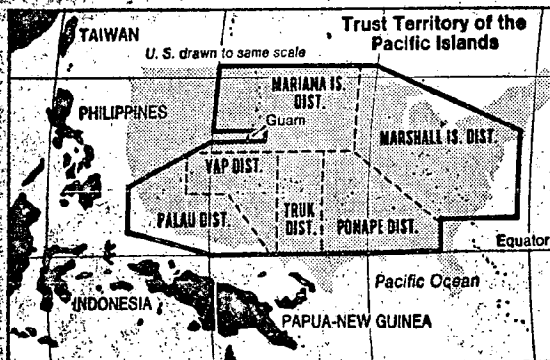


Crumbling Trust

The first bitter fruits of Washington's short-sighted enthusiasm for splitting off the Northern Mariana islands from the rest of the far-flung Pacific Trust Territory are now showing up in the corridors of the United Nations Trusteeship Council. A delegation from the Marshall Islands and Palau has arrived to ask for eventual independence from the United States but immediate administrative separation of the relatively prosperous Marshalls and Palau from their poorer island neighbors.

The long-range strategy of the separatists runs directly counter to current United States policy of forging a working unity in the American-administered Pacific islands, scene of bitterly remembered combat of World War II. About a month ago, White House negotiators initiated the long-awaited Compact on Free Association



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UNITED NATIONS N.Y. AP - Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim congratulated President Ford Friday on the U.S. Bicentennial, saying it is "an occasion of extraordinary historical moment not only for Americans, but for all these people who have taken up the global struggle for national independence."

Waldheim said the worldwide drive for self-determination, "only now in its final state of fulfillment, owes much to the inspiration of the original American colonies two centuries ago. In that sense, what started here on American soil has profoundly transformed the political map of the world."

Waldheim is in Africa. The message was issued by his U.N. office.

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between the islands of Micronesia and this country, providing a well thought-out and coherent program for political autonomy and economic development of these diverse islands in voluntary association with the United States.

Unfortunately, even prior to completing this compact, the Nixon and Ford Administrations—under strong Pentagon influence—succumbed to the separatist interests of the Northern Marianas, encouraging them to accept a vague "commonwealth" status under American sovereignty—a far closer relationship than would exist with the rest of Micronesia. Once that chink in the gradually formed unity of the Pacific islands had been permitted, further separatist ambitions were virtually inevitable.

The United States record of trusteeship in the Pacific is not a noble one over the postwar decades, but in the last few years a seemingly genuine attempt has been made to stake out a political evolution which would leave these islands economically and strategically viable, autonomous yet closely associated with the United States. The newly initiated compact provides for a plebiscite throughout the Trust Territory (excluding the Northern Marianas); any island district which failed to provide at least 55 percent support for the federated state would not be required to join.

It would have been far better if the Northern Marianas had been included in this plebiscite, which is likely to take place early next year. The admittedly strong separatist sentiment in those islands could have been duly expressed in an orderly process, fully consistent with the United Nations mandate, without being allowed to stand as a special precedent. Since it is too late to undo that political blunder, at least the separatists of the Marshalls and Palau should not be encouraged to fragment the unity of Micronesia any further.

Security Council:

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