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FRG CABINET RESHUFFLE

SUMMARY

1. KOHL'S CABINET CHANGES MAY HELP THE COALITION TURN THE CORNER, WAIGEL AS FINANCE MINISTER AND SCHAEUBLE AS INTERIOR MINISTER ARE GOOD APPOINTMENTS. STOLTENBERG AS DEFENCE MINISTER IS MORE OPEN TO QUESTION.

DETAIL

2. KOHL ANNOUNCED HIS EXPECTED CABINET RESHUFFLE ON 13 APRIL. THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE RESHUFFLE (NONE OF WHICH INVOLVES THE FDP) ARE THAT STOLTENBERG IS TO BE REPLACED BY WAIGEL AS FINANCE MINISTER, SCHOLZ BY STOLTENBERG AS DEFENCE MINISTER AND ZIMMERMANN BY SCHAEUBLE AS INTERIOR MINISTER (ALL IN LPR). THE EFFECT ON THE COALITION BALANCE IS TO INCREASE THE CSU'S NUMBER OF PORTFOLIOS TO SIX BY THE CREATION OF A NEW CABINET-RANK POST OF GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN. FULL DETAILS OF THE RESHUFFLE AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON MESSAGES ARE IN MY 2 IFTS (NOT TO ALL).

COMMENT

3. GOADED BY THE PRESS AND SOME OF HIS SUPPORTERS KOHL HAS FINALLY MADE HIS MOVE. THESE CABINET CHANGES ARE ENOUGH TO GIVE A HOPE OF ACHIEVING THE APPEARANCE OF A NEW START FOR THE GOVERNMENT. BUT THE REFUSAL OF GEISSLER, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CDU, TO JOIN THE CABINET WAS A SETBACK. KOHL IS PRIVATELY DETERMINED TO GET RID OF HIM, WHICH MAY MEAN A MAJOR ROW AT THE CDU CONGRESS IN SEPTEMBER.

4. THE ADDITION OF WAIGEL (49), THE LEADER OF THE CSU, WILL STRENGTHEN THE COALITION ON THE RIGHT AND HE SHOULD PROVE A COMPETENT FINANCE MINISTER: HE HAS AN ECONOMIC BACKGROUND, AND MORE FIRE THAN STOLTENBERG, WHOSE CONTRIBUTION TO GOVERNMENT OVER THE LAST YEAR OR SO HAS BEEN LOW KEY.

5. DESPITE THE GOOD RELATIONSHIP BUILT UP BETWEEN SCHOLZ AND MR

YOUNGER, WE SHOULD SHED NO TEARS FOR SCHOLZ, WHO FOR SOME TIME HAS LOOKED PAST THE POINT OF POLITICAL RECOVERY. STOLTENBERG (60) FIRST CAME TO MINISTERIAL OFFICE 24 YEARS AGO, AND IS THUS MORE EXPERIENCED THAN ANY OTHER MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS A TRADITIONAL VIEW OF SECURITY, CENTRED ON THE ALLIANCE AND THE AMERICAN CONNECTION. HE IS MORE THOUGHTFUL AND CAREFUL, AS WELL AS MUCH MORE EXPERIENCED, THAN SCHOLZ. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER HE CAN FIND THE ENERGY TO GRIP HIS NEW PORTFOLIO AND FIGHT HIS CORNER EFFECTIVELY IN THE CABINET AND IN THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON DEFENCE. THE APPOINTMENT OF SCHAEUBLE (46) IS GOOD NEWS: HE IS AN ENERGETIC, CLEAR-THINKING HIGH-FLIER WITH A FUTURE, WHO CAN BE EXPECTED TO DEVELOP A COHERENT POLICY ON THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS INVOLVED IN THE HANDLING OF IMMIGRANTS, AND WILL MAKE A MORE CONGENIAL INTERLOCUTOR FOR MR HURD THAN ZIMMERMANN.

6. THE LOWER LEVEL APPOINTMENTS SEEM IN SOME CASES TO BE CHANGES FOR CHANGE'S SAKE. KOEHLER, FOR INSTANCE, HAS ACQUITTED HIMSELF WELL IN THE AID MINISTRY, THOUGH HIS SUCCESSOR, REPNIK, IS EQUALLY COMPETENT. THE NEW BUILDING MINISTER (HASSEFELDT) IS AN UNKNOWN, AGED 38, AND IN HER FIRST TERM IN THE BUNDESTAG.

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