

Accompanying paper
to Concept for
Victory
12 June 1964

A CATALYST TEAM FOR VIETNAM

This paper explains more fully the purpose and function of the "team" described in the team working paper "Concept for Victory in Vietnam" which outlines and illustrates principles believed essential to success in Vietnam. The "team" is as essential to the concept as the concept is essential to the team.

To call the group simply the "team" would be grossly unfair and misleading, for all the people, Americans and Vietnamese, seeking a victory for freedom in Vietnam must become a single nationwide team, working together with intelligence and good will along correctly oriented routes to a common objective. Let us, then, call this small group "the catalyst team," for its mission may be said to be, above all, to bring about better, more understanding teamwork among Americans and Vietnamese. This group participates in actions only enough to create proper conditions for effective functioning and accomplishment by the assigned participants in those actions.

Just as "the catalyst team" should not be thought of as being the "team," neither should it be thought of as being only a single discrete group. To the extent that human resources, time, and space permit, its members should seek to work with all who can contribute to the effort, seeking to help them make their maximum contributions without interfering with their assigned duties, or their national or organizational loyalties. If experience has taught us anything, it is that men are most effective when they are doing what they believe is consistent with their loyalties.

The catalyst team may be likened to an atom whose nucleus, the leader and his staff, is surrounded by two rings of individuals (like electrons) who, without obstructing access to the nucleus, do tend to attract or influence still other individuals.

The leaders and the members of his staff have essentially three functions: To inform; to advise; and to support. Thus, they seek to serve as many as possible of the nationwide team, with special emphasis on the leaders and on other "catalyzers."

The first surrounding ring may be called the special situations men (rather than special operations, as in the basic paper, since for some this latter term has an inappropriate clandestine connotation). Each will be responsible for knowing about, advising and supporting those concerned with one or more operations or situations special (i.e., peculiar) to the situation in Vietnam. These fall into three classes: Those not within the mission or capability of any one agency, those with implications or significance too great to be the sole concern of a single agency, and those disowned or disregarded by all the agencies. Exemplifying the first is the Montagnard situation; the second, the religious sects; and the third, the Nungs. (At this point, a word of clarification: "Experts" and "specialists" have little value as catalysts; occasionally but exceptionally their services may be needed; but unless they can broaden their scope their stay on this team will be limited.)

The second ring will be coordinators and liaison men, working openly within existing US agencies and among their counterparts, informing, advising, and supporting, helping each to make the maximum contribution to, and to receive the maximum support from, the nationwide international team. It is presently thought that there should be approximately 10 of these men, perhaps two to each of the major US agencies in Vietnam. Many are already serving in Vietnam and could continue in their present positions with additional duties. Others have recently returned to the US but would volunteer to return for a duty which offers hope of winning.

The existence and mission of the team need be neither publicized nor concealed. It needs no formal accreditation to or approval from the Vietnamese, provided it receives the appropriate cooperation from US leaders in the country. It will require no elaborate logistics or separate headquarters. It will require its own communications with Washington through existing facilities. Above all, it must have the backing of the President or it will suffer the same fate as so many other well-intentioned efforts in Vietnam, lack of support for the men on the firing line.

The team is a voluntary brotherhood of men of good-will. It is founded on respect for the abilities of each individual member, not

on rank or conventional status. Each member is known to have the ability to make exceptional contributions over a wide spectrum; as required, they are flexible enough to be concentrated together on a single target or be widely dispersed for multiple targets. The skill in placing each as an advisor is simply a judgement of which disciplined, dedicated man is most trusted by or most useful with the man he advises. Obviously, membership is not subject to appointment by officials outside the team. Membership has been earned by individual success at understanding and using the sound actions of free men against Asian Communist subversive insurgents. This, too, is the basis for increasing such a brotherhood.