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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

January 29, 1971

SUBJECT: Conversation with Steve Shepley, CORDS PP&P,
Approximately January 12, 1971.

Shepley is considered one of the brightest lights at the Saigon planning level having ample former field experience. I asked him what the major rationale now is for U.S. advisory presence in Viet-Nam. He said that the major U.S. contribution now is at the Central Pacification Council level, where institutional changes on the Vietnamese side can be initiated. Regarding advisory personnel in the field, their major role at this time is and should be to signal problems so that they can be corrected at the top or intermediate levels. A secondary contribution is to explain GVN programs to provincial officials, since in many cases the American side knows more about the programs than do the GVN officials.

Shepley said that MR 2 was largely stagnated. He felt there were far too many Americans in-country and that the desirable cuts should take place at the regional level first. He noted that RD was supposed to phase out 25 percent per year, with final phase out four years from now. Regarding the village/district problem, he noted some slight movement towards village power, but more movement towards increased Provincial Council power. Nevertheless, in III and IV Corps, the Village Councils were actually telling the Province Chief what they wanted, in many cases. The makeup of the Provincial Council is increasingly of people with former government positions who were used to exerting leverage. The same is also becoming true of village councils. Shepley doubts that province chiefs will be elected this year and that delaying tactics will be carried out in the legislature. On the other hand, the increased role of the Provincial Council tends to soften the anti-democratic implications of the failure to elect province chiefs. Regarding village officials, the best are former platoon leaders. Peoples Information is not working too well. Where it does work, it is through the provincial mobile advisory team, a concept developed in An Giang. The province chief or his deputy for administration make rounds of the villages with service chiefs, solving problems and setting deadlines. Incidentally, this has the effect of purveying the Peoples Information program. Regarding Peoples Organizations, Shepley had no faith that this really meant anything and that it was rather window dressing for the 1971 Plan. Shepley is leaving Viet-Nam in August and expressed an interest in working at VTC. We should definitely try to get him, provided a slot is available at that time.

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