

“Are National Olympic Games Pseudo Olympics?:” Willibald Gebhardt and the German National Festival Movement

Roland Naul
University of Essen, Germany

Many years before the idea of “International Olympic Games” was promoted in Germany, especially by Dr. Willibald Gebhardt, a national festival movement existed which tried to establish “National Olympic Games” as the patriotic alternative to the international idea of the Olympic Games movement. Dr. Willibald Gebhardt integrated both movements after 1900 to establish the first standing Olympic Committee in Germany in 1904.

The paper gives a brief overview of the “National Olympic Games Movement” in Germany. It argues that the idea and the programme of “National Olympic Games” are by no means only “pseudo-olympic.” Instead, Baron Pierre de Coubertin himself later wanted to add a programme of music, drama and fine art to the Berlin Olympics 1916 as the “Germanic” contribution to the international glory of the Olympic Games.