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ARRIVAL REMARKS
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ST. THOMAS, VIRGIN ISLANDS

To be transported in four hours to these islands of sun, sea and gentle trade winds is a 20th Century miracle!

All of us are grateful to some of your earliest visitors whose trips were made without the comforts of tourist fares and helpful stewardesses. We are reminded that it was, after all, Christopher Columbus who started the first "See the USA" program.

Millions have followed him to this exotic and breathtaking part of the world and all of us are grateful, Governor, that our reception here has been considerably more inviting.

This is my first trip to the Virgin Islands, but I already know it won't be my last. The visitor is apt to begin -- as I did -- planning his return trip on the way into town from the airport.

I was particularly delighted to receive your invitation to come this June and share one of the big moments of history in the Virgin Islands -- the first graduation ceremony of your new college.

Standing here in Emancipation Gardens -- by Fort Christian -- circa 1671 -- there are reminders of many other moments of history.

The visitor discovers quickly that more than 400 years of history whispers with your trade winds:

the freeing of slaves in these very gardens in 1848 and the impressive way equality was translated into reality here;

the purchase on these grounds of the Virgin Islands by the United States in 1917 for \$25 million. We have only to look at last year's cash register to know what a bargain that was. For in one year alone, the Virgin Islands bought \$70 million worth of goods from the states. But far more than dollars, we gained citizens of strong character and devoted loyalty. We have not forgotten that in World War II, when the Virgin Islands was NOT included in the draft, you sent a delegation to Washington asking to be included.

All of these are proud pages of history -- a tribute to you, a tribute to your leadership. I bring with me today the greetings of the President to the citizens of the easternmost part of the United States. Please know how much we appreciate your enthusiastic involvement with such national programs as beautification (in which Providence already endowed you with so much) and your progress for a healthy economy.

But we are aware today that all islands in these crystal blue-green Caribbean waters are not untroubled.

And in our hearts is the prayer that their voyage to peace will be a short one.

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