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LAND ELECTIONS IN LOWER SAXONY, 15 JUNE

SUMMARY

1. SUNDAY'S REGIONAL ELECTIONS IN LOWER SAXONY AN IMPORTANT TEST FOR THE COALITION, AND A POINTER TO THE JANUARY 1987 FEDERAL ELECTIONS. RESULT LIKELY TO BE A CLIFFHANGER.

DETAIL

2. HASKELL'S LETTERS OF 16 AND 30 MAY TO WED (NOT TO ALL) HAVE GIVEN THE BACKGROUND TO THE ELECTIONS FOR THE LANDTAG (REGIONAL PARLIAMENT) IN LOWER SAXONY TO BE HELD ON 15 JUNE. THE CDU MINISTER-PRESIDENT, DR ALBRECHT, WON AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF SEATS IN 1982, BUT NO-ONE EXPECTS A SIMILAR SHOWING THIS TIME. THE CHANCES OF HIS REMAINING IN POWER THEREFORE DEPEND ON THE FDP GETTING OVER 5 PER CENT, AND ON THE CDU/FDP COMBINED HAVING MORE SEATS THAN THE SPD AND GREENS. ALTHOUGH THE LOCAL SPD LEADER, SCHROEDER, HAS SO FAR RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A RED/GREEN COALITION, SUCH AS ALREADY EXISTS IN HESSEN, THE TWO PARTIES COULD FORM A TACTICAL ALLIANCE TO VOTE DOWN A CDU OR CDU/FDP MINORITY GOVERNMENT.

3. CHERNOBYL HAS GIVEN THE GREENS, AND THEIR SIMPLISTIC MESSAGE THAT NUCLEAR POWER SHOULD FORTHWITH BE ABANDONED, A STRONG IF PERHAPS TEMPORARY BOOST. MEANWHILE THE CDU HAVE LOST SOME SUPPORT IN AGRICULTURAL AREAS. FOR MOST OF MAY, OPINION POLLS HAVE SHOWN THE CDU AND SPD RUNNING FAIRLY CLOSE TOGETHER IN THE MID-40S, WITH THE GREENS AT AROUND 10 PER CENT AND THE FDP CONSISTENTLY BELOW 4 PER CENT. THE LATEST POLLS ARE MARGINALLY MORE ENCOURAGING FOR BOTH CDU AND FDP, THOUGH ONLY ONE POLL HAS PREDICTED A WIN FOR ALBRECHT. THE RESULT ON THE DAY IS LIKELY TO BE A CLIFFHANGER.

4. A WIN FOR THE CDU/FDP, HOWEVER NARROW, WOULD COME AS A GREAT TONIC FOR KOHL, AND WOULD HEARTEN THE CDU IN THE RUN-UP TO THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS NEXT JANUARY. THE COALITION MIGHT BE ABLE TO SHRUG OFF A CLOSE DEFEAT, BUT A CLEAR WIN FOR THE SPD/GREENS WOULD RAISE NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF KOHL'S LEADERSHIP, AND, IF THE FDP DO BADLY, COULD CAUSE FRESH STRAINS WITHIN THE COALITION AS THE FDP SEARCH FOR A CLEARER INDIVIDUAL PROFILE.

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

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