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Politics and the Paralympic Games: Disability Sport in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe

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In 1948, Dr. Ludwig Guttmann, a physician and surgeon at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital near Aylesbury, United Kingdom, organized the first games for athletes with spinal-cord injuries. Dr. Guttmann pioneered a regimen of therapy for his patients, encouraging sport and physical exercise as part of a program to help overcome trauma. A one-in-ten survival rate for spinal injury in 1940 had become a nine-in-ten survival rate by 1950, and the Games commemorated the tremendous medical advances of the post-war years.[1] The opening ceremonies of the first Stoke Mandeville Games, with two teams of fourteen men and two women, coincided with the opening of the 1948 London Olympics, the first post-war Olympiad. Guttmann later referred to this as a "*coincidence*," as if to imply the link between the two Games was destiny.[2] But destiny it may have been: twelve years later the Stoke Mandeville Games opened in the Olympic Stadium in Rome in the first Paralympic Games, the world's premier sporting competition for athletes with disabilities.

The second Stoke Mandeville Games opened in 1949 with six teams; among the athletes was the late Margaret Harriman, one of the most accomplished all-around Paralympians in history. Just two years before, at age 19, Harriman sustained a fractured spine in a tractor accident. She wound up in Stoke Mandeville for treatment and immediately latched on to sport as a supplement to her rehabilitation. When the quartermaster handed her a wooden bow and arrows, her first shot hit the gold center of the target.[3] She never gave up her interest: when she immigrated to the Southern African country of Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe) in 1957, she brought disabled sport with her to the African continent.[5] The year 1957 proved pivotal in the history of the Stoke Mandeville Games: 360 competitors from twenty-four countries participated. The Games had grown too large for organizers to handle; beginning in 1958, the Games would become a national competition from which a British team would be chosen to advance to international competition, opening in 1960 as the first Paralympics. Rhodesia was well-represented: Harriman took home two gold medals in archery and a silver and two bronze in women's swimming events at those first Paralympics.[5]

With Harriman's encouragement, athletes with disabilities in Rhodesia adopted training techniques and coaches from the non-disabled sport world. The country was still then the British colony of Southern Rhodesia, a white minority-ruled state in which systems of racial segregation and class division deepened even as independence was imminent for most African countries. The resistance of Rhodesia's large white minority to black majority rule only grew as time passed. In 1965, Rhodesia's white settlers, numbering nearly a quarter of a million, rebelled against the world and declared their state sovereign of the British Empire. African states, backed by Britain and the developing world, sought to ostracize Rhodesia from international organizations, including sporting events, and deny the illegal regime recognition.[6] Sporting contacts could "*enhance the subjective perception of the legitimacy of the political system*," Strack notes.[7] For a brutal police state, critics argued, this was unconscionable.

The Paralympic Movement, evolving from its medical and humanitarian origins into the world of sport, eventually confronted the world of cruel politics. Large swaths of the newly-independent world and the Soviet bloc entered the Paralympic Movement, and inevitably the tensions between the developed and developing worlds erupted over the continued participation of Rhodesia and its neighbor, apartheid South Africa. The division between haves and have-nots, however, persisted. As disability sport became increasingly commercialized, new forms of training, equipment, and competition heightened a class division, placing sport out of reach for many disabled persons worldwide. To a great extent, class and race were correlated. Suffering from lower literacy rates, gender bias, structural unemployment, chronic instability or natural disaster, and lack of social welfare, the posi-

tion of disabled persons in the developing world remains precarious.[8] Disability often creates economic dependence; in the developing world, disability sport, however important it is for health, socialization, and acceptance, may be impossible. For the Paralympic Movement, which has led countless athletes to overcome barriers and build bridges, this contradiction has defined its history. The history of Rhodesia's Paralympic participation illustrates these tensions cogently.

Paralympism as Charismatic Authority

The words and deeds of Sir Ludwig Guttmann and the medical and humanitarian commitment of Stoke Mandeville infect the Paralympic Movement's modern organization and define its vision. In many ways, Paralympism is a charismatic authority, as defined by Max Weber. Charisma exists outside the world of rational rules and immemorial traditions, rooted in the spiritual, revolving around a supernatural leader who commands the loyalty and respect of his followers. This charisma, unbounded as it is by laws and limitations and dedicated to the status of a charismatic individual, is inherently unstable. Charisma thus becomes either erased ("*routinized*" in Weber's words) or transferred to an office, a position, or a continuing authority ("*institutionalized*").[9]

