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FM BONN

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

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OF 011000Z DECEMBER 86

INFO ROUTINE BNG BERLIN, CHCC(G)

INFO SAYING EUROPEAN COMMUNITY POSTS

INFO SAYING CONSULATES GENERAL IN THE FRG

FRG INTERNAL POLITICAL ROUND-UP

## SUMMARY

1. FEDERAL ELECTIONS ON 25 JANUARY LOOMING EVER LARGER. ALL SIGNS STILL POINT TO THE PRESENT COALITION BEING RETURNED TO POWER.

## DETAIL

2. KOHL AND GENSCHER COME TO LONDON THIS WEEK FOR THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL WITH THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS ON 25 JANUARY AT THE TOP OF BOTH OF THEIR MINDS. THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE LAST WEEK ON THE FINAL READING OF THE 1987 BUDGET WAS A SERIES OF CAMPAIGN SPEECHES. THE PRESENT BUNDESTAG MEETS IN PLENARY FOR THE LAST TIME ON 12 DECEMBER. THE ONLY IMPORTANT PIECES OF UNFINISHED LEGISLATION ARE THE RATIFICATION OF THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT AND A PACKAGE OF ANTI-TERRORIST BILLS.

3. FOR THE CDU/CSU THE PROSPECTS ARE SO GOOD THAT SOME WORRY LEST THEY ARE PEAKING TOO EARLY. ONE OR TWO OPINION POLLS HAVE EVEN SUGGESTED THAT THE CDU/CSU COULD WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY (IN WHICH CASE THE FDP HAVE ALREADY SAID THAT THEY WOULD NOT REMAIN IN THE COALITION AS A SUPERFLUOUS THIRD PARTNER, BUT WOULD GO INTO OPPOSITION). THE CDU/CSU HAVE ONLY PULLED OFF THIS FEAT ONCE, UNDER ADENAUER, AND KOHL AND STRAUSS ARE ANXIOUS TO DAMPEN ANY SIGNS OF PREMATURE EUPHORIA. BOTH TAKE THE LINE THAT THEY WANT THE PRESENT CDU/CSU/FDP COALITION TO CONTINUE. KOHL MEANS IT, KNOWING THAT AN FDP COALITION PRESENCE MEANS A SAFER MAJORITY AND HELPS TO COUNTERBALANCE STRAUSS' INFLUENCE ON HIS RIGHT. STRAUSS DETESTS THE FDP, BUT KNOWS FROM PAST EXPERIENCE THAT OVERDOING HIS ATTACKS TENDS TO PRODUCE A BACKLASH OF SYMPATHY FOR THEM.

4. THE FDP THEMSELVES HAVE BEEN GOING THROUGH A BAD PATCH. THEIR RANK AND FILE REBELLED, AS HAPPENS SOMETIMES IN LIBERAL PARTIES, AGAINST THEIR LEADER'S AGREEMENT TO A PACKAGE OF ANTI-TERRORIST LEGISLATION PUT TOGETHER AFTER THE TERRORIST MURDER OF THE GERMAN POLITICAL DIRECTOR. THE BILL IS NOW GOING FORWARD IN REVISED FORM. WERE TERRORISTS TO STRIKE AGAIN IN THE RUN-UP TO THE ELECTIONS, THE FDP JUST MIGHT BE IN ELECTORAL DIFFICULTIES, BUT ALMOST EVERY PUNDIT WOULD PUT HIS MONEY ON THEIR GETTING BACK INTO THE BUNDESTAG. THERE IS A SMALL PERSONAL QUESTION-MARK BOTH OVER BANGEMANN AS PARTY LEADER, AFTER AN UNIMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE IN 1986, AND OVER GENSCHER AS FOREIGN MINISTER, GIVEN THAT STRAUSS IS GUNNING FOR HIM PERSONALLY AND IS PERHAPS ALSO AFTER HIS JOB. BUT HE PERSONALLY WOULD BET ON GENSCHER'S SURVIVAL AS FOREIGN MINISTER.

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5. ON THE OPPOSITION SIDE, THE SPD IS IN A DREADFUL MESS. SEVERE REVERSES IN LAND ELECTIONS IN BAVARIA AND HAMBURG HAVE WRECKED THEIR STRATEGY OF A STEP-BY-STEP RETURN TO POWER IN BONN. THINLY-DISGUISED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEIR CHAIRMAN BRANDT AND THEIR CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE RAU HAVE AGGRAVATED THEIR PROBLEMS. RAU IS GAMELY GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS, AND WILL, PROBABLY DO BETTER ON THE DAY THAN THE POLLS AT PRESENT PREDICT, BUT HE IS NOT ACTING AS IF HIS HEART WAS IN IT. WHEN I SAW HIM IN DUESSELDORF LAST WEEK, HE Poured himself a large brandy at 5PM WITH AN AIR OF 'WHAT THE HELL'. THE PARTY IS ALREADY THINKING ABOUT THE INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE WHICH WILL BREAK OUT AFTER THE EXPECTED DEFEAT IN JANUARY.

6. CONVERSELY, THE GREENS ARE BUOYANT. THEY POLLED WELL IN BAVARIA AND ESPECIALLY IN HAMBURG, NOT LEAST BECAUSE THEIR VOTERS ARE IDEOLOGICALLY MORE MOTIVATED THAN THOSE OF THE SPD, AND THEY DID NOT STAY AT HOME. THE POLLUTION PROBLEMS IN THE RHINE HAVE BROUGHT THEM MORE SUPPORT WITHOUT THEIR EVEN HAVING TO TRY. AND THE SPD'S CONFUSED ATTEMPTS TO STEAL THEIR CLOTHES ON, EG NUCLEAR ENERGY, SEEM MERELY TO HAVE LED MORE PEOPLE TO CONCLUDE THAT THEY MIGHT AS WELL VOTE GREEN.

7. AS FOR CHANCELLOR KOHL, HE IS HIS USUAL EXTROVERT SELF. HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY STILL LAGS SOMEWHAT BEHIND THAT OF HIS PARTY, BUT IS HIGHER THAN RAU'S. HIS NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW A MONTH AGO, WITH ITS IMPLIED COMPARISON OF GORBACHEV WITH DR GOEBBELS, WAS AN ERROR WHICH HIS STAFF SHOULD HAVE CORRECTED AND WHICH MOSCOW IS BELATEDLY EXPLOITING FOR EVEN MORE THAN IT IS WORTH. AS THINGS STAND, I CANNOT SEE THIS OR ANYTHING ELSE ROBBING KOHL OF A SECOND TERM AS CHANCELLOR, OR DENTING HIS MASSIVE SELF-CONFIDENCE.

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