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1975

(BORJA SUPPORTS COVENANT)

SAIPAN, JULY 13 (CONGRESS RELEASE)---SENATOR OLYMPIO T. BORJA OF THE MARIANAS, HAS SENT A STATEMENT TO THE U.S. HOUSE TERRITORIAL AND INSULAR AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE IN WHICH HE STRONGLY SUPPORTS CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH.

HIS STATEMENT, DATED JULY 14, 1975, WAS SENT IN RESPONSE TO AN INVITATION BY THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSMAN PHILLIP BURTON, FOR MICRONESIAN LEADERS TO TESTIFY ON THE PROPOSED COVENANT. IN A COVERING LETTER, BORJA EXPLAINED IT WAS WITH REGRET THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO PERSONALLY ATTEND THE HEARING, BUT WAS REQUESTING THAT HIS STATEMENT BE READ OR INSERTED INTO THE RECORD OF THE HEARINGS.

IN IT, HE STATED THAT THE REASON WHY THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS WANT TO BECOME A PART OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL FAMILY "IS A SIMPLE ONE. IT IS THEIR FERVENT AND DEEPLY-HELD BELIEF THAT OF THE FOUR DIFFERENT NATIONS WHICH HAVE RULED THE MARIANAS, THAT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA HAS WON THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS, BECAUSE OF THE DEMOCRATIC IDEALS AND FREEDOM WHICH IT REPRESENTS, AND STANDS FOR IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICES IN FACT."

HE NOTED THAT THE SUBCOMMITTEE MUST NOT ONLY RECOGNIZE THE MANY RESOLUTIONS AND PETITIONS REQUESTING THIS STATUS AND THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES, BUT ALSO THAT "MY PEOPLE VIEW A PERMANENT ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES WITH RESPECT, WITH AFFECTION, AND WITH ADMIRATION."

HE RECOUNTED THAT A MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY WAS BORN IN THE MARIANAS IN THE 1960S WITH JOINING THE U.S. AS A MAJOR PLATFORM, AND THEN RECALLED A SPEECH HE MADE IN 1970 AFTER THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA HAS REJECTED THE COMMONWEALTH PROPOSAL.

IN THAT SPEECH, HE RELATED HE HAD SAID, "WE ARE SOMEWHAT FLATTERED BY THIS INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES IN MICRONESIA..." AND THAT "SINCE THAT TIME, THE BASIC GOALS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS HAVE NOT CHANGED, AND NEITHER HAS THE SENTIMENT THAT WE ARE SOMEWHAT FLATTERED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS CONVINCED ENOUGH OF OUR SINCERITY TO AGREE TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS..."

THE MARIANAS SENATOR STATED THAT "WE ARE... AWARE THAT NO INSTRUMENT IS PERFECT" BUT URGED THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE TO A U.S. CONGRESS TO APPROVE THE COVENANT "WHICH PROVIDES THE MECHANICS OF LATER MUTUALLY APPROVED REVISIONS."

BORJA THEN COUNTERED THOSE WHO HAVE OPPOSED THE COVENANT AS AN ACQUISITION OF NEW CITIZENS AND TERRITORY, SAYING THAT THE MARIANAS PEOPLE "CHOSE TO SEEK FREEDOM, FREEDOM FROM THE INVOLUNTARY DEATH, DESTRUCTION, AND SUFFERING VISITED UPON THEM FOR CENTURIES. WE DO SO BASED ON THE HUMANITARIAN AND DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES WITH WHICH AMERICA HAS TUTORED US AND OUR CHILDREN... AND IN

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WHICH WE BELIEVE."

"WE DO SO NOT BECAUSE WE KNOW AMERICA IS A RICH AND POWERFUL NATION...THERE ARE MANY RICH AND POWERFUL NATIONS IN THE WORLD TODAY, AND IF THAT WERE THE ONLY CRITERION, THEN OUR PEOPLE COULD CHOOSE FROM AMONG SEVERAL NATIONS."

HE THEN SAID THAT JUST AS AMERICA MUST BELIEVE IN THE "SINCERITY OF OUR MOTIVATIONS...WE BELIEVE THAT THE PRIMARY AND PRINCIPLE REASON" THAT AMERICA WANTS THE MARIANAS AS A PART OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY "IS DUE TO THEIR RECOGNITION OF OUR LONG ASSOCIATION...AND THE FIRM BELIEF IN THE FREELY EXPRESSED WILL OF THE PEOPLE TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN DESTINY."

WITH REGARD TO THE STRATEGIC ASPECTS OF THE COVENANT, HE NOTED THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS "MUST SHARE" BOTH THE BENEFITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF U.S. PROTECTION, BUT THAT SECURITY OR MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS OR NEEDS "SHOULD (NOT) BE THE BASIS OF CONTENTION FOR THE COVENANT. FOR WHILE THEY ARE INHERENT, THEY ARE ALSO SECONDARY AS INDICATED BY THE NATURE OF THE COVENANT."

SAYING THAT THEY HAD NO IDEA OF THE MARIANAS IMPORTANCE IN MILITARY STRATEGY, HE SAID THAT "WE DO...BELIEVE THAT JUST AS MILITARY INTERESTS SHOULD NOT BE THE PRIMARY REASON FOR ENTERING INTO THIS COVENANT, THEY SHOULD ALSO NOT BE THE PRIMARY REASON FOR OPPOSING IT."

"WHAT WE HAVE BEFORE US TODAY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF A DOCUMENT, OR A PIECE OF PAPER, BUT AS A SIGN OF AFFIRMATION; A POSITIVE AND AFFIRMATIVE ACT TO CONSUMMATE WITH FINALITY, THE LONG, CLOSE, AND POLITICAL FAMILY TIES BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS AND THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES."

BORJA NOTED THAT THE PREVIOUS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND ITS REPRESENTATIVES WAS IMPORTANT, BUT "PRELIMINARY IN NATURE AND INCOMPLETE."

"FOR NOW, WE FACE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF AMERICA, AND IT IS YOU, MEMBERS OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE, AND OF THIS CONGRESS WHO MUST EXERCISE LEGISLATIVE PREROGATIVES IN MAKING THE MOST IMPORTANT ACT OF AFFIRMATION AND APPROVAL TO THIS HISTORICAL DOCUMENT WHICH OUR PEOPLE...ARE AFFECTIONATELY AWAITING YOUR APPROVAL."

HE ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE "INCONCEIVABLE TO US" THAT THE U.S. WOULD RETRACT THEIR OFFER, AND REJECT THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE MARIANAS PEOPLE. THAT, HE SAID WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE TRUSTEESHIP, AND THE AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, CONSTITUTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS.

"THE CONSUMMATION OF OUR DESIRES AS CONTAINED IN THIS AGREEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE WOULD BE A MOST TIMELY AND FITTING EVENT AS THE UNITED STATES CELEBRATES 200 YEARS OF A FREE, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN 1976," HE SAID, AND "WE THEREFORE HOPE AND FERVENTLY PRAY THAT THE ANSWER OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE "YES", AND THAT WE MAY SOON BEGIN TO LIVE THAT DREAM SO LONG DEFERRED AND FOR WHICH OUR PEOPLE NOW EAGERLY AWAIT YOUR FAVORABLE ACTION."

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