Scholars have long recognized the charismatic origins of the Olympic Movement, descended from the "charismatic leadership of [Baron Pierre] de Coubertin, and his idealist vision of Olympism," which "has been institutionalized into the [International Olympic Committee] as a value structure from which decisions emanate."[10] The quasi-religious rituals and symbols surrounding the Olympics, the rhythmic four-year cycle, the motto "citius, altius, fortius" (faster, higher, stronger), the five rings and the torch, and the solemn opening and closing ceremonies, are all part of this almost spiritual faith of Prophet de Coubertin and his successors on the IOC, mythically attached to the world of Ancient Greece and the sporting festivals that date back to 770 B.C.[11]

The origins of the Paralympic Movement share many of the same qualities. As Sainsbury notes, the name Sir Ludwig Guttmann "i*s as synonymous with the Paralympic Games as de Coubertin's name is with the Olympic Games.*"[12] Olympism and Paralympism descended from the charismatic visions of their respective prophetic leaders, whose idealism transferred to their organizations. Over the decades, the two Movements have sought to preserve the visions of their founders, combating those unwelcome forces that threatened the charisma: the commercialism, the politics, the doping, the professionalism. Sir Guttmann, like de Coubertin before him, carried a universal, internationalist vision: "*Looking into the future, I foresaw the time when this sports event would be truly international and the Stoke Mandeville Games would achieve world fame as the disabled person's equivalent of the Olympic Games*," he recalled of those first 1948 Games.[13]

Despite these conscious efforts to model the Paralympics after the Olympics, only over time did the two charismatic visions merge. The Olympic Games began at the height of European imperialism, personified in the mythical connection to Ancient Greece, the birthplace of Western civilization. From the first Olympiad in Athens in 1896, the Olympics tended to replicate the social distinctions of the late nineteenth century: the division between amateurism (middle class) and professionalism (working class); strict gender divisions; and a corporate structure heavily weighted toward the West.[14] The Paralympics, on the other hand, descended not from an ancient religious sporting festival, but from modern medical technology; Paralympism was a challenge to the old order, which had long held that the strongest and most perfectly formed should dominate. Integration became the watchword of the Paralympic Movement: the integration of a disability into the body through rehabilitation and therapy; the integration of disability sport into the able-bodied sporting sphere; the integration of a person with a disability into society. The dream of athletes to overcome their limitations, this was the dream of Guttmann's Paralympism.

The year 1960 was the fulfillment of Guttmann's vision, as 400 disabled competitors gathered in Rome's Olympic Stadium, lived in the Olympic Village, and competed under Olympic conditions.[15] Although the 1957 Stoke Mandeville Games, with 360 competitors from 24 countries, were roughly equivalent in scale and scope to the 1960 Games, the difference was the Olympic connection; thus, the 1960 Stoke Mandeville Games in Rome have retroactively become known as the first Paralympics. After Rome came Tokyo in 1964. Guttmann's idealism, reminiscent of de Coubertin's half a century earlier, was evident: "*The Tokyo Games were a wonderful demonstration of international cooperation and goodwill*," he wrote: *Although the will to win was very high and each wheelchair athlete gave of his best, running through the Games was a sense of deeper purpose, which binds the physically handicapped from so many countries into a close unity. They realize that the Games have a much deeper significance than the winning of medals and honors for their country. [...] So long as our three symbols--friendship, unity, and sportsmanship--remain the guiding principles of the Stoke Mandeville Games, these Games will go from strength to strength and remain an inspiration to the sports movement of all disabled in the world.*[16] When he opened the 1960 Rome Games, Pope John XXIII was right on target: "*Dr. Guttmann, you are the de Coubertin of the Paralyzed*!"[17]

De Coubertin's Olympic vision, founded in an era of kings and empires, radically changed in the decades that followed as the Euro-centric Games expanded to include large swaths of Africa and Asia and the Soviet bloc. The new members gave rise to a new, competing vision of Olympism that threatened the charismatic authority of the IOC: the belief in sport as a human right, in absolute anti-discrimination and representative democracy in the sporting sphere. The controversies that rocked the Olym-

pic Games over the expulsions first of South Africa and then of Rhodesia illustrate the spectacular clash between the charismatic vision and the competing democratic one. When the controversies came to a final vote, the democratic tendency won, and the two white minority regimes were expelled. In the end, the vision itself changed: in 1981, a revision of the Olympic Charter included issues of human rights and anti-discrimination, co-opting the competing egalitarian vision of Olympism.[18]

