

gaged in similar speculation, almost all of which turned out to be wrong. As the senior Vietnamese leader laughingly put it to me, "They don't understand the collegiality of our leadership," a characteristic of the VCP established by the style of Ho Chi Minh and much in contrast to that of other communist parties.

At the Central Committee level, however, almost a third of the members are new, and 39 Central Committee members were removed in an effort to restore confidence in the party's leadership and to bring new blood in. At the Politburo level three new members were added; the size of the Politburo was reduced from 17 to 13. Le Duc Anh, an Army general said to command the Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, was added. There are also two new alternate Politburo members: Nguyen Co Thach, Vietnam's sophisticated and relatively young Foreign Minister, and Army gen-

eral Dong Si Nguyen.

My Vietnamese sources report a generally positive response in the population to the Congress's results. While some were upset at changes in the leadership, particularly regarding the popular General Giap, people were hopeful, those sources say, that progress will result, particularly on the economic front.

After 35 years of almost uninterrupted war and terrible privation, there is no denying the sense of weariness a visitor encounters in Vietnam. The Chinese and people in Washington believe they can "bleed Vietnam dry" with a continued campaign of a war of attrition and semi-blockade. Such strategists may selectively read the proceedings of the fifth VCP congress as evidence that this strategy is succeeding. A view taking account of the toughness of the Vietnamese people and their leadership will come to the opposite conclusion.

U.S. veterans make some progress in Hanoi talks

The second visit of a group of American veterans of the Vietnam war to Hanoi in early June made some headway in healing the wounds still left from the war. Since their first visit in December 1981, the veterans, representing the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), a nationwide veterans' group, have established a process of negotiations, parallel to U.S. government efforts, on the issues of Americans missing in action (MIAs), the effects of the use of the defoliant Agent Orange, and the status of Amerasian children fathered by Americans during the war.

Greg Kane, a Marine veteran and a member of the delegation, told *EIR* that "what was most important is the establishment of a friendly, cooperative dialogue [with the Vietnamese government] and the continuance of that." During their week-long visit to Vietnam, the veterans met with senior government officials including Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach and with Ngo Minh, the chairman of the Committee to Investigate Americans Missing in Action.

Kane described the results of a "lengthy period of discussion" on the MIA issue. Information was provided on recently discovered remains of American soldiers, including one full set of identified remains and material evidence (identity cards) of three others, and remains of four others which have not been identified. Most significant, Kane emphasized, was the agreement of the Vietnamese to review one by one the

names on the list of American MIAs in what is called Category I. This is a new concession by the Vietnamese which Kane felt could lead toward the goal of a reasonable "final accounting" of MIAs. The VVA is cooperating with the administration on this issue, and Kane reported that American officials in Bangkok dealing with this question were pleased with what the veterans had accomplished.

The Agent Orange issue is of great concern to American veterans who claim serious medical effects were inflicted by the use of the toxic defoliant during the war. Vietnamese scientists and doctors report effects including a high incidence of birth defects in areas where the defoliant was heavily used. So far veterans have not been able to receive veterans' benefits for Agent Orange-related problems.

The talks in Hanoi aim toward a study on the Agent Orange effects, combining efforts of the Vietnam Science Council and scientists in the United States and Europe who have done work on this question. On the issue of children of Amerasian parentage, the veterans discussed the streamlining of procedures on both ends for providing exit visas for children, particularly those who want to join fathers who are willing to accept them. The veterans also discussed possibilities for cultural exchanges with Vietnam; one proposal is a concert tour of the United States by the Vietnamese pianist who recently won the international Chopin competition in Warsaw. The Vietnamese are open to this proposal, but the State Department has officially refused a visa to the pianist.

The VVA will send another delegation within some months to continue talks with the Vietnamese on these issues.