

God's Plan For South Africa

WHAT STRIKES you about Das Bundhoo is the depth, power and clarity of his commitment to the urgency for him and his fellow South Africans to find "a God-guided strategy" for their country.

Men and women of his conviction may be the best hope, perhaps the only hope, to save South Africa from the bloodbath that seems to be the aim of some of its friends as well as of its enemies. Das Bundhoo, a recent Cincinnati visitor, doesn't speak from naivete or inexperience: A South African native and Natal resident of Indian descent, he is national president of the 30,000-member South African Federation of Leather Trade Unions. He is also vice president of the joint labor-management National Industrial Council of the Leather Industry of South Africa.

Trust among leaders of all races in South Africa is his aim. He believes it can happen. And he's worked in that direction already.

For example, after being invited to the recent International Moral Re-Armament (MRA) conference in Washington on "Making a World of Difference," it took Bundhoo three months to decide to come. He hadn't known how he'd pay his travel expenses. But conviction grew that he was meant to come, and when he finally "surrendered," as he put it, a miracle occurred.

HE TOLD his union board of his plan. Then to his amazement, its white Afrikaner secretary, a member of South Africa's ruling party, "moved that the union pay my fare," Bundhoo recalled. The board approved, and his airline ticket arrived swiftly.

Bundhoo will talk about disinvestment, if he must, but that's not what interests him. "It's not a matter of investment or disinvestment, but of filling empty hands with work and empty hearts with an idea that really satisfies," he said in an interview at the Cincinnati home of relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Vi-



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Jay C. Parikh. Pressed, Bundhoo would say only that to rob South Africa of investment could hurt many families from jobs lost.

And on a positive note he emphasized the South African government's release of 500,000 state-owned homes for purchase. "Many workers of all colors have taken advantage of this," he said. His union includes an estimated 10,000 blacks, 10,000 Asians and 10,000 mixed-race coloreds and whites.

HOW CAN Americans best help? "By having more involvement with South Africa, by sending more black technicians who can help educate their counterparts," he replied. The better trained they are, obviously, the easier for workers of any stripe to land jobs. "This training is very essential," Bundhoo said, "and must be one of the top priorities. There also needs to be more dialogue at higher levels between the U.S. government and Pretoria. MRA is also very important in that through it informal discussions with top leaders may be held. We need prayer, faith and complete surrender to finding God's strategy for South Africa."

He harked back to the informal discussions at the MRA conference he'd just attended at Georgetown University as a pattern for what needs to happen in his country. At the conference, which this writer also attended, about 500 men and women from around 40 countries — and six continents — met in formal and informal sessions. The agenda was geared to fresh starts, to breakthroughs and revolution in the thinking about one's self, aims and motives and about one's country and its aims and motives.

Some conferees would be putting to a quick test at high levels what they had learned. One, Jim Lester, is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee of Britain's House of Commons and former member of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's cabinet. He and others from his committee would be meeting soon with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow. U.S. Sen. Jeremiah Denton, R-Ala., and U.S. Rep. Charles Bennett, D-Fla., addressed the conference.

BUNDHOO HAD an arresting thought about how Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Rajmohan Gandhi, the distinguished journalist and grandson of the Mahatma, might work together to bring India to new heights. "Their grandfathers worked together, one (Jawaharlal Nehru) in the political sector, the other (the Mahatma) in the spiritual sector," he said. "Rajmohan, for example, could go easily into the Punjab, where Rajiv would have to have a lot of security." Rajmohan Gandhi recently completed a year's study at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.

Certainly in a nuclear age, when man could be wiped out between noon and the cocktail hour, fresh insights, thinking and breakthroughs were never more urgent. The conference that brought Bundhoo to Washington invited everyone to measure his or her life by absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, and seek direction from the "still small voice" inside.

Those who accept that invitation experience a new power that, widely enough applied, might indeed save a world that seems at times bent on its own destruction. In this respect, Das Bundhoo is assuredly destined to be one of the mighty, positive voices in his troubled land — and beyond.

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