The Paralympic Movement, as well, radically changed with the integration of new trends, cultures, and technologies into the disability-sporting sphere, eventually outgrowing its medical-humanitarian origins. After Tokyo, the Paralympics continued their rhythmic cycle separately from the Olympics, for a variety of political and financial reasons: Tel Aviv, Israel in 1968; Heidelberg, West Germany in 1972; Toronto, Canada in 1976; Arnhem, the Netherlands in 1980. The paths of the Paralympics and Olympics would reunite, more than two decades after the 1964 Tokyo Games in Seoul, South Korea in 1988.[19] Just as the old social distinctions of white, male, upper-class sport preserved in the Olympics began to erode in the second half of the twentieth century, so too did the Paralympics diversify. Old barriers would fall.

Politics would eventually infect the movement. In 1976, several countries boycotted the Toronto Paralympics before and during the Games in order to protest the inclusion of *apartheid* South Africa. As Scruton writes, *"sadly, it was the first time that the Games had been disrupted by political intervention, denying disabled athletes the right to compete in sports events for which they had trained for years."* It was *"a blow against the ideals of the international federations in creating a world sports movement for severely disabled people,"* she concluded.[20]

Guttmann's charismatic vision, though continuing to define the Paralympic Movement, was rapidly changing as it confronted international political forces.

A certain tension always existed in the Paralympic Movement between the medical professionals and humanitarians who sought to organize the Games around disability, with a rigid classification system in which athletes of similar disability would compete together; and the sports professionals who sought organization solely around sport, with athletes of varying (dis)abilities competing across categorical lines. In the early years, the medical tendencies, supported by Guttmann, were paramount, and organizers enforced a rigid classification system for determining eligibility for sporting competitions. By the 1970s, the transition was clear: sports professionals, not the medical community, organized the first Paralympic Winter Games in Onskoldsvik, Sweden in 1976. As McLarty explains,*"the Winter Paralympics were organized by functional classification, meaning by physical ability to do sport rather than medical diagnosis (i.e., disability)." In short, only ability, not disability, mattered. On the other hand, "the Summer Games traditionally segregated athletes by disability; hence, an athlete with a spinal cord injury would only compete against other athletes with spinal cord injuries"* and not, for instance, against athletes with paraplegia or cerebral palsy, even if the mobility of the athletes were similar.[21] The gulf between the "medical camp" and the "sports camp" deepened. In 1984, two separate Summer Paralympics were held: wheelchair events, organized on a medical basis with closed competition for athletes with spinal cord injuries, were held in Stoke Mandeville (2300 athletes, representing 45 countries), while all other athletes competed in New York City, organized on a sporting basis with open competition determined by ability, not disability (1700 athletes, 41 countries). Integrating new athletes into the Movement mirrored the integrative Paralympic ideal and changed Paralympism forever: for as long as the Movement was about medicine and the humanitarian ideals of Stoke Mandeville, it remained above politics, insulated from the political sphere. The 1976 "Torontolympiad" was the first jointly organized by the International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (ISMGF), composed of medical professionals, and the International Sports Organization for the Disabled (ISOD), composed of sport professionals. Although Guttman was president of both, the ISMGF alone had organized the previous four Paralympics. The Toronto Games were also the first threatened by politics; perhaps the shift in the Paralympic philosophy from its medical-humanitarian origins into the world of sport removed the insulation of the Paralympics from the political arena.[22]

The definition of "disability" expanded to include new groups not yet integrated into the world of disability sport: athletes with visual impairments and amputations first competed in 1976 Toronto Paralympics, and in the years that followed athletes with intellectual disabilities competed as well.[23] Modern medical technology helped erode the old classification systems: the use of prosthetics and aids have helped to integrate athletes with varying disabilities. The Olympics and Paralympics *de facto* for the 1988 Seoul Games, and by treaty for the 2000 Sydney Games, symbolized this trend. Today, the modern International Paralympic Committee lists "integration" among its goals:

> *"to seek the integration of sports for athletes with a disability into the international sports movement for able-bodied athletes, while safeguarding and preserving the identity of sports for disabled athletes."*[24]

Not all was integrative. As Sainsbury alludes,"t*he explosion in sophisticated equipment with all the expense involved in areas such as designer wheelchairs and prosthetics" are a major barrier to universal disability sport.*[25] *In a country like Zimbabwe, which has been starkly socially divided for most of modern history, this "disability divide*" persists despite the efforts of the modern disability rights movement. Zimbabwe's participation in the Paralympic Games, especially the team's dazzling victories

at the 2000 Sydney and the 2004 Athens Paralympics, has given rise to a new generation of heroes. In winning their personal struggles, Zimbabwe's disabled athletes have not only become role models for persons living with a disability; they are national symbols of the insurmountable obstacles that their countrymen overcame in their nation's tragic history.

