

Famine Relief

By Bill Dawson

Taboo! What is it? It's a prohibition or restriction imposed by social custom on certain behaviour or word usage. It comes from the island of Tonga in the South Pacific, and used to be chanted when someone questioned a custom that was regarded as sacred, or performed an action contrary to that custom. Death could result. In Britain today we have many taboos - subjects or ideas that must not be questioned. Death doesn't usually result, merely unthinking people showing shock-horror or choosing to be deeply offended. "Politically incorrect" is the mild term used nowadays when a verbal taboo is broken.

So, which taboo am I about to break? Well, I'm going to dare to pose the following questions: "Do the starving masses in poverty-stricken countries deserve to be in that situation? Have they brought it on themselves? Can they help themselves if they have a mind to? Are we wasting our time and valuable resources by giving them aid - money and `plane-loads of food - called famine relief? Are they victims of climate or circumstance - or, to put it bluntly, is it their own fault? And does famine relief really change anything?"

Let's have a look at some facts. Hunger is a world-wide occurrence, but let's just consider Africa for the moment. The 'developed nations' started giving aid on a large scale to Sudan about 14 years ago: today, still a large part of the population is starving. That fact makes its own statement. Why are the people still starving? In fact, why were they starving in the first place? What is the most significant occupation of the people of **Sudan**? Why, it's fighting, killing and maiming themselves, of course, and killing and maiming is a very expensive business. They have to grab many millions in aid annually in order to be able to use the money that could go to buy food for the whole population, to buy modern weapons of hate. Tens of thousands of men, who could and should be working the land are now active killers, working hard at destroying the land and the crops of others, as well as murdering their brothers and sisters who try to cultivate the land - and someone has to feed them. A huge portion of the 'famine aid' is gobbled up - in one way or another - by the killers and those men and women who egg them on. Cruelty and viciousness is the order of the day in that land.

"But what about the victims, surely they are not to blame - they're not all vicious killers, are they?" is the obvious question.

By victims we usually mean the losers, the under-dogs, the ones with the less power. But, people should not be judged by their actions, for it is their attitude and intention that counts. How would these 'victims' behave if they had the whip hand, if they had others in their power? Well, consider the practice of the poor farmers with their pitiful herds of half-starved cattle: in order to have meat to eat, but without having to kill a cow and therefore having to eat all the meat at once, it is a known documented fact

that there is a general practice of cutting pieces of flesh off the flanks of the living cows, patching up the holes, and cooking and eating the flesh they have cut out. Many of them periodically cut a vein in the neck of their victim (a cow that they have at their mercy), and drink a certain amount of blood from it. These people use their cattle as living, agonised larders. Victims did someone say? Who are the real victims, and who are the cruel, vicious ones?

'But they suffer from drought in those areas, and they can't help the climate, can they? Their cattle are dying for lack of water and the lush grass that water brings - aren't they?'

So, they're starving, and yet they choose to insist on eating meat? On one acre of ground you can grow 180 pounds of beef - or over 3,000 pounds of corn, or 20,000 pounds of potatoes or similar root crops. 180 pounds of beef - or 20,000 pounds of potatoes - that is their choice. And they choose to have one pound of beef rather than one cwt of potatoes. They choose to have one pound of cow rather than 16 one-pound loaves. And we are told they are starving because of circumstances beyond their control.

'But there's a shortage of water for the earth, isn't there?' some would say. Well, it requires 500 litres of water to produce one kilo of potatoes, but it requires 100,000 litres of water to produce one kilo of beef - 200 times as much water. And those people insist on beef - in a regular drought area - and beef cut from a living animal doesn't worry them.

Of course, there are other issues at the source of the starvation and violence, and the leaders of the two major factions agree that the two main causes are 'self-determination of regions', and religion. So, let them give up their religions which engender their hatreds. They can do so if they wish: it is their choice, and at a stroke it would remove half of the cause of the murders and mutilations - and the starvation. But only if they choose to do so.

