

THE MUNICH OCTOBER FESTIVAL

AN ORIGIN OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES



by Karl Lennartz



Horse racing at the First Munich October Festival 1810, Peter Heß, oil on canvas

Preface

Each year after the *Munich October Festival*, also called the *Munich Beer Festival*, the press proudly - and perhaps with a touch of irony - reports how many million visitors came, how many million litres of beer were drunk, how many million knuckles of pork, Brathendl, stockfish, pretzel and Radis were eaten, how many drunken bodies had to be sobered up, and how many riots were registered. But what has this "Bavarian beer rave" got to do with the Olympic Games? One could - at the very least- see similarities in commercialism or think of the siege of the souvenir booths near the Olympic stadiums 1996 in Atlanta.

Nevertheless the next couple of pages will offer evidence that the Munich October Festival must be considered as a starting point when we consider the origins of the Olympic Games.

In 1806 Bavaria became into a kingdom. The new monarchy searched for a national identity linked to a consolidation of the WITTELSBACHER dynasty. For this purpose the wedding of Crown-Prince LUDWIG to Princess Therese of SAXONY-HILTBURGHAUSEN was turned into a popular event. Festivities lasting ten days were organized. They started with the wedding on October 12 and a so called Schutzenfest (shooting match), which continued until October 21. A further highlight was a horse race to be held on the grounds of the festival outside of Munich on October 17. The idea was suggested by the banker Andreas von DALL'ARMI. An historical explanation was given for the race.

"After the first horse race had been staged at the marriage of Duke Albert III to Princess Anna of Braunschweig in the year 1448, it was soon established as a folk amusement in Bavaria, and served to increase festivity and joy at all national festivals."

There were fifty thousand visitors to the race course when the Royal Family took their seats in the stands. The event started with homage, poems and songs presented by 16 pairs of children and a breakfast for the Royal Family and all attending. After this the starting signal was given for the race in which 30 race boys (so called "*Rennbuben*") took part with their horses. "*The racecourse was 11656 Bavarian feet long. The three laps of the course were completed in 18 minutes, 14 seconds.*" The winner was Franz BAUMGARTNER, a corporal in the National Guard, won. After the race the Royal Family returned their palace. It was only then that the winner's ceremony began. The owners of 13 horses each received a flag and monetary prizes from 1 to 250 Dukates. Additionally every race boy received a newly minted golden medal in recognition of the Crown-Prince's wedding.

After this successful event it seemed obvious to repeat it. But more was required to promote Bavarian national spirit. Above all the new kingdom needed an economic revival. To achieve this, was essential to improve agriculture in the region. The *Landwirtschaftlicher Verein* (Agriculture Club) realized this and presented an appropriate programme:

1. horse races,
2. first German agricultural exhibition with awards for studs, mares, bulls, cows, rams and pigs,
3. cattle market.

In the following year the presentation of agricultural products and new equipment was added to this programme.



"Sports festival": stone hurling conducted by German gymnastics teacher Lorenz Gruber 1835 or 1836

It began with a horse race and a shooting match in 1810. They shot at a wooden model of an eagle until the last bit of the bird fell to ground. A "hit" on each part of the bird's body was rewarded with a special prize. There was also a round target (1816 until 1913) and the so called "running deer" (from 1822). In 1820 Madame REICHARDT'S balloon flight was a special attraction.

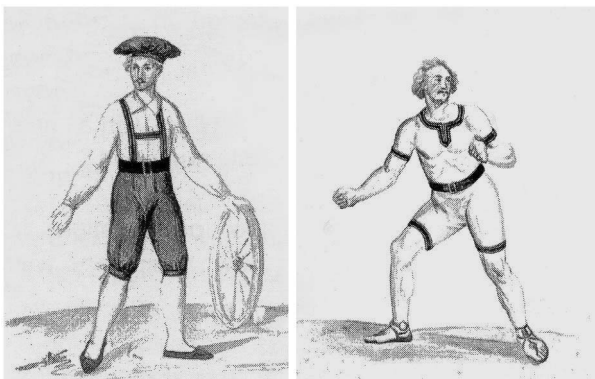
From 1815 onwards attempts were also made to include "gymnastic exercises". They started with running, sack races and tree climbing for school boys.