Sport and Disability in a Divided Society

White settler-ruled Rhodesia, since 1965 in rebellion from the British Empire, sent teams to both the 1972 Munich Olympics and the Heidelberg Paralympics, both held in West Germany. Here the histories diverged: the all-white Rhodesian Paralympic team took home ten medals, five of them gold; the racially integrated Olympic team, however, would win no medals. The threat of an African boycott and the potential disruption of the Munich Olympics over Rhodesian participation was a cost too high for the IOC, which chose instead to exclude the isolated rebel state from competition. Why did Rhodesia continue to compete in the Paralympics but not in the Olympics? The Paralympics were fundamentally more isolated from international political currents than the Olympics were for three reasons. First, the Paralympics were decidedly more integrative and internationalist than the Olympics, and, given the Movement's medical and humanitarian background, seen to be "above" politics. Second, the small-scale nature and the generally lower public interest in the Paralympics meant that policymakers and advocates did not push as hard for expulsion of the white minority regimes ("below" politics). Finally, simple geopolitics was determinative: Africa and the developing world were underrepresented; their collective voice was weaker.

With the independence of Sub-Saharan Africa and the resulting power shift in the structures of many international sports bodies, South African participation came under assault: sport in South Africa was strictly segregated, and only all-white teams could represent South Africa abroad. As a sanctioned, white-ruled state, Rhodesia's fate in many international organizations often followed South Africa's. The sporting sphere in Rhodesia, however, was not segregated along South African lines, and white domination was incomplete, only partially established. While boxing, for instance, came under state control early on, regulated and standardized as part of a greater pattern of urban domination, government intrusion into soccer was much less successful.[26] The 1947-9 football strike in protest of government attempts to control soccer was successful, preserving soccer's autonomy and independent organization under black African control.[27] The segregation of the sporting sphere in Rhodesia was highly uneven, varying by sport, club, event, and locality. This allowed black Rhodesians to make real progress in Rhodesian sport, and, unlike South Africa, national sports teams by 1960 were increasingly integrated.

Rhodesia's Olympic and Paralympic experiences began in Rome in 1960. The 1960 Olympic team included black African schoolmaster Cyprian Tseriwa in the 10,000 meters. At Tokyo, in 1964, the Rhodesian Olympic team included marathon runners Mathias Kanda and Robson Mrombe. The first Olympic Games after Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence in 1965 were the Mexico City Games in 1968. Again the Rhodesian team was racially integrated, with Kanda and long-distance runner Bernard Dzoma, the holders of numerous white records and titles.[28] By 1968, however, South Africa had been suspended from the Olympic Games, and Mexico Olympic organizers were reluctant to spark a repeat of the bitter South African controversy with the Rhodesian team. The British Government, opposed to the participation of its rebellious colony, joined Mexican officials in disrupting communications, lobbying behind the scenes, and "losing" paperwork in the mail, despite the fervent protests from IOC members, devoted to their anti-political charismatic vision of Olympism.[29] As Strack concludes, "Rhodesia was not formally excluded from the 1968 games; Rhodesia was maneuvered into withdrawing."[30]

In 1972, at the Munich Olympics, a threatened African boycott forced the IOC's hand: four days before the opening of the Games, the IOC voted to exclude Rhodesia from competition. The Rhodesian Olympic team included seven black Africans, a majority of the team's large track and field squad.[31] Despite a compromise under which the Rhodesians participated under their old colonial flag and the anthem "God Save the Queen" to avoid giving the illegal regime recognition, the Rhodesian athletes were reduced to watching the opening ceremonies from the stands. A 1974 IOC investigation into Rhodesian sport highlighted racial discrimination in many aspects of the Rhodesian sporting sphere, while conceding that such discrimination was not universal.[32] In 1975, Rhodesia was permanently expelled from the Olympic Movement, one of only two countries to ever experience that fate; the other was South Africa in 1970.

