Credo.

Caroline Cox.

Over the years, I have developed a passionate belief in the fundamental importance of freedom.

Brought up a Christian, I was familiar with Jesus’ famous words ‘You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.’ Experience has taught me the fundamental importance of truth and freedom, through exposure to the suffering inflicted on those who are denied them. The German theologian Kasemann said *‘Jesus means freedom’*. I have witnessed how Christianity so often motivates individuals and societies to speak for the oppressed and to set the captive free.

My awareness began with academic freedom. In the 1970s, as Head of Department of Sociology at the Polytechnic of North London with 16 out of 20 Communist Party staff, I was so deeply disturbed by ruthless indoctrination, academic blackmail and physical violence in 'occupations' premised on lies that I eventually co-authored a book 'The Rape of Reason', to which Bernard Levin devoted 3 articles in *'The Times'*, one headed *’In all Its Brutality, the Making of an Intellectual Concentration Camp’.*

In the 1980's, I travelled many times to Poland to people suffering extreme deprivations of martial law. I always returned humbled by their courage, faith and dignity. One vignette: totalitarianism meant one could be sent to prison for smuggling blank paper; I was warned: ‘*It’s dangerous: one can write ideas on it’*. We covertly visited a Professor of History in the University of Krakow, asking if we could help or if that would be too dangerous for him. He replied: *’If we do not use such freedom as we still have, we are already lost.’* I returned, terrified by the reality of Communist totalitarianism – and appalled that this was what my academic colleagues were ruthlessly trying to impose.

In the 1990s, I travelled many times to Sudan in the grip of the Islamist National Islamic Front regime which had military jihad against all who opposed it – Muslims, Christians and traditional believers. That war killed 2 million, displaced 4 million and enslaved hundreds of thousands. I was privileged to help to rescue several thousand. I will never forget their heartbreak stories, such as little Deng’s, aged about six. As we talk, tears stream down his cheeks. He has just learnt that both his parents had been killed in the raid when he was abducted; he is now an orphan. But before we part, a little wistful smile appears and he *says ‘At least I am home now, I am called my own name ‘Deng’; I’m no longer called ‘Abt’* (Arabic for slave). I believe no-one should be called ‘Slave’ in our world today. But there are at least 27 million slaves in our world. I am so passionate about this barbaric phenomenon that I have brought out a new edition of a book on modern slavery with three chapters of stories of people into whose eyes I have looked who have been slaves - and their voices speak for those whose voices we cannot hear, because they are still enslaved. William Wilberforce's mission is far from accomplished. I believe we have a moral imperative to continue his mission.

In the 1990s and into this century my passion for freedom led me to try to be a 'Voice for the Voiceless' for victims of oppression off the radar screen of major aid organisations and international media, often trapped behind closed borders. Major aid organisations can generally only visit places with the permission of a sovereign government. If a government is victimising a minority and denies access, humanitarian organisations such as the UN big players cannot reach those victims. I therefore established a small NGO, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), to reach such people with aid and advocacy. One example: a small historically Armenian land, Nagorno Karabakh, was cut off by Stalin from Armenia and relocated in Azerbaijan. In the early 1990s, Azerbaijan began ethnic cleansing the 150,000 Armenians who lived there, unleashing full-scale war. With phenomenal courage - and some miracles – the Armenians hung onto their historic land. A cease-fire was signed in 1994. Now, HART supports a path-breaking Rehabilitation Centre there and I have just returned from my 80th visit.

We try to serve and speak for other people denied their freedom and trapped in conflict, including the Rohingya Muslim, Shan Buddhist and Christian Kachin peoples in Burma; and the peoples of Sudan and South Sudan who have suffered far too much for far too long.

I am painfully aware that my endeavours are minuscule. But I believe that we who have freedom should use our freedom in the service of those denied theirs.

HART is very small. We often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of our partners’ needs on frontlines of faith and freedom around the world. We could feel almost paralysed. But we have a motto:

*'We cannot do everything, but we must not do nothing.'*

I believe, if, together, we all do something, we really can make a difference.