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Note BIO(83)58 (suite 1) aux Bureaux Nationaux
c.c. aux membres du Groupe

ATTENTION SPECIALE WASHINGTON ET GENEVE

Press conference by Vice-president BUSH (W. Helin)

"For too long the Soviet Union has been challenging us to an arms race. We challenge them to a peace race. We believe we have a sound moral position by trying to eliminate from the face of the universe a whole generation of deadly weapons. With the strong support of our alliance, and with a willingness to talk with the Soviet Union, we have an excellent chance of taking giant steps for peace in these (Geneva) negotiations." These were the opening remarks made by Vice-president Bush at his press conference here tonight. Questions by the press mainly centered on the missiles issue. Vice-president Bush stated that during all of his talks in Europe, the European partners of the alliance "were all strongly in favour of the zero option". Avoiding to answer on any so-called alternatives to this zero option, he added "the only argument against it is that the Soviets don't like it". If there is "a way to negotiate on other approaches to reach this end, we will welcome this".

Vice-president Bush also refused to comment on questions relating to what would happen if no agreement was reached by the end of 1983 on the disarmament talks and if subsequently some European governments refused to deploy missiles as scheduled. "I am not a negotiator, I am consulting here. My impression is, that the alliance is together and strong, I don't answer hypothetical questions. What is in the forefront, is the morality and sensibility of the US position. We'd like to see some action out of the Soviet Union. We care about Afganistan, Poland and human rights: they are fundamental problems of freedom. We have got to remind the USSR that the mere fact of saying so is the reality of the alliance", Bush said.

Answering questions about the reaction to President Reagan's letter, which he read in Berlin, Mr. Bush said they were "generally favourable in the press and very favourable in the meetings" he had. He added that "I think there has been a perception that President Reagan was unwilling to talk to Andropov at all". "It's a good thing that a proposal was made by Andropov.

Only one question was raised on the trade issues with the EEC. "We have grievances with the EEC, they have with us: the tone of the meeting here was thoroughly constructive. I cannot comment on the tone of President Thorn's statement to the press. I am not troubled by that, it shows the vitality of the EEC." In his opening remarks, on the same issue, Vice-president Bush said "the United States in its relations with the EEC will work to maintain the freest possible trade and to reach compromise where we have difficulties, openly talk about it to find solutions. As we showed last year in resolving the steel and pipelining issue, we can reach agreements which serve our joint interest.

Amities,
M. Santarelli, COMEUR ////