What was true for Rhodesian sport was also, to some extent, true for disability services. These services tended to be autonomous of government control, charity-driven with minimal central coordination, and tended to reflect, in practice rather than law, the racial and class divisions of the society. As Peresuh and Barcham note: "U*ntil 1980, the education of children with special needs was provided by charitable organizations and churches", w*ith humanitarian organizations, like the Jairos Jiri Association and the Council for the Blind, complementing the efforts of missionaries in providing special education services. "*There was no national policy on special education, the Ministry of Education's involvement before 1980 was minimal, any initiatives were generally uncoordinated and children with special educational needs were usually placed in rural boarding schools or institutions.*"[33] To this was added segregation in many of the special schools, funding dependent on church and charitable do-

nations, and a lack of specialist training staff.

> *"Serious concern for the education of children with disabilities and learning difficulties began at Independence [in 1980] with the adoption of a national policy of universal primary education,"*

Peresuh and Barcham add.[34] Mpofu further notes that the social division between whites and blacks has tended to persist into modern Zimbabwean society: "Black Zimbabweans tend to patronize the informal rehabilitation sector more than White Zimbabweans," while whites tended to utilize the formal sector for disability services.[35]

The Rhodesian Paralympic team bound for the 1960 Games in Rome had two athletes, Margaret Harriman and George Mann. She was the favorite in the archery contests, and also entered for the pentathlon and table tennis events. Mann had only been an archer for six months, but he had a strong record in local competition. The Polio Fellowship gave full support to Harriman and Mann, starting a fund to build support from the Rhodesian sporting community, businesses, state lotteries, and private individuals to pay the way of the athletes, reflecting the autonomy of the sporting sphere. One member of the Rhodesian Olympic team in Rome, boxing manager Archie Calder, was to remain in Rome through the Paralympic Games to save the cost of an additional return ticket for another coach.[36]

Nearly 400 athletes from twenty-one countries participated in the Rome Paralympics, opened by Italian Minister for Public Health Camillo Giardina, and graced by the presence of Pope John XXIII. The pope told the athletes, "*You have shown what an energetic soul can achieve, in spite of apparently insurmountable obstacles imposed by the body*." The Rome Games were dogged by logistical difficulties, with accommodation built on stilts and only accessible by means of steep ramps and steps. These problems affected the Rhodesians as well. The Olympic coach who was supposed to stay behind left early, and Harriman and Mann had to enlist the assistance of their teammates.

> *"Both are living in blocks with two flights of stairs, and once George Mann gets helped downstairs, he has to remain there for the rest of the day,"* a *Herald* reporter noted, adding, *"it is extremely difficult for the Rhodesians to find out what is happening and where."* The reporter concluded, *"This is a poor reflection on Rhodesia."*[39]

Rhodesia's performance in the Games was respectable in any case: Margaret Harriman took home two gold medals in archery, and a silver and two bronze in women's swimming events.

After the success of the first Paralympics in Rome, as Scruton writes, the decision to hold the first Commonwealth Paraplegic Games in Perth, Western Australia, in 1962, immediately prior to the Commonwealth Games, occupied organizers. Nine teams competed, including four from the United Kingdom representing England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, along with teams from Australia, India, New Zealand, Rhodesia, and Singapore.[40] It was the only Commonwealth Paraplegic Games in which Rhodesia would participate, although the small African nation had had independent representation in the Commonwealth Games since 1934. By the time of the next Commonwealth Games, in Kingston, Jamaica in 1966, Rhodesia's membership in the Commonwealth had been suspended after the country's unrecognized declaration of independence in 1965. Along with Harriman, the 1962 Rhodesian team in Perth included gold medalist Lynn Gilchrist, the star of the 1964 Paralympic team in Tokyo.

The Rhodesian team almost didn't make it to Tokyo. Less than a month before the Games began, the team of six and three coaches had to abandon plans to fly on a chartered plane with the South African team. At the last minute, the athletes were forced to raise enough money to transfer to a commercial airline.[41] The 1964 team had six members: Harriman, Mann, Gilchrist, Les Manson-Bishop, Kieth Pienaar, and weightlifter Alan Robertson. *"When the Rhodesian Paraplegic sports team flies off to Tokyo today it will be a great triumph*," wrote one Rhodesian newspaper correspondent. "*The para[plegic] team is the strongest we have yet fielded and every member is good*."[42] On November 2, the team left Salisbury, the capital of the white-ruled state, by air, arriving in Tokyo after dark some days later, awed by the city lights and the hospitality and organization of the hosts.[43]