"1816 shows reports about equestrian vaulting and a steeplechase for 16 pupils of the Feiertagsschule with blue and white little flags and in 1818 again a race."

In 1835 - on the occasion of the Royal couple's 25th wedding anniversary and therefore the 25th anniversary of the Munich October Festival - the bakery workers and wheelwrights trade were invited to an athletic presentation under the auspices of German gymnastics teacher Josef Gruber. 25 bakery journeymen staged wrestling matches in yellow jerseys and trousers. Then 16 wheelwright journeymen competed in a wheel race, followed by a race between the bakery comrades. All participants were rewarded with a flag and a commemorative medal. A year later 41 bakery and cooper journeymen took part in "gymnastic games". They took part in competitions such as wrestling, javelin throw at a statue without and with a run up, stone hurling, running races and tightrope climbing.

In 1838 German gymnastics teacher Lorenz GRUBER organized running games for 60 apprentice boys.

**Gymnastic Games.
Bakery and
wheelwright
journeymen's
races**



In the second half of the 19th century Turn festivals combined to the Munich October Festival were staged by the organized clubs within the *German Turnerschaft*.

Comparison Munich October Festival - ancient Olympic Games

The high ranked civil servant and co organiser of the Munich October Festival, Joseph von HAZZI, often compared the Munich October Festival to the ancient Olympic Games. He first mentioned this in a speech 1820:

"A universal desire for this festival develops as a great Public meeting point and a great national festival comparable to the Ancient Greeks and THEIR Olympic Games and like Olympia, the

targets ion the world and staged in a magnificent way.

It shall [have] the same great benefits for national education, development of power, patriotism and general wealth, as it had once in Greece."

In the publication celebrating the *Landwirthschaftlichen Verein* on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in 1835 von HAZZI again presented a link to Olympia:

"An annual national festival like no other in the world is developing. Not only does this greatly honour and encourage the nation's most important trade, but also all other national interests are hereby awoken and created. At the same time it is a public meeting for all the citizens of the kingdom, created for all Bavarians just as Olympia had once been organized for the Greek nation"

In 1835 a race with four "carriages" built in the same way as Olympic carriages" was organized.

König Ludwig I.

LUDWIG was born in Strasbourg on August 28, 1786 as oldest son of MAXIMILIAN I. Joseph, who was Bavaria's first king from 1806 to 1825, (having ruled Kurfurst since 1799). Because Bavaria was a member of the Rheinbund and therefore allied to Emperor NAPOLEON I., the young Crown-Prince fought as an officer on the French side from 1806 to 1809. In 1810 he married - as mentioned above - Princess Therese of SAXONY-HILTBURGHAUSEN. After the Vienna congress he lived in Wuerzburg and Aschaffenburg and indulged his artistic tendencies - especially in writing poems.

On the death of his father he was crowned as LUDWIG I. in 1825, moved to Munich where he initiated an enthusiastic building programme. A number of the buildings built in his time still characterise the city centre to this day. It was intended that buildings reflected ancient styles in a modern setting. Amongst them: Glyptothek (1816-1830), New State Gallery (1838-1848), Propylaen (1846-1862), Old Pinakothek (1826-1836), New Pinakothek, Ludwigstreet, Odeon, State Library, Ludwigs Church, University, Feldherrnhalle (1841-1844), Siegestor (1843-1852). He brought a number of known artists and scholars into the city. Amongst them: Leo von KLENZE, K. von FISCHER, Georg Friedrich ZIEBLAND, Friedrich GARTNER, Friedrich Wilhelm THIERSCH. Munich turned into the art capital of central Europe. In 1826 he moved the regional university

from Landshut to Munich. There were moves to develop Bavaria into an industrial state (first railway in Germany, mechanical spinning and weaving mills, King-Ludwig-Canal).

LUDWIG was an enthusiastic supporter of Wilhelm MULLER, Adelbert von CHAMISSO and Alphonse de LAMARTINE (Eugene DELACROIX, Leo von KLENZE, Karl Friedrich SCHINKEL). The politico-military Philhellenism was strengthened after Lord BYRON'S death in Missolonghi and the beginning of the Greek liberation war in 1821. The Greece benevolent society collected money. Volunteers from all social groups travelled to Greece and supported the Greek cause as the Philhellenic Corps led by General Karl Friedrich NORMANN-EHRENFELS. It was almost completely devastated in the battle near Peta on July 16, 1826. Munich was a centre of Greek support, especially from King LUDWIG I.

