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FM BONN

TO PRIORITY FCO [COLLAR]

TELNO 051

OF 101700Z OCTOBER

INFO ROUTINE BMS BERLIN, CONSULATES GENERAL IN THE FRG, CICC(G)

FRG INTERNAL: THE COALITION'S PROSPECTS

## SUMMARY

1. CDU PARTY CONFERENCE THIS WEEK SHOWED KOHL'S PARTY TO BE IN GOOD HEART, AND CONFIDENT THAT THE COALITION WILL BE RETURNED TO POWER IN JANUARY. NEXT SIGNIFICANT EVENT IS BAVARIAN LAND ELECTION ON 12 OCTOBER. STRAUSS LOOKING FOR AS BIG A CSU VICTORY AS POSSIBLE, TO STRENGTHEN HIS HAND IN COALITION NEGOTIATIONS AFTER THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS.

## DETAIL

2. THE CDU PARTY CONFERENCE (FULL REPORT BY BAG) TOOK PLACE IN MAINZ ON 6-8 OCTOBER. KOHL'S MAIN SPEECH WAS PEDESTRIAN AND UNINSPIRING, BUT IT SUFFICED TO ENHANCE THE OVERALL FEELING OF CONFIDENCE. THIS WAS AN OCCASION FOR CREATING A MOOD, RATHER THAN SETTING OUT POLICY. THE CDU BELIEVE THEY ARE ON COURSE TO BE RETURNED TO POWER ON 25 JANUARY, AND ARE NOT INCLINED TO ROCK THE BOAT. AN OPINION POLL ISSUED DURING THE CONFERENCE GIVES THE CDU/CSU 45 PERCENT, SPD 41 PERCENT, FDP 7 PERCENT AND GREENS 5 PERCENT NATIONWIDE; PERCENTAGES THAT HAVE NOT SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED SINCE MID-SUMMER.

3. THE LIBERAL WEEKLY DIE ZEIT, WHICH DISLIKES KOHL AND USED TO DESPISE HIM, SUMS UP HIS STYLE THIS WEEK AS 'HARDLY ELEGANT, BUT SUCCESSFUL'. IT DESCRIBES KOHL AS PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY UNAFFECTED BY FOUR EXHAUSTING YEARS AS CHANCELLOR, STILL RADIATING OPTIMISM, STILL PREFERRING GENERALITIES TO DETAILS, STILL JAWING AWAY ABOUT THE FAMILY, THE HISTORY OF THE NATION ETC; NOT A THRILLING FIGURE, BUT A DURABLE ONE. I THINK THIS IS A FAIR PICTURE.

4. THE KEY FIGURE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IS THE BAVARIAN MINISTER-PRESIDENT STRAUSS (CSU). HIS GUEST SPEECH TO THE CONFERENCE WAS SHARPER (AND MORE ENTERTAINING) IN ITS ATTACKS ON THE SPD THAN KOHL'S, BUT HE AVOIDED DIRECT REFERENCE TO FRICTION BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND THE CDU. EG ON WHETHER THE TWO SHOULD HAVE A JOINT ELECTION MANIFESTO OR NOT. HE ALSO LET THE FDP OFF MORE LIGHTLY THAN USUAL.

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5. FOR STRAUSS, THE NEXT BIG DAY IS 12 OCTOBER, WHEN BAVARIA GOES TO THE POLLS. THE CSU WANT TO GET AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO MATCHING THE 58.3 PERCENT THEY SCORED IN 1982, NOT LEAST BECAUSE THIS WOULD STRENGTHEN STRAUSS' HAND IN NEGOTIATIONS AFTER 25 JANUARY ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEXT CABINET IN BONN AND THE CONTENTS OF THE COALITION'S POLICY PROGRAMME. CSU CONTACTS SAY THAT THESE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE LONG AND TOUGH. STRAUSS MAY KNOW THAT HIS CHANCES OF EVER REALISING HIS AMBITION TO BE FOREIGN MINISTER ARE SLIGHT, BUT HE MEANS TO DO ALL HE CAN TO HAVE GENSCHER REPLACED.

6. THE FDP ARE GOING THROUGH A BAD PATCH. THEY POLLED BADLY IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS IN LOWER SAXONY LAST WEEKEND (DESPITE HAVING DONE WELL IN THE LAND ELECTIONS THERE IN JUNE), AND HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF CLEARING THE 5 PERCENT HURDLE IN BAVARIA THIS SUNDAY. THOUGH GENSCHER IS NOW OUT OF HOSPITAL FOLLOWING HIS COLLAPSE LAST WEEK, HIS HEALTH IS STILL A SOURCE OF WORRY FOR HIS PARTY. BUT THE FDP WILL BE BACK IN THE LIMELIGHT ONCE ATTENTION RETURNS TO THE FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AND THUS TO THE FEDERAL ISSUES WHERE THEY HAVE MOST TO CONTRIBUTE.

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