"*The Japanese press, radio and television took a tremendous interest in the Games, and representatives came daily to the Village to interview officials and competitors*," Scruton recalled, noting the intense press interest in the Games, involving 390 wheelchair athletes from 21 countries.[44] The Rhodesian press took an interest in the Games as well, keeping count of Rhodesia's medal-winning performances, beginning with Manson-Bishop's tie for bronze in javelin on the first day. "T*he weather has been bitterly cold on the first two days with rain and strong winds affecting performances considerably*," the *Herald* noted.[45] The Games were severely time-constrained, squeezed into four and a half days, leading to a scheduling nightmare. Harriman had to throw the first javelin in one event before rushing from the field to compete in archery. In the end, the six Rhodesian Paralympians won an astonishing ten gold medals, five silver, and two bronze. Secretary Lynn Gilchrist won five gold and two silver, the undisputed champion of the team. She competed in swimming, javelin, shot put, and club throwing, medaling in each of them.[46] The 1964 Paralympics may well have been Rhodesia's most successful international sporting event during the period of white settler rule.

After the Tokyo Games, given the great changes that had occurred in Africa in the early 1960s, the days of white minority rule in Africa seemed numbered. The white electorate in Rhodesia, seeking to preserve its power, gave a landslide victory to white farmer Ian Smith, a staunch Rhodesian nationalist. In November 1965, Smith and his Rhodesian Front government announced a unilateral declaration of independence from the British Empire, confirming a separation that had long existed in practice. By 1968, comprehensive trade and travel restrictions were installed on the white regime, and Rhodesia's status in sporting organizations came under fire. As the following analysis of British diplomacy will show, however, the Paralympic Games were immune from the political earthquakes then threatening other sporting spheres, especially the Olympic Games. Those seeking the expulsion of Rhodesian teams and athletes, fearing that participation would grant some sort of recognition or acceptance on the illegal regime, did not feel the same way about the Paralympics. This contradiction fundamentally illustrates how the ideals and heritage of the Paralympics insulated the Games from the political arena.

Although the first two Paralympiads, in Rome and Tokyo, were held alongside the Olympics, Mexico City organizers were unable to host the 1968 Paralympics. The International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (ISMGF), the organizers of the Paralympics, accepted the bid of Tel Aviv, Israel for the Games, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the founding of both the Stoke Mandeville Games and the State of Israel. Scruton recalls the "*special magic*" surrounding the Holy Land Games, which included 750 athletes from 29 nations. The opening ceremony took place in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Stadium and was officially opened by Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon.[47] The Israeli Games organizers were obligated to invite the Rhodesian team, a member in good standing with the ISMGF.

A telegram from the British Embassy in Israel to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London is particularly revealing.

> *"The Israel [sic] authorities have agreed to our request not to recognize passports issued by the illegal regime in Rhodesia and would normally refuse entry to the holder of such a passport,"* the telegram noted. For the Paralympic Games, however, the Israelis were *"reluctant to apply the rules too strictly on this occasion both because Israel is the host country and because they anticipate an emotional outcry from in the Press if it seemed that they were acting harshly toward the physically handicapped."*[48]

Israeli immigration officials asked British permission to allow in the Rhodesian athletes without asking for passports. The Rhodesians would be asked to fill out landing cards, and the entry visas would be stamped on the cards and not in the passports. If the Israelis didn't see the unrecognized passports, then they couldn't refuse them.

> *"I hope my Consul General can be authorized to tell the Israel [sic] Consular Department that we would have no objection to this procedure," the British diplomatic officer wrote. "The Israelis are probably amongst the most helpful of our friends on the Rhodesian question but they might be tempted to be less cooperative if we failed to meet their difficulties on this relatively minor point. We could also expect a good share of press criticism if at our insistence [sic] the Israelis were to make an issue over the type of passport held by Rhodesian cripples."*[49]

An internal memorandum in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, responsible for the Rhodesian issue, indicates that the Israeli suggestions were well taken.

"Do you agree that we can turn a blind eye to the paraplegic sports?" one official asked. *"I must say that it would be very unfortunate, to say the least, if we felt obliged to lay ourselves open to the charge of being beastly to paraplegics."*[50] *The point was clear: the Paralympics were an illegitimate target for political maneuvering.*

The irony of these statements is that almost simultaneously a vigorous British effort to exclude Rhodesia from the 1968 Mexico City Olympics was under way. Already by early 1968, the highest levels of British diplomats were lobbying the IOC, Mexican officials and Games organizers, and other Commonwealth governments to exclude the Rhodesians. One diplomatic report from early 1968 recalled how the British Foreign Minister

> *"emphasized how serious a propaganda defeat we could suffer. If Rhodesia sent a team, including colored athletes, to Mexico to compete as a separate nationality, then [Prime Minister] Smith could feel he had again succeeded in smacking us in the face."*[51]

Perhaps British officials could not see the irony: they were supporting the inclusion of an all-white Rhodesian team in the Paralympics, and opposing the inclusion of an integrated team in the Olympics. Officials believed the Paralympics to be simultaneously insignificant (below politics) and somehow sacred, medical or humanitarian in nature (above politics). This ambivalence in British policy reflected the contradictions inherent in the Paralympic movement itself.

