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YEN Chia-kan, Vice President of the Republic of China

The GRC National Assembly elected Premier YEN Chia-kan Vice President of the Republic of China March 21, 1966; and Yen is to be inaugurated (along with President CHIANG Kai-shek, elected for his fourth term) on May 20. It is not now known whether he will hold concurrently his present position as Premier.

At 61 years of age, Yen has been a key administrative official in Taiwan since the GRC took over the island from the Japanese in 1945. He has served as Minister of Economic Affairs, Minister of Finance, and Governor of Taiwan. He became premier in December, 1963.

Yen is an economist of international reputation and an important figure in the group of GRC officials that have successfully sought the adoption of measures for the acceleration of Taiwan's economic development. Although a highly capable administrator, he is considered to be without any important degree of personal political power. His scholarly manner, his good command of English and familiarity with American and European affairs, derived from numerous travels and participation in international financial activities (a Director, IMF and IERD), make Yen stand in marked contrast to other senior GRC officials, most of whom come from military backgrounds. Yen is believed to be on good terms with other GRC officials and is probably the one most acceptable to the Taiwanese.

The selection of Yen as Vice President marks him as Chiang Kai-shek's choice as titular successor. (Chiang is now 78.) Yen, however, lacks the following and charisma to replace Chiang as the GRC's political leader and will probably have to trade heavily upon the prestige of office and his talents as a bureaucrat if he is to exercise real influence of his own.

An official visit to the United States would be most useful as a means of strengthening Yen's position in the GRC. His predecessor as Vice President made an official visit in 1961. Yen last visited the United States in September 1963, before becoming Premier. In view of current and foreseeable difficulties and strains in U.S.-GRC relations, a visit of a GRC official of Yen's rank would also have the most useful purpose of demonstrating to the GRC continued U.S. friendship, support, and cooperation. The last GRC official of cabinet rank to visit the U.S. was Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo who came here in 1965 as the guest of Secretary McNamara. A final consideration is the opportunity an official visit would afford to make Yen better known in the United States, where his acquaintances have been limited largely to economic circles. The impression he conveys as a competent administrator deeply interested in the economic betterment of Taiwan and its people should be helpful in dispelling some of the public misconceptions about the GRC and its policies.

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