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Mr Powell

CDP
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President Chernenko

Tass has just announced that President Chernenko is dead. The return of three high-level delegations from abroad, including Shcherbitsky from the United States, suggests that a Central Committee Plenum has been convoked, probably for tomorrow. According to Victor Louis, who is usually correct, the funeral will be as soon as Wednesday. There is no reason to expect the opening of the Geneva arms talks to be appreciably delayed - it was business as usual when Brezhnev died.

2. The composition of the funeral commission is likely to be announced this afternoon; this will provide evidence (but not conclusive evidence) about the succession. I attach the last JIC piece on this; the only change is that Grishin's position has been given more prominence in the last few weeks.

PERCY CRADOCK

11 March 1985

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