

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

Undaunted against great odds

As everyone knows the 1964 Olympic Games took place in Tokyo last October. The universal interest they aroused again provided the measure of world enthusiasm for sports.

Following the games, another world-wide event took place in the Japanese capital; the Olympic Games for the Paralysed (or Paralympics). These began on November 8, 1964, at the Olympic village, with 370 participants (escorted by 200 attendants) from 22 countries: the Argentine, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Ceylon, Fiji, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Rhodesia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA.

These somewhat unusual games—sometimes called the Stoke Mandeville Games—were promoted by Dr. L. Guttmann, Director of the British National Spinal Injuries Centre. They were first held in 1948, since when the number of countries participating has regularly increased. Today these Games include some fifteen different sports and in principle they are held in the same place as the Olympics themselves.

The competitors at Tokyo performed feats in the national and international contests specially organized for them and several records were broken. This is a fine example of endurance and determination which was given by men and women who, though victims of the ills to which the flesh is heir, refuse to submit, scorn seclusion, and persevere with fortitude to take their place as useful members of society despite their handicaps. And through sport they too add to the joy of life.

There was a noticeable manifestation of goodwill for these handicapped, by the youthful public especially among the Junior Section of the Japanese Red Cross who, as described below, were eager to contribute to the well-being of the participants in the

Games and who are already contemplating putting their experience to use for the benefit of the contestants in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico.

All competitors were dependent on two wheels which they manipulated with dexterity ; their determination and skill aroused general admiration among the audience of several thousand at the various competitions.

Directed by Mr. Kasai and Mr. Tanabe, respectively former and present executive Vice-President of the Japanese Red Cross, the Japanese Organizing Committee spared no pains for the welfare of the participants and to contribute towards the success of this international event inspired by a spirit similar to that of the Red Cross.

Changes were made in the Olympic village in order to facilitate wheel chair traffic : only the first floors of the houses were used, after altering the stairs by making the steps lower and installing special ramps ; cafeterias and restaurants served set meals at special prices while university students volunteered to act as waiters and waitresses. As a precaution, central heating by gas was replaced by electric heating, and in the theatre the seats were removed to make room for the wheel chairs. In addition, a special amphitheatre was erected with seating for 2,000 people.

We would also mention that sweeping and cleaning in the village was taken in hand by some thousand members of the Junior Red Cross.

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This great event was the occasion of some impressive ceremonies, attended by the Imperial Royal Family. Speeches were made at the opening and closing ceremonies, and we give below a few extracts of Dr. L. Guttman's address :

The torch of the 1964 Olympic Games has hardly been extinguished when another flame has sprung into life in Tokyo—a flame proudly lit by paralysed men and women who have come to the Olympic Village from all parts of the world to take part in their own Festival of Sport—the International Stoke Mandeville Games.

That it has been possible to hold the 1964 International Stoke Mandeville Games for the Paralysed in Tokyo is due greatly to the understanding of our Japanese friends, who had the vision to recognize

the significance of these Games not only as an important sports movement but as a beam of hope for disabled people all over the world.

After expressing thanks to the Japanese Government, the Tokyo municipal authorities and various other official organizations, as well as for the Imperial Prince's keen interest, Dr. Guttman continued :

Most of you have travelled many thousands of miles to be reunited with our large family of paraplegics, and for many it has been no easy task to raise the money or overcome various obstacles which have stood in their path. Yet, with courage, determination and loyalty all barriers have been overcome, and I am sure that those who have been privileged to take part in the 1964 Games in Tokyo will carry rich experiences to pass on to paralysed sportsmen of the future.

At the closing ceremony Mr. Kasai made a speech in which he said, *inter alia* :

The International Stoke Mandeville Games will certainly contribute to the welfare of disabled persons through participation both by the teams and the spectators and by calling the attention of world society in general to the actual performances of the competitors. And I have the honour to bear witness to the significance of the present Games.

This is the time of the year in Japan when chrysanthemums bloom in the fields and mountains. It is our sincere hope that in this exhilarating climate of late fall, the competitors from all corners of the world will share mutual encouragement and friendship and thus contribute to true international fellowship.

Mr. Kasai concluded by expressing his " deep appreciation to all those who helped to make the present Games a reality ". This reality seems indeed to have been first and foremost a beneficent experience, especially for Japan, which sees such games as an encouragement to promoting welfare for the country's disabled.

Trophies and medals were then awarded to a number of teams.

Mrs. Sachiko Hashimoto, Director of the Japanese Junior Red Cross, has sent us an interesting report on the work undertaken by the Japanese Red Cross and the interpreting service she organized. We believe it worthwhile to reproduce the main passages of this for our readers.

Before doing so we would say a few words about one of the Japanese sportsmen, Mr. Makio Suga, in order to show the moral

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... in promoting friendship through conversation among competitors from various countries

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influence which sport can have on the handicapped. Although confined to his wheel chair, he trained for the Olympics. This young man of 22 competed with representatives of twenty-two nations in hockey, swimming and wheelchair slalom matches. He said " I was paralysed in 1961 after an accident I had when driving a mobile crane ; thanks to sport I can look at life from a different angle ; with more confidence. I practise sports for 2 or 3 hours a day and I am greatly helped by the staff of the Japanese National Centre for Rehabilitation and Occupational Therapy ".