The following points must be mentioned in relation to Ancient Olympia. There was: Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who wanted to start excavations there, Richard CHANDLER, who rediscovered it in 1766. Many French, English and then also German scholars made visits to the site in the following decades with the Germans visiting each year. Also worth mentioning are Francois POUQUEVILLE, William Martin LEAKE, Edward DODWELL, Lord Spencer STANHOPE, the French excavations in 1829, and Ernst CURTIUS' speech in 1852 leading to Olympia's excavations (1875-1881).

Charles COCKERELL, Baron Karl HALLER von HALLERSTEIN and Jakob LINCKH had discovered the gable sculptures of the Zeus' temple, the so called Aegineten, when they went from Athens to Aegina and continued their travelling to the Peloponnesus and also to Olympia. Their findings and the translation of COCKERELL'S work by Friedrich Karl Ludwig SICKLER had great significance for pro- Greek enthusiasm in Bavaria. King LUDWIG bought the Aegineten in 1812 and later exhibited them in the Glyptothek built for this purpose. In 1821 SICKLER called for Olympia's excavation. His plans were mainly supported by THIERSCH and von KLENZE. The outbreak of the Greek liberation war delayed these plans for a long time.

National Olympic Games until the middle of the 19th century

It is sufficient at this stage to refer to many of Joachim K. RUHL'S publications, especially the comparison chart in the catalogue of the exhibition 100 years Olympic Games.

Only Robert DOVER'S (from 1612) "Olympick"

Games existed prior to the Munich October Festival in 1810, but according to RUHL these were motivated by politics rather than sport. These competitions staged in Chipping Campden (Cotswold Hills) were Royalist inspired and against the Puritans. The name "Olympick" Games was rather a means to an end. When they were re-established again after a break from 1625 until 1660, they were simply called DOVER'S meeting and continued until 1851. The when they were revived once more in 1963, they were referred to as *"Robert Dover's Games"*.

For Johann Christoph Friedrich GUTSMUTHS the Prince Franz of ANHALT-DESSAU'S Drehberg Festival (1776-1799) represented the *"revived Olympic Games"*. The event itself did not carry this name. It is also interesting that this included horse races, an agricultural harvest and breeding show, races and shooting competitions.

In France in 1792 Gilbert ROMME suggested using the additional leap day every four years

"for public games, a citation similar to the Greek's Olympiads; they should be called French Olympiads and the last year the Olympic".

DANTON called for national games on the Mars field comparing these to Olympic Games. It was not until 1832 that a local school festival of the Petit Seminaire du Rondeau (near Grenoble) was named "Olympic Games". They were organized there until 1906 and in Montfleury from 1906 until 1954.

The Olympic Club in Ramloesa near Gothenburg organized Olympic Games in 1834 and 1836 with mainly gymnastic exercises.

All other Olympic Games Ruehl mentions in his charts were staged in the second half of the 19th century.

Otto the Greek King

The Greek's revolt started when the flag of rebellion was raised by Archbishop GERMANOS of Patras on April 6 (March 25) 1821. First successes, liberation of almost the complete Peloponnesus and Athens, enabled the creation of a government under Theodor KOLOKOTRONIS and acceptance of a preliminary constitution by the National Assembly on January 27, 1822. In the following years, however, the Turks regained almost the entire area. Missolonghi was seized in 1826, a year later Athens was also occupied by the Turks. On April 11, 1827 the Greeks elected Ioannis KAPODISTRAS to reign for seven years. A few months later, Russia, Great Britain and France signed the London treaty on July 6, 1827

and provided the Greeks with military support. The Turkish/Egypt fleet was destroyed in the battle of Navarino on October 20, 1827. The French expedition corps on the Peloponnesus and further military successes achieved, supported by the London protocol from February 3, 1830, the complete sovereignty of a new Greek kingdom. The designated regent Prince Leopold of SAXONY-COBURG-GOTHA renounced his control.