Isn't it time to break the taboo, to risk being unfashionable, to risk being politically incorrect, and to use common sense instead? Dare we seriously ask ourselves - do these people really need our aid? Do they deserve it? Will their circumstances really change, without their changing their ways? It seems hugely unlikely: neither their ways nor their circumstances have improved over the last fourteen years of aid being poured in.

Sudan is just one starving African country; much of southern Africa is verging on a state of famine, too. Should we bombard them with our millions - in money or in food - with famine relief? To start with, there are **Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe** with famine problems. The percentages of the populations of those countries said to be on the verge of starvation are 23%, 21%, 28%, 3%, 20%, 21% and 46% respectively.

As I write this I am looking at a photograph of a small group of cattle at a very

shrunk waterhole at the dried-up Lusitu River in Zambia. I count 27 cows drinking there.

Now, if they chose to grow food with that supply of water, instead of insisting on the luxury of meat, they could feed between 100 and 200 times as many people. It's simple arithmetic that anyone can understand. Is it better to pay them to carry on the way they are, or would it be more caring to point out to them the folly and pig-headedness of their ways? I hope I don't offend anyone's sensibilities by posing this question.

How did one of the richest and most fertile regions on the continent come to this? Are there any other factors that indicate it is their own fault that they are in this condition? You could say it is the drought: but droughts are a regular occurrence in southern Africa - they don't come as a huge surprise, they are to be expected - like autumn leaves on the railway lines that have caused so much disruption in Britain. No, it is the folly and irresponsibility of the people: for instance, last year the Malawian people sold off their entire Strategic Grain Reserve, an emergency store of food built up in case of dry spells, and which could have fed the nation. The **Malawians** say it was an 'honest mistake' - and, of course, they want us to pay for that 'mistake' - with famine relief. In my home town in Lancashire they would not have called it 'an honest mistake' - they would have called it 'bloody daft'. They claim the International Monetary Fund told them to do it, so wouldn't it be better if the I.M.F. were made to pay for the relief of their famine - they can certainly afford it.

And maybe, at the same time, the I.M.F. should pay up for the consequences of the advice they gave to **Zambia** - drop agricultural subsidies and scrap centralised marketing - which they very stupidly did. So cheap, subsidised food from South Africa was dumped there, the Zambian people would not buy what their own farmers produced, many farmers could not sell their crops and went out of production, and now there is famine - of course. Even the famine relief World Food Program in Zambia will not buy food for their refugee camps from Zambian farmers who are growing it in the next field - it's cheaper from South Africa.

What else helped to cause starvation in Zambia? They used to rely heavily on their huge, state-owned copper mine: it made them quite prosperous and stable. So they privatised it - and bungled it, the same as our rulers did for us in the U.K. with the railways. Starvation results. And this is not due to unfortunate circumstances beyond their control, or unfortunate climatic conditions - in fact, Zambia has nearly half of southern Africa's water resources: food can be grown there in abundance. So need we even ask who is to blame for their famine - especially when they will not change their ways and revert to their former successful system - just as we in Britain will not revert to a sensible, centralised railway system. But then again, we do not ask the French people, or the Japanese people to pay for our stupidity, merely because they have a superb railway systems and ours is in chaos. The same logic applies to Zambia.

The Bushmen of the Kalahari, in **Botswana**, are dying, literally of thirst. Is it because we Europeans are not giving them enough 'famine relief' aid? Is it because of drought?

Would it change their lives - save their lives - if we were to pour in aid? No, as a matter of fact, it wouldn't. Their country has just received aid to the tune of fifty million Euros, and the people to whom it has been handed are using it to deprive their fellow inhabitants of water - actually cutting off their water supplies, as well as sending soldiers, with weapons we have helped them to purchase, to achieve a spot of ethnic cleansing. At the same time they are refusing European MP's, representing the people who gave them the millions of Euros, official permission to merely visit the area. That's Famine Relief - Africa style.