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This is what Mrs. Hashimoto wrote :

" We are all agreed that the 1964 Paralympics were a resounding success. 22 countries were represented by 377 competitors and 186 escorts totalling 563 people. The biggest team was from Great Britain with 105, the second biggest from USA with 89 and the third, from Italy with 47, except the host Japanese team of 84. The winner of the largest number of medals was the U.S. team which won 37 gold, 40 silver and 33 bronze medals, next, Great Britain with 23 gold, 24 silver and 24 bronze medals. The Italian team was third.

The games were held from the 8th to 12th November at the Olympic Village in Tokyo, the first Italian team arrived in the evening of the 4th and the last British team left late on the 18th. The village therefore was animated actually for a fortnight with signs of life of various kinds : competitors in colourful sportswear, but always busy rolling wheelchairs, rattling sounds of buses constantly going around the site, youthful figures in uniforms of the Self-Defence Forces willing to wait upon the wheelchairs and the young with the red cross emblem. They were unsparingly ready at any moment to help those participants in the Paralympics as soon as they were awake and until they were safe in bed, because they worked as volunteer interpreters and language is indispensable in every nook and corner of human life.

We could never, however, expect these 500 visitors to Japan to understand our language and an appeal was therefore made to the Junior Red Cross, which is the Red Cross in schools, where the

desire to help one another is combined with academic requirements. It was indeed quite a challenge for us to meet this appeal.

On November 24, 1963, I heard the term "Paralympics" for the first time in my life at one of the Japanese Organizing Committees to which I had been invited, whilst the whole Japanese nation knows what Olympic games are. Naturally we did not have the resources to meet the needs of the Organizing Committee. A list was presented with requests for help. As we were part of the Red Cross I expected that it would be a question of medical services, instead of which we were asked to provide an interpreter service.

It was quite a surprise, but I soon understood that our traditional attitude towards the physically handicapped had been entirely false. They used to be taken care of in some sheltered corner in the name of charity, while the main objective of the Paralympics was not meant for public pity, but a real demonstration of the triumph of rehabilitation for a tremendous impact on the public.

Certainly the competitors coming a long way to Japan were rehabilitated enough not to need medical care. There was no difference in their difficulty from that of any foreigners visiting here, except the language difficulty. The need, however, could not be met by persons of good will or hands to help, but only by those who had studied in schools to be good bilinguals . . .

. . . Human beings are so made as never to be fully satisfied until their pleasure is united with another's. This is the Golden Rule and the basic principle of the Red Cross called "Humanity". It is so basic that it will never change as long as a human being is born naked. Human life is interdependence as well as independence, while birds and animals are more independent as they are born with fur. Why don't we put more emphasis on this fundamental principle of life in basic human education for children? None of us is born educated. Every one has to start from zero in mind and heart. This education especially must be done through practice of volunteer services as early in one's life as possible, starting from home, then school and the community. The Red Cross has thus prepared many service programs, but coming back to the Language Service needed by the Paralympics, it is only the Junior Red Cross section that can meet the challenge.

I willingly accepted the responsibility of organizing a group of interpreters on a voluntary basis at the request of the Organizing Committee on the sport. In front of me there were 3 grades of organizing volunteers to tackle : Recruitment, placing, and training. I started with the 6 young students who had been doing volunteer office assistance, mostly translation of JRC albums. They were inspired enough to recruit ten friends more each. Iron must be struck while it is hot. We held the first gathering of sixty young people on the 7th of January 1964.

There were two problems then left to be solved : Places for training and trainers. For the former, I appealed to their parents through the youngsters to open their houses and succeeded in obtaining 6, so that ten students could meet once a week for two hours' practice in English conversation. For trainers I appealed to the American Red Cross in the name of President Shimadzu. Six original leaders and I tried to grab any English-speaking people who happened to pass our way and distributed to those six different groups in Tokyo. The first 4 months were the hardest period of trial and, bless their hearts!, those who helped us during the period. Her Imperial Highness Crown Princess Michiko is the first to be blessed and remembered. She has always been a good sympathiser of our Junior Red Cross, being an Honorary Vice-President of the National Society. On April 18th she volunteered to honour our first official meeting with her presence . . .

. . . We finally set up an examination system, assisted by the delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross whose office was at our headquarters in order to deal with the repatriation of Koreans in Japan. And yet, this undertaking was still strange and difficult to understand by the Japanese mentality, for which "voluntary service" meant merely giving, regardless of the needs involved. In June we made a study tour of the Rehabilitation Centre at Hakone which later sent 27 competitors to the Paralympics.