After KAPODISTRAS' murder on October 9, 1831 the three controlling powers agreed on LUDWIG I. second born son, the yet under aged 17 year old Prince OTTO, as first Greek king.

The Greek National Assembly voted for this suggestion on August 8, 1832 and sent a commission with twelve members under the auspices of Andreas MIAULIS, Dimitrios Blaputas KOLIOPOULOS and Kostas BOTZARIS to Munich to honour OTTO I. and to fetch him. A contract between all states involved determined that Bavarian civil servants should govern the country for the next three years until Otto was of age.

1832: Munich October Festival - compared to the Olympic Games

This happened at the time of the Munich October Festival. Because of a delay in the Greeks' arrival King LUDWIG had the Munich October Festival extended that year in order to combine the Bavarian national festival with the king's proclamation. The Greeks saw the sports competitions (horse races and shooting) and the agricultural exhibition. They wrote to their government on October 20:

„In the afternoon, we accepted an invitation, to watch a certain - festival, which is celebrated annually on the 8th of this month, and is called, October Festival'. It is held on an extensive plain outside the city. The described festival presents a simulation of the Olympic Games and spectacles derived from ancient Greece."

It would be interesting to know, whether or not the Greek representatives made this comparison themselves or if their attention was drawn to this fact (see von HAZZI). The information was, however, sent to Athens only one year before the poet Panagiotis SOUTSOS called for a revival of Olympic Games and three years before Minister Ioannis KOLETTIS' memorandum relating hereto (see below).

On December 6, 1832 Otto travelled from Munich to Greece with the Greek commission following a day later.

Otto I - the Greek King

OTTO arrived in Nauplia, Greece's first capital, February 6, 1833. A year later he transferred the seat of government to Athens. He himself took over government when he came of age in 1835. The new state received a loan from the great powers to enhance economic development and a Bavarian garrison as a military safeguard. His father remained influential and tried to establish an absolute monarchy and in accordance with his father's wishes OTTO, still under age had to give almost all leading positions in economy, government and administration to Bavarian civil servants. This caused friction amongst the Greek elite which had split into "English", "French" and "Russian" factions.

The "Bavarokratie", whose members even intrigued against themselves, was soon despised. The king himself was popular as he soon spoke Greek fluently and dressed in a Greek style. However, there was criticism. He remained Catholic and that his wife did not get pregnant. Furthermore, there were problems in foreign policy as a result of for example, the revolt of Greek citizens on Crete in 1841. In the aftermath of political riots ("Antibavarism") almost all "foreigners" had to be dismissed from state services. Otto was forced to approve to a constitution. Greece turned into a constitutional monarchy. The idea of establishing a Great Greek Empire („Μεγάλη Ἰδέα") with Constantinople as its capital saw the Greek parliament side with Russia in the Crimean war. After initial success in Epiros the English and French seized the port at Piraeus and Athens. It was the unsuccessful home and foreign policy that led to a rebellion in February 1862. OTTO was deposed on October 22, of that year and went into exile to Bamberg with his wife AMALIA of Oldenburg, where he died on July 26, 1867.

During OTTO'S residence he had supervised the reconstruction of Athens using Munich as a model. It had been little more than a village when he arrived amid great celebration in 1835. According to the scheme of his architects SCHAUBERT, von KLENZE, GARTNER, the Danish brothers Christian und Theophil HANSEN and the Greek Stamatios KLEANTHES a classical townscape with radiant main streets and the appropriate buildings was created, including a university, academy, library, Technical College, National Museum and King's Palace.

Bavarian influence on Greek physical exercise

Like much of the Greek administrative system schools were also created according to the Bavarian model. At first Georg Ludwig von MAURER was responsible, and he based his decrees closely on the Bavarian teaching schedules (four years of elementary school, three years of Hellenic schools and for talented students four years so grammar school) drawn up by the pedagogue and philologist Friedrich Wilhelm THIERSCH. In the act "About primary schools" from February 6, 1834 "physical exercises twice a week supervised by the teacher" were regulated. This was also valid for the Hellenic school and the grammar school. A Royal decree on December 31, 1836 prescribed these schools:

"During the break time and in the lesson free period [Wednesdays and Saturdays] the pupils have to take part in gymnastics and other exercises supervised by a teacher."

