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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : American Embassy Taipei.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

REF :

SUBJECT: Comment of SHEN Ch'ang-huan on the Position of General CHIANG Ching-kuo.

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 OFFICE OF CHINESE AFFAIRS
 DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 DATE: May 22, 1952
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On May 16, the Reporting Officer attended a meeting presided over by Dr. SHEN Ch'ang-huan, Government Spokesman, during the course of which Dr. Shen made the following remarks on the position of General CHIANG Ching-kuo and the political situation within the Chinese Government generally.

Foreign observers tend to exaggerate the importance of General Chiang Ching-kuo, according to Dr. Shen. They reason that, since China is a dictatorship and General Chiang is the son of the President, he must for that reason wield extraordinary powers beyond those of his position--Director of the Political Department of the Ministry of National Defense. Some foreigners have even assumed that Chiang Ching-kuo would succeed automatically to the Presidency in the event of the death of CHIANG Kai-shek. This impression is wholly mistaken, said Dr. Shen. The fact is that China is not a dictatorship but a constitutional republic. President Chiang Kai-shek is very sensitive to public opinion and is careful to avoid showing favoritism to his sons. Chiang Ching-kuo himself is similarly sensitive to criticism that he is trading on the name of his father. According to Dr. Shen, there are several persons in the Ministry of National Defense who outrank Chiang Ching-kuo in fact as well as name.

Dr. Shen pointed out that China is governed under a constitution, the influence of which is strong enough to prevent any one person, however powerful, to flout it. China has a Vice President who would succeed to the Presidency without question were he present in China and not enjoying a "comfortable life" in New York. In the event of the death or incapacity of the Vice President, the constitution provides that the Prime Minister would occupy the presidency for a period of three months while a new National Assembly was formed for the purpose of electing a new President. In Dr. Shen's opinion, if Chiang Kai-shek should die, these provisions of the constitution would be adhered to, and it would be quite impossible for Chiang Ching-kuo, or any other individual, to set them aside.

Dr. Shen went on to say that age and experience counted for a great deal in Chinese politics. He remarked wryly that he had discovered this fact from personal knowledge and that despite

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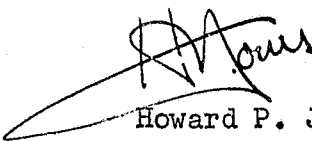
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the fact that he has been close to Chiang Kai-shek for ten years he has found that his relative youth and inexperience are weighty factors hampering his rise to high position. Chiang Ching-kuo, he pointed out, is only about forty years of age and is a relative newcomer on the Chinese political scene... He cannot expect to outdistance overnight the older men who outrank him in the government and party hierarchies.

President Chiang, said Dr. Shen, attaches great weight to the advice of elder statesmen such as YU Yu-jen, President of the Control Yuan, YEN Hsi-shan, former Governor of Shansi and Prime Minister, and Dr. WANG Shih-chieh, former Minister of Foreign Affairs. The advice of these elder men counts for much with the President, while the words of younger men, such as himself, go unheeded.

Since he for long has been a member of Chiang Kai-shek's inner circle, it is believed that Dr. Shen's opinion on these matters should be given considerable credence. While Chiang Ching-kuo is undoubtedly an important figure in Chinese politics--because of his ability, his father, and the key post he occupies--it is considered probable that the title of "crown prince" accorded him by certain foreign and Chinese observers, is not fully merited.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that Dr. Shen Ch'ang-huan himself is reported to be facing a crisis in his career. His aspirations to step into high position in the Foreign Office were said to have suffered a setback as a result of his over-optimistic report on the light in which Free China is held abroad following his recent trip to Europe. The President, the report goes, is said to have been displeased at the conflict between Shen's statements and the more realistic reports of "Jimmy" WEI and Dr. HAN Li-wu. However, the recent illness of Dr. SHIH Chao-ying, Administrative Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, has once again revived rumors that Shen's ambition may be crowned with success. Should Dr. Shih Chao-ying be given a less arduous assignment overseas for reasons of health, it is thought likely that Dr. Shen will stand a good chance of succeeding to his Foreign Office post.


Howard P. Jones