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## Micronesia's complexity

The situation in Micronesia these days is like a series of boxes within boxes.

Micronesians and the United States are engaged in talks aimed at creating a new political identity for the Trust Territory. But instead of getting simpler, the situation gets more complex.

An article on this page today outlines some of the events coming up which will bear heavily on the future of Micronesia. If one message comes through in the article, it is that theme of complexity.

Several things become apparent, however, and should bear watching.

- The first is that responsibility for delaying progress on a new political status has switched from the U.S. side to the Micronesian side. At one point, it was the Americans who wanted to "go slow" and explore a variety of options. The Micronesians had a clear and fairly straightforward

position — they wanted free association with the U.S.

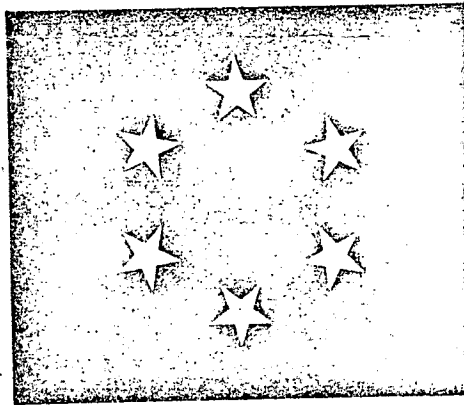
Today, the Americans seem ready to negotiate a free association agreement, but the Micronesians are divided. The article on the right points to the depth of that division.

- The lands question has important ramifications. Micronesians want public trust lands returned, but to whom? Whether they revert to some kind of central Micronesian authority or to the individual districts will have much to do with the strength of whatever government is eventually formed.

- The lands question also involves the matter of American military bases in the Micronesia of the future. At one time, it was an article of faith that the Micronesians held a trump bargaining card because it was assumed the U.S. would want and need military rights in the islands. This may no longer be so. In an era of detente and pull-back, the U.S. may already have all the military facilities it needs in the area.

- An end to the Trusteeship will not necessarily mean an end to political problems in Micronesia. The day the Trusteeship ends could mark the day Micronesia comes apart, with each — or at least most — of the districts attempting to work out its own unique relationship with the U.S. or even some other nation.

The point in all of this is that these are complex and difficult times for Micronesia. Fascinating for those who watch but frustrating for those involved.



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