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NEW YORK: DEFEAT OF ED KOCH

1. The Mayor of New York, Ed Koch ("undefeatable Ed"), went down to defeat yesterday in the New York gubernatorial primary, beaten by a sizeable margin (54-46 per cent) by the Lieutenant Governor, Mario Cuomo.
2. Although Ed Koch's defeat had been widely predicted by New York cab drivers, and to some extent by the polls which showed Cuomo closing a gap of 37 percentage points, it nonetheless came as a surprise, largely because Koch has been the dominant figure on the New York scene and was so highly regarded as Mayor that for his triumphant re-election in 1981 he was endorsed by the Republican Party (and by President Reagan) as well as by the Democrats.
3. Numerous explanations are being offered for Koch's defeat, of which the most plausible seem to be the following:
  - (a) When Koch was re-elected Mayor, he indicated that he would remain on the job and not seek the Governorship. Within a matter of months he had changed his mind.
  - (b) In an interview in Playboy Magazine (which seems to have a knack of making otherwise canny politicians say stupid things, cf Jimmy Carter in 1976), given before Koch had decided to seek the Governorship but published after he had declared his hand, Koch described rural life as a joke and suburban life as sterile. He said of Albany, the New York state capital, that it was "smalltown life at its worst". Koch never quite lived down these remarks outside New York City and they certainly gave a standing advantage to Cuomo, whose strength anyway lay in the rural areas.
  - (c) Cuomo's ability to put together a coalition of Democrats, liberals and trade unionists and to portray Koch (who is a feisty conservative) as President Reagan's favourite mayor. Cuomo also did well in televised debate against Koch.

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4. Other factors that have been cited include a clever commercial put out by Cuomo in the last days of the campaign suggesting that people should vote for him in order to ensure that they did not lose Koch as Mayor of New York. This may indeed have been a factor, particularly in New York City where Koch has done an outstanding job and where he was expected to win the big votes that would compensate for his relative lack of support up-state. In practice, he only had a two per cent advantage over Cuomo in New York City and the suburbs according to the early results.

5. It has also been suggested that Koch, who is widely seen as the personification of Jewish New York, suffered because of the terrible pasting which Israel has been receiving in the United States in recent days. I find this explanation a bit far-fetched.

6. That Koch will now stay on as Mayor of New York is good news for the city. That Cuomo will very likely be elected the next Governor of New York in November is not good from our point of view. Koch gave lip service to anti-British sentiment in Ireland but never gave the impression that he was really interested. Cuomo, on the other hand, has for some time been associated with Congressmen Biaggi and Senator D'Amato and their ilk, who have a vested interest in making trouble for us. The retiring Governor of New York, Governor Carey, was, as you know, one of the Four Horsemen. That position was a personal one rather than an ex officio one, and I doubt whether Cuomo can expect to succeed to it or that he would even wish to do so. If he is elected in November we can hope that the preoccupations and responsibilities of higher office may temper his involvement in Northern Ireland, but we cannot count on it.

7. Cuomo's opponent in the November election will be a 44-year old Republican called Lewis Lehman, a millionaire store developer who spent \$7 million on his primary campaign, \$4 million of his own money.

8. In the senate primary, Senator Moynihan easily won the endorsement of Democrats and of the New York Liberal party and looks set for easy re-election in November. It was not always thus. A few months ago the Liberal party (strong in New York) and some Democrats were unhappy at Moynihan's neo conservative record. When the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) came on the scene, attacking Moynihan as more liberal than Kennedy, the Liberals began to think Moynihan could not be so bad after all and rallied to his cause. NCPAC seem to be losing their touch or, rather, revealing the essential weakness of their negative campaign approach. It worked in 1980 when they rode the Regan bandwagon helping to ease out Senators who were anyway vulnerable. This time round, with Democratic incumbents coming back into fashion, NCPAC have a harder task. Moreover, they have encouraged their opponents to fight back using some of the same weapons. NCPAC are still able to raise large amounts of money. I suspect they may reach their zenith on this campaign and fade somewhat after the mid-term elections.

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