flexibility**

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*The Soviets are striving to appear flexible in their dealings with Japan while privately remaining intransigent on the Northern Territories issue.* [redacted]

The TASS account of the meeting in New Delhi on Sunday between Premier Tikhonov and Prime Minister Nakasone says that Tikhonov noted that "practical steps by both sides" are needed to improve strained relations. Vadim Zagladin, the first deputy chief of the Soviet Communist Party's International Department, took the same line at a press conference in Tokyo last week, stating that a visit by Foreign Minister Gromyko is still on the agenda. [redacted]

Japanese Foreign Ministry officials regard the meeting with Tikhonov as significant because Nakasone was one of the few Western officials whom Tikhonov met while attending Mrs. Gandhi's funeral. The Japanese say Tikhonov displayed no flexibility on the Northern Territories issue, while urging Japan to conclude economic and cultural agreements and a "good-neighbor" treaty. Nakasone reportedly told the Premier that Japan will discuss new agreements only if Gromyko visits Tokyo and addresses Japan's territorial claims. [redacted]

**Comment:** Moscow's new interest in high-profile contacts with Japan is an attempt to appear responsive to Nakasone's recent efforts to expand the dialogue. The session in New Delhi was the first such meeting since former Prime Minister Tanaka visited Moscow in 1973. [redacted]

The continuing stalemate in Sino-Soviet relations and signs of North Korean interest in better relations with Japan also may be contributing factors. Moscow may hope that playing to public opinion in Japan will encourage some movement by Tokyo. There is no evidence, however, that the Soviets will offer concessions regarding the Northern Territories. [redacted]