A comparison to Jahn's ideas becomes obvious. The connection between Friedrich Ludwig JAHN and Greek schools is easily found. As a young Prince King OTTO was educated in Turnen by the Jahn scholar Hans Ferdinand MAßMANN, whom King LUDWIG brought to Munich as the director of a public German gymnastic institution.

When OTTO moved to Greece he was also accompanied by two German gymnastics teachers, who were educated by MAßMANN. In 1834 the German gymnastics teacher Ludwig KORCK founded a German gymnastic institution in Nauplia which was equipped in similar fashion to German institutions. Here the students of the teacher training seminar for primary schools were educated. In 1834 OTTO sent the Greek Georg Th. PAGON to Munich to have him instructed as a German gymnastics teacher by MAßMANN. After his return PAGON conducted the gymnastic lessons in the teacher training seminar for primary schools in Aegina. From 1837 onwards he worked at the teacher's seminar in Athens. In the same year he published the first Greek schoolbook about physical exercises. It was based on the information in GUTSMUTHS *Gymnastik für die Jugend, Deutsche Turnkunst* by JAHN/EISELEN and AMOROS' *Manuel d'Education*. In 1858 PAGON became head of the new *Royal Gymnastic Academy* in Athens. He was succeeded by Ioannis PHOKIANOS.

It is doubtful whether all the positive decrees and instructions were carried out in practice. Many Greek scholars were wary of physical

exercise. The Bavarians had set the emphasis on intellectual education according to the modern humanist educational values.

1833: Panagiotis Soutsos' demand 1835: Kolettis' memorandum

The pre-history of the Olympics initiated by Evangelos ZAPPAS was investigated quite precisely by Giorgios DOLIANITIS, Anastase KIVROGLOU und Wolfgang DECKER in recent years. But they hardly did any research on the connection to the Munich October Festival.

In 1833 Panagiotis SOUTSOS asked in his poem *"Dialogue with the dead"*:

*"Where are your pretty Olympic Games?
Where you Pan-Athenaes? Your festivals,
your great theatres?"*

So he was thinking of renewing the Olympic Games. The Greek Home Secretary Ioannis KOLETTIS presented a memorandum in February 1835: *„Sur l'institution des solennités nationales et des jeux publics à l'instar de ceux de l'antiquité"*. He was talking about festivals following the example of the great Pan-Hellenic argons that were organized starting in year 1836 but instead of being staged in Olympia, Delphi, Nemea and on Isthmos as they had been in antiquity they were to now be organized at prominent places of the liberation war. They were to be opened each year by the King on March 25, the Greek national holiday. He suggested gymnastic, equestrian and artistic competitions and a big fair.

1835: Otto's enthronement

On June 1, 1835 turned 20 and so came of age. On this day his enthronement was celebrated in Athens. The author found a pamphlet (announcement) about this occasion in the museum in the former parliamentary building, a white printed sheet of paper in a wooden frame. The *"Festive Programme for June 1 (Mai 20), 1835 the day of enthronisation of H.M. the King"* was presented in three languages (Greek, German, English). Point 17 says:

„On 21st May (2nd June) there will be held a running competition at the stadium, on the next day a long jump contest which shall be followed by a horse race. On one of these days will be celebrated a military review of the garrison, and will be observed by H.R. Majesty."

The horse races and gymnastic exercises put one in mind of elements of the Munich October Festival. One of the king's advisors, Ludwig Roß, wrote ironically about parts of the festival:

"Kolettis as Homes Secretary had ordered something similar to Olympic Games, running, wrestling and throwing at targets on an open space and had hired a couple of dirty comrades as Olympians, but the usually so sensible man made a complete fiasco of his national festival; one could only laugh about this."

The comparison to the Olympic Games made in honour of the King. KOLETTIS is responsible, who had suggested a renewal of the Olympic Games a couple of months earlier.