For the Rhodesians, the Tel Aviv Games were an unqualified success. The team was about double the size of the 1964 team, with ten athletes medaling; Rhodesia won twenty medals overall, six gold, seven silver, and seven bronze. As the official report stated, absolute med-

al counts were misleading and often turned into a political race between the United States and the Soviet Union. In fact, if the number of medals won was divided by the number of athletes on the team, South Africa came first in the medal count, with eight athletes winning 24 medals, three medals per athlete. Rhodesia came in second with 1.3 medals per athlete, and the United States was third with 1.2 medals per athlete.[52] Rhodesia's best performances were in the pool: fifteen of the twenty medals were in swimming events.

Evidence appears to indicate that the Rhodesians marched separately in the opening ceremonies, although whether the team had a flag or anthem is uncertain.[53] By the 1972 Paralympics in Heidelberg, West Germany, a significant change had occurred in British politics: Harold Wilson's Labor Government had fallen and Edward Heath's Conservative one had succeeded it. As one Foreign Office official noted: *"The previous Government's policy was to make every effort to prevent Rhodesian national teams from participating in international sporting events, since this might give the regime some degree of international recognition. Under the present Government, it has become the practice to leave the host country to make its own decision without prompting from us,"* although Rhodesian athletes could not compete in the United Kingdom.[54] Britain no longer lobbied international sporting bodies for Rhodesia's expulsion. Although the International Olympic Committee would eventually exclude the Rhodesian Olympic team from the 1972 Munich Games, this was done in the face of boycott threats and protest from African and Middle Eastern nations and West German officials. Since Africa for the most part did not compete in the Paralympics, and the West German Government sought to avoid controversy, the Rhodesian team competed at Heidelberg even as it was excluded from Munich.

"*Paraplegic Games are an entirely different matter*" from the Olympics, wrote an FCO official. "*It would be wrong to bring cripples into the political arena*."[55] The West German government used a loophole in the mandatory United Nations sanctions on Rhodesia, exempting humanitarian aid. The Rhodesians could be admitted to West Germany on "humanitarian" grounds.

"The [German] Foreign Ministry on the whole seem ready to risk any political unpleasantness that might arise [...]; they think that it would anyway only be slight, since the only African countries participating in the Paraplegic Olympics are Uganda and Ethiopia."[56]

The British discouraged organizing officials to allow use of the Rhodesian flag or anthem, and refused to allow the Rhodesian team to participate as a contingent of the team from the United Kingdom. If Rhodesia's Paralympic participation should spark controversy, the British wanted to spare themselves. After a phone call to Sir Ludwig Guttmann, Paralympic organizers agreed to allow the athletes to compete not as representatives of Rhodesia, but as individuals.[57]

Not only did the British raise no objection to the participation of their rebellious colony in the Paralympic Games, but they even agreed to invite the Rhodesian athletes to a reception held by the British Ambassador to West Germany, to which the teams from Gibraltar and the Bahamas, the only other British dependencies at the Games, were invited.

"*As we have taken the view that, on humanitarian grounds, there is no objection to Rhodesian participation in the Games, it follows that we should treat the Rhodesians as individual paraplegics from a British colony*," the Rhodesia Department in the Foreign Office finally determined. "*This would help to show after the argument about Rhodesian participation in the Olympic Games, that we are not vindictive to Rhodesians, but we are simply concerned to maintain the status quo as regards sanctions*."[58]

The British diplomats clearly believed the Paralympians should be protected "on humanitarian grounds" from the intense political controversies taking place in the international sporting arena. In this clash of politics and sport, sport won.

