

Says spiritual guidance will solve the problems in Vietnam

By TONI ANTHONY

A South Vietnamese citizen is touring the U. S. unveiling a fantastically simple plan to end the war in Vietnam — with peace, love and unity among men — a plan so obvious that it has been obscured by the tons of war rhetoric Americans digest.

Le Loc is a native of Saigon, a member of the Baha'i faith, a veteran of the war in Vietnam, and a high school teacher. He is also the chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Vietnam, and his plan is known simply as the Baha'i Peace Plan.

"The military authorities have accepted that military efforts will not bring victory to any nation in the Vietnamese war, and that politics can only create more divisions," said Loc. "So there is only one way for man to reach peace, and that is to accept a religious solution.

"The Baha' i faith teaches the unity of mankind, and we believe that when this purpose is attained, there will be world peace."

To make the goal of world peace a reality, Loc, and

other Baha'is in South Vietnam are spreading the teaching that all religions are a manifestation of the will of God, a tenant of the Baha'i faith.

The Bahais spread their message of love through local, national, and international spiritual assemblies, elected by the members, who abstain from politics, neither supporting or opposing any political party.

"The South Vietnamese don't believe they will have peace if the U. S. withdraws from the war," said Loc. "If the two countries continue to hate each other, the killings will continue. What is important to us is understanding among men, which will bring peace, love, and unity."

Loc estimated that over one million soldiers and civilians have been killed since the war began in 1957. "The people in Vietnam want simply, peace," said Loc. "Their economy, education, and morale has been destroyed by the war."

To the local populace of South Vietnam, who are mostly poor farmers, whose livelihood has been destroyed by the conflict, Democracy

is a matter of indifference.

The threat of Communism is not a reality to the Vietnamese peasant, who feels that fewer lives would be lost if the Communists took over than are now lost in the war. "At least the people would be alive," was one observer's comment.

In 1969 there were 52,000 members of the Baha'i faith in South Vietnam. Today of their apolitical philosophy, there are 100,000. Because members are allowed more freedom of movement, by the government in contrast to other youths of military age, who are not allowed to travel out of the country.

Now a world wide religion, the Baha'i faith was founded in 1844 in Iran, Persia. It's fundamental teachings are the oneness of mankind, the elimination of religious and racial prejudice, the harmony of science and religion, the equality of men and women, and universal peace.

The Baha'i faith was brought to Vietnam in 1954, and now ranks as the third largest religious group in the country. Banished under the Diem government in 1963, the Baha'i faith began to grow after its fall.