As soon as the summer vacation started before students returned to their home towns, we organized an intensified four day's and three night's training course. There were included not only English conversation, with, incidentally, a 10 yen penalty for each Japanese word used, but the Red Cross principles, the Geneva Conventions,

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parliamentary procedure, sports terms, physical terms and study on volunteers. Again we were happy to receive valuable help from the American Red Cross. Nearly 20 American instructors took leave from their work to make our course a success. They just demonstrated what volunteering meant and how volunteers should work to make us learn by "Seeing is believing".

In a word, we followed the pattern learned and shown through those weekly and summer training programs, once the voluntary service for Paralympics finally started on November 4th. We were then 156: 96 females and 60 males including 119 students, 23 workers and 14 mothers of families.

Those who welcomed national teams first on their arrival at the airport were the Language Service volunteers with leis of paper-folded cranes prepared by Junior Red Cross children, together with the Self-Defence Force men ready to carry them out of the planes and up into the buses. It was very inconvenient, for most of the in-coming planes arrived always very late in the evening. It took hours for loading and unloading those wheelchairs and their arrival in the village was at nearly midnight or even after midnight. While our Language Service airport team and hosts and hostesses assigned one or two to each national team accompanied the buses to the village, the other members on reception duty were waiting for them at the gate and led the buses to the village canteen where more Language Service volunteers were placed to look after them¹.

The first night there were a certain number of canteen workers, who were also students on a paid basis. The next day, however, they refused to work extra hours without a bonus. Our volunteers then asked the cooks to prepare hot meals for new arrivals and offered to wait on them. Of course this was not included in the work of interpreters, but their volunteer spirit made them feel hungry when guests felt hungry. They were united in joy and pain, the tangible effect of the golden rule which is the strength of volunteers. There I did see the difference between a paid worker and a volunteer. The former works for money, by the hour, and stops at a set time, whilst the volunteer thinks always of the work and only

¹ *Plate* : At the Olympic Games for the Paralyzed, the Language Service of the Japanese Red Cross is needed everywhere and at all times.

stops when this is completed. It was indeed sometimes difficult for me to make these stop working, so dedicated were they to their work.

At the same time, however, I again realized how hard it is to do good voluntary work, that is to say according to real needs. For instance, it was most agreeable to have arrangements of flowers, but it was unnecessary to have too many. For the Olympic Games, properly speaking, beauty parlours had been prepared whilst there were none for the Paralympics. On their arrival women competitors asked where they could have their hair washed. A young future doctor in Keio University made searches in the neighbourhood and found one such establishment. He accompanied some girls in wheelchairs one day and returned with a broad smile of satisfaction. Their satisfaction was his pleasure. The next day was Thursday and the hairdresser was closed, to his great disappointment. He searched in the telephone directory and found one open in the Isetan Department Store. He asked the Defence Force to place a bus at his disposal. The result was that five girls had their hair arranged in the morning and seven more in the afternoon. It was the day of the closing ceremony. When they had all returned in time, he looked like a triumphant general and reported to me that the hairdresser had not charged anything for his work . . .

Life was not all rosy. But the more we saw the facts, the more impressed we were with the strength of the mind over the weakness of the flesh. This led us to discover the essential value of human dignity. Many of the participants well on their way to rehabilitation asked us not to push their wheelchairs from behind, but to walk beside them so that they could see us and enjoy our conversation. " We do not need pity ", they said, " but, understanding ". Indeed, to understand is to share their joys and their sorrows and also their struggles for personal dignity. This was done by the Red Cross volunteers who, when offering their services, humbly asked " May I stay with you? " and " Can I help you? "

These experiences greatly impressed us and will have had an influence over all our lives, especially those young volunteers who were of an age of much sensibility and idealism.

The Paralympics have now ended in Tokyo, but they still remain with us in our hearts. We will be meeting at the headquarters

of the Japanese Red Cross to decide on our contribution to the next Paralympics which will be held in Mexico. Whilst the Olympic Games themselves are open to all athletes, this does not apply to the Paralympics. Here there is scope for mutual aid, friendship and co-operation. We should now help the Mexican Organizing Committee to be more successful than ours. For a start, we should send it the detailed report of our linguistic service. Since its language is Spanish, it may be in a better position than us, but they will still require interpreters. I would give the following advice for the proper organizing of a young people's service :

1. The program must be concrete, to enable Juniors to realize the practical value of their efforts.

2. Sufficient emphasis should be laid on their imagination and idealism to bring out their fighting spirit to meet the challenge. Too easy a task without the underlying meaning being understood is almost an insult to the young mind.

3. The adult members must have confidence in the younger ones, in those who have already been trained in established youth organizations. They should, from the beginning, invite them to join in planning and development and to take final responsibilities...

4. Group co-operation should be prepared to enable all to know individual contributions to final success.

5. Personal identification is necessary, which can only be achieved through personal contact and this will be of great satisfaction to each individual.

Thus by helping the Mexican Organizing Committee we would be repaying those who helped us for nearly a year. We are immensely grateful to all those who came such long distances in their wheel-chairs and to the escorts of the competitors who opened up a new aspect on life to 156 young people of the Red Cross of Japan".