Rhodesia took home twelve medals from Heidelberg, including three gold. A new generation of Rhodesian Paralympians were successful on the field: Sandra James of Bulawayo took home two gold, two silver, and a bronze in swimming and field sports, the most successful of Rhodesia's team of thirteen. Considering that she was isolated in Bulawayo as the only athlete in her category (class 1A) and had no competition before the Games and no trainer to assist her in Heidelberg, James's victories were impressive indeed. She had not medaled in Tel Aviv, two years after her first disabled sport competition in the 1966 South African Games (like Rhodesia, South Africa was suspended from the Commonwealth and ineligible to participate in the Commonwealth Games in Kingston, Jamaica). To the *Bulawayo Chronicle*, James commented on the tremendous hospitality the team enjoyed: "*We were given a very friendly welcome and seemed to get the biggest cheer at the official opening ceremony*." She recalled of her performances, "I was watching the others before me and they were throwing so far that I thought I would never get near them," as she won gold in javelin, silver in shot put, and bronze in discus. The victim of childhood polio, James was very excited about the next Paralympic Games in Toronto, Canada.[59] Here again, politics intervened.

Rhodesia did not compete in the 1976 Paralympics in Toronto, and the reasons for this must remain speculative. It is possible but unlikely that the Canadian government refused to allow the team to compete. Only two weeks before the opening of the Toronto Paralympics, three Rhodesian delegates to the International Amateur

Athletic Federation Congress held in Canada were denied entry visas.[60] But the Canadian government did not interfere with the entry of the South African team, choosing instead to cancel a large grant to Paralympic organizers in protest of South African participation.[61] It is also possible that the Paralympic organizers, jointly of the ISMGF and ISOD, chose not to invite Rhodesia, or acted against Rhodesian participation, but again organizers refused to prevent South Africa's team from competing, despite the boycott of a handful of teams before and during the Games in protest. Guttman even led the ISMGF to adopt a rule allowing the expulsion of any nation that played politics, not sport, at the Paralympics.[62] South Africa sent a 38-member team, which included eight black Africans, a tremendous achievement in a country that refused to send multiracial teams abroad until the early 1970s.[63] Instead, the most likely scenario is that the Rhodesians themselves decided not to send a team, or were financially unable to; by 1976, the guerrilla war that led to the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 was in full swing. It is possible that internal, rather than international, politics kept Rhodesia away in 1976.

During the period of white settler rule, Rhodesia's Paralympic team was among the strongest in the world, even if the social divisions in the country and the highest levels of international diplomacy threatened the team's legacy. Zimbabwe returned to the Paralympics in 1980 after an eight-year absence, sending a small team to Arnhem, the Netherlands. Although the Zimbabwean women's hockey team would win gold at the Moscow Olympics, gold medals eluded the Paralympic team in Arnhem. The Paralympic team took home seven silver and four bronze in 1980; its streak continued to decline, winning one silver and two bronze in 1984. Eventually, Zimbabwe's Paralympic glory would return.

At the 2000 Sydney Paralympics, Elliot Mujaji, a worker at Shabanie Mine, ran the 100-meter race in 11.32 seconds, winning gold. Despite growing up playing football, Mujaji realized his talent for sprinting in high school. The legendary Artwell Mandaza, a member of the ill-fated 1972 Munich Olympic team, coached Mujaji, helping him train for what might have been a future Olympic career. However, disaster struck: his right arm had to be amputated after an accident with a live electrical wire. He believed his Olympic dream had ended, but he could not give up sport, choosing to continue his professional training. His gold medal was the first ever won by a Paralympian in independent Zimbabwe. Four years later, in Athens in 2004, he repeated his gold-medal feat, this time in only 11 seconds.[64]

Conclusion

The charismatic vision of Sir Ludwig Guttmann guided the Paralympic Movement from its birth at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in the United Kingdom through its humble origins and into the Paralympic Movement. Today, the Paralympics are a multilateral sporting institution that puts on the largest spectacle in the world of disability sport. The Games have found a comfortable place alongside the Olympics, themselves the product of an idealistic myth that seeks to transcend division and work toward unity. Politics came late to the Paralympic Movement, which did not have to wrestle with the great Cold War controversies that dogged the Olympics, at least in part because the developing world was underrepresented due to the persistence of a "disability divide" and social attitudes toward people living with a disability. Guttmann's idealism and the medical-humanitarian origins of Paralympism placed the Movement above overt political maneuvering. That idealism has become the Paralympic founding myth, which continues to infect the modern organization. The diplomacy that flowed from Rhodesia's participation the Paralympics illustrates how even the highest levels of diplomacy hesitated to politically threaten the movement. The Rhodesian Paralympic team survived the international isolation of the country's political regime and the rest of the Rhodesian sporting sphere because of the space opened up by Guttmann's charismatic vision and the commitment of the hospital staff at Stoke Mandeville. ■

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