
The Parallel-bar Quarrel, a Consequence of the Reception of Swedish Gymnastics in Prussia, and its Influences in the Prussian Military and Interior Policy

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Hugo Rothstein, strongly influenced by P.H. Ling, became director of Berlin's Royal Central Institute of Physical Education. His five volume work on the superiority of Swedish gymnastics over Jahn physical culture created a pedagogical and political controversy in Prussia. Strongly critical of what Rothstein called the German lack of understanding the totality of man, the parallel and horizontal bar exercises were stricken from the curriculum at his academy. Immediate and stormy protest broke out during the period 1860-1864. Even the Prussian House of Deputies became involved; conservative and liberal elements, strongly nationalistic, militaristic factions debated intrinsic Prussian motifs as well as foreign, invading ideas.

Rothstein's disparaging remarks regarding the parallel and horizontal bar routines plus his advocacy of Swedish gymnastics was taken, in a hot political, military climate, as a downright unpatriotic gesture. The intermingling of sport and politics is nearly perfectly manifested by the Rothstein fiasco — an affair that rightly belonged within the narrow jurisdiction of school administrators, athletes, and physical educators.