WAR AND FOOD SECURITY

Notes by R. H. Green

I. Two Horsemen Ride Together

1. In SSA in the 1980s famine (defined as large numbers of food shortage
    related deaths) has occurred only in war cases: Angola, Mozambique,
    Somalia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Sudan, Liberia and portions of Uganda.

    This is not new. After the early 1920s famine was virtually
    prevented in SSA with the single exception of Ethiopia. The dominant
    causal factor appears to have been the internal combustion engine
    (i.e. lorry transport).

2. Drought in the absence of war - even when severe, multi year and in
    countries with poor transport did not result in famine. (In the
    1970s Ethiopia's 1972 drought did result in famine - and the downfall
    of the Emperor - because of lack of response).

    War and drought have almost without exception proved lethal.
    However, war without drought has also been associated with famine,
    e.g. in Liberia and parts of the Sudan and Angola.

3. The impact of war on food security operates through:

    Reduced Production
    a. related to rural terrorism as a strategy (e.g. Renamo and UNITA
        in Mozambique and Angola); and/or
    b. massive violence directed or related to conquest objectives (e.g.
        Liberia, Eritrea, parts of Ethiopia, 'middle belt' of Sudan);

    Politics
    a. international (external) use of food aid for leverage;
    b. domestic (government or armed opponents) use in support of
        military or public relations strategies;

    Logistics
    a. overload on limited infrastructural, vehicle park, institutional
        capacity;
    b. physical damage to facilities and personnel.

II. What Is To Be Done?

1. Resolve war. Desirable, ultimate solution. Unlikely food security operations can play leading role. (Domestic concern about famine can, e.g. in Angola, Mozambique. But external concern is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to channel domestic famine concern to conflict resolution negotiations.)

2. Set up food corridors of peace. Sometimes possible - only if famine of supporters and public relations concern outweigh political and strategic concerns of blocking food to enemy and if both sides have identifiable proto-civil governance zones and control over own forces.

3. Strengthen governmental (including armed alternative as in Tigre, Eritrea), domestic NGO, foreign NGO, UN distribution capacity and domestic infrastructure rehabilitation. Most war/famine victims are in areas which are (even if with a risk) accessible, not in full fledged combat zones. (Graphically illustrated in Mozambique and Western/Eastern Sudan.)

4. Mobilise food aid on the basis of reasoned projections of need (with a bias to caution - given lead times, delivery lags, non-fulfilment of pledges, 'lost, strayed or stolen' inevitability in chaotic conditions caution in respect to lives means high demand estimates) and a worked out supplier to eater logistics plan with dates.

5. Avoid creating an illusion of adequacy by starving domestic logistics and then using inability to deliver flow well below agreed targets (or even pledges) to justify further cuts.

6. Avoid a 'short term' perception, i.e. make clear need will continue so long as war does and will not decline (may even increase if war blocked access to significant numbers of people) until one to two years after relatively peaceful conditions are restored.

7. Plan for converting emergency survival relief into rehabilitation support (i.e. tools for reclearing land, rebuilding homes, tilling, seeds, core livestock herd, food until harvest is won, i.e. 8 to 18 months) and for the logistics of converting a - usually - camp based wartime programme to providing food where people are as they seek to rebuild livelihoods.

III. <u>Some Glaring Gaps and Dangers</u>

1. Inadequate food supplies.

2. Even more inadequate logistics.

3. Preference for limited contact point, main road linked camp distribution over more complex home district/accessible to farm approach.

4. Business (including annual leave!) as usual approaches to impending disaster.

5. Shell-shocked acceptance that minimum essential (to avert famine) levels of food and distributional capacity cannot be obtained leading to sitting back to watch others die without at least loud banging on the table (which surprisingly often has produced results).

6. Inadequate, delayed field reporting and central analysis with resultant loss of time leeway to avert famine.

7. Lack of serious forward planning and pre-mobilisation in respect to converting emergency into rehabilitation programmes. In 1991 in Mozambique, Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia perhaps Somalia, 1992 - one hopes - in Liberia, rehabilitation should already have full co-priority with survival. Only in the Sudan would that be wishful thinking to date but even there pre-planning/pre-mobilisation are needed because, as in Ethiopia or Somalia, when a breakup of the conflict constellation of forces comes it is likely to take place very rapidly.