Of course, there is no need to discuss **Zimbabwe** in detail and the three quarters of the food production that has recently been deliberately destroyed - and the 6 million people vulnerable to starvation. But what is the nature of the people? Innocent victims, or potential villains? Mugabe is using U.N. food aid as a weapon to get supporters: tens of thousands of ordinary people, given extra food and, more importantly, power, have turned into brutal thugs, turning not only whites but thousands of their black brothers off the land. No use trying to buy them out of their impending famine: stupidity and brutality make a powerful combination, and those people have it in trumps.

But what about the **Sahara**, a desert land almost the size of the United States - three and a half million square miles - virtually a wasteland - yet once the most fertile and cultivated area of the known world.

'Oh, but that's all in the past, isn't it? It happened thousands of years ago: it's nothing to do with the present-day Africans. They can't help it.'

Not correct. The desert is advancing southwards at the rate of three mile per year - over a thousand mile front. That means that three thousand square miles of desert is being created each year. And I do mean created: the continued grazing of meat animals, and the continued destruction of certain plants, is causing wind erosion, taking away the fertile soil for ever - and it is being done knowingly and deliberately by the inhabitants, because they want to keep their tribal traditions, and refuse to change their lifestyle. Any use giving famine relief to them, do you think? Would it stop them from destroying the land? Would it stop them from destroying themselves? Dare I say it - who is to blame for their worsening plight?

I could go on about other African Famine Relief countries, such as **Angola** where a 27-year civil war has forced millions off the land, destroyed infrastructure and left huge areas off-limits for farming. After 27 years of killing and otherwise destroying themselves, I don't think my words are going to change their indescribable folly and the lifestyle they choose to lead, and I'm equally certain giving them more millions won't either.

So, is African famine necessary, inevitable - an unfortunate circumstance of nature? Or is it quite avoidable, simply by a change to a more common-sense attitude?

We are constantly being shown pictures of starving children, told of the high death

rate among them, that there are just too many mouths to feed. Yet they deliberately keep bringing more children the world, into a land where there is drought, war, disease and famine. That is the extent of their caring for children. And then they cry out for someone else to feed and clothe these children, whilst they keep on producing more and more babies, regardless of the suffering they are bringing upon them. This is totally selfish, irresponsible behaviour, and they should be told to stop doing it immediately, instead of being paid for doing it.

Of course, the Christian religion, which has a virtual stranglehold over the lives of millions of poor Africans, must share a large portion of the blame for this insane behaviour. I speak mainly of the high priests of the Church of Rome, which deny them the right to use contraceptives, declaring that this is sinful, and that their god will punish them if they use them.

Which brings us to the next point - AIDS. Literally millions of people, those who would otherwise be able to work the land, or earn a living for their families, are dying annually with this disease - and yet the people are being told by their priests they are not permitted to have 'safe sex', by using condoms. Their masters in Rome obviously consider it preferable to continue to spread the disease, regardless of the misery it causes, rather than use basic human compassion - or even common sense.

I realise full well that I might offend many genuine, well-intentioned people who sincerely believe that it is right and proper to feel pity and give without question, but I care enough for these unfortunate, suffering people to risk that, by daring to break a few taboos and point out unpalatable facts, and making unfashionable and 'politically incorrect' suggestions for a solution to their problems.

One relief organisation states: 'If you give someone a fish, it will feed them for a day, but if you teach them how to fish it will feed them for a lifetime.' Now that is sensible.

It is useless to try to better their conditions for them, to counteract the circumstances supposedly beyond their control. Surely it is more practical and beneficial to tell them how to deserve better, by being more caring of their fellow man, their Earth and the creatures upon it. Then, and only then, will their conditions improve, permanently - unless, of course, they refuse to change their ways, and wipe themselves out, in one way or another, before that happens. However, I have no desire to try to force my way upon others: I honour their free choice, and can only observe, sadly, the relentless march of its consequences.

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