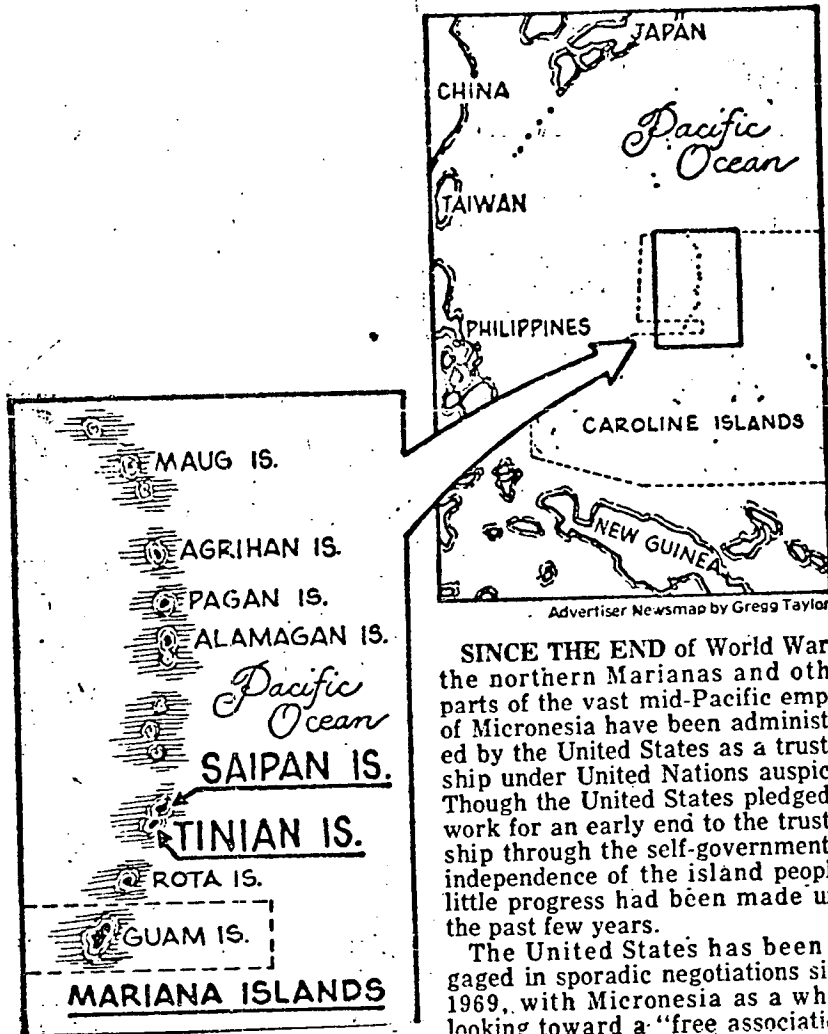


Most of the residents of Tinian, Saipan and the other inhabited parts of the proposed "Commonwealth of Northern Marianas" are believed to be in favor of permanent affiliation with the United States. However, no test votes have been taken recently and a proposed referendum on Tinian alone was vetoed by U.S. authorities early this year, on grounds this is a decision for the entire northern Marianas chain.

1973/74



SINCE THE END of World War II the northern Marianas and other parts of the vast mid-Pacific empire of Micronesia have been administered by the United States as a trusteeship under United Nations auspices. Though the United States pledged to work for an early end to the trusteeship through the self-government or independence of the island peoples, little progress had been made until the past few years.

The United States has been engaged in sporadic negotiations since 1969, with Micronesia as a whole looking toward a "free association" status in which the far-flung islanders voluntarily affiliate themselves with the United States for defense purposes and permit continued American use of the missile-testing facilities in the Marshall Islands.

IN MAY 1972 the northern Marianas group opted to carve out a separate future for itself as a U.S. commonwealth, and negotiations to this end began in May 1973.

Presidential representative Williams, who is also chief negotiator in the Micronesian "free association" talks, said last week that "tentative understandings" have been reached on key issues with island leaders, including the dollar support level for the "free association" group. He declined to disclose the proposed dollar figure or other details of the proposed agreement, which is to be discussed anew this week in a U.S. Micronesian conference to take place on Guam.