1836: Otto I's visit to the Munich October Festival

One year later OTTO I. returned to Munich to visit the October Festival and was able to again watch the complete sports programme from horse races to German gymnastics and an agricultural exhibition. There were presentations of bakery journeymen: wrestling, javelin, running, stone hurling and rope climbing. The journeymen targeted a Hercules sculpture covered with a lion fur in the javelin competition. Otto was presented with a poem:

*„Von macht'gen Kampfen ist uns hohe Kunde,
Und von Athletenspielen in dem Land,
Das du beherrschest durch der Liebe Band
Bald mit dem höchsten Erdengluck im Bunde."*

*Auch in der Heimath geht's von Mund zu Munde,
Daß deutsche Kraft stets rust'ge Streiter fand,
in Deiner Heimath, die mit Dir empfand
des Wiedersehens wonnevolle Stunde."*

1837: Foundation of the Committee to promote industry

A year after his return from Germany, (he had in the meantime married Princess AMALIA von Oldenburg) Otto reacted to KOLETTIS' memorandum in Athens and founded a "Committee of twelve members to promote the national industry, agriculture and cattle breeding" with a Royal decree on February 2, 1837. This included public sports competitions. The wording says:

"that public competitions shall be staged on three consecutive days after its ending at the same place, namely horse races, wrestling competitions, running, discus, jumps, javelin, national dances and other exercises, that are to be presented accompanied by music."

1838: Olympic Games in Letrinoi

The Greek community in Letrinoi organized Olympic Games in Pyrgos in 1838. Pyrgos is today the capital of Elis, and is situated directly neighbouring Olympia. We know little about the event. But there is no evident connection to the later ZAPPAS' Games.

1850: "Olympic Games"

1852: "Greek racing competition on horse back" at the Munich October Festival

The unveiling of the Bavaria statue and part of the Ruhmeshalle (Hall of Honour) - king LUDWIG had commissioned the building from the artists Ludwig SCHWANTHALER, Leo von KLENZE and Ferdinand von MILLER - This was the highlight of the Munich October Festival on October 9, 1850. King OTTO was one of the guests of honour.

But of even greater importance to our research is an event that took place on October 8:

"The Olympic Games organized this afternoon on the Therese's Green including a cycling race start at 2.30 o'clock"

was written on a flyer.

Bekanntmachung.

Die heute Nachmittags auf der
Theresien-Wiese stattfindenden olym-
pischen Spiele nebst dem Radlau-
fen beginnen um 2½ Uhr.

Am 8. Oktober 1850.

Magistrat
der
k. Haupt- u. Residenzstadt München.

Bürgermeister: Dr. Bauer.

Rachmayr, Sekretär.

What did these Olympic Games look like? The "Sakular Chronik" wrote:

"At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the Olympic Games, the wrestling and cycling races among the bakery and wightwheel journeymen, with many participants, started

Flyer with the
announcement of
Olympic
Games 1850



Parade
of the
Olympic
Games

on the Therese's Green conducted by the German gymnastics teacher Gruber and with great applause from the audience. The bakery journeymen marched [...] to the school building [...], where they were joined by the wightwheel comrades. Then the parade set into motion [...] to the Therese's Green. Trumpeters set the opening, followed by the flag bearers, the bakers' jury, 24 bakery journeymen with flags, one bakery journeyman with tournament pole and a stick, the bicycle of the wheelman Gutmann von Lechhausen, the jury of the wightwheel journeymen and 12 wightwheel journeymen, all dressed in old German costumes. The wrestling took place in two sections and six prizes were each distributed in stone hustling, dart throwing and racing"

The programme was similar to those in 1835 and 1836. The "sports" exercises that originated in Bavarian tradition were now decorated with the term "Olympic Games".

King OTTO returned to Munich in the autumn of 1852 and visited the Munich October Festival. A "Greek racing competition on horse back" was held now in his honour. A leaflet written by the organiser "L. Gruber, German gymnastics teacher of H.M." presented information about the programme.

It began with a parade from the court riding school through town to the Therese's Green. The parade included:

- the jury's carriages,
- nine trumpeters in old Greek costumes on horse back - the royal director of music Streck had written music specially for this occasion - ,
- the honorary flag of the cabmen, which was made by the Magistrate of the Munich township,

- four prize flags,
- eight racers,
- one school leader with two javelin bearers.

All were on horse back and dressed in "old Greek costume(s)".

On the Therese's Green the parade continued with an "honorary ride" past the Royal stand.

"Then 8 competitors started the throwing at a set up figure with a javelin in a short gallop. - The upper body being the target."

Then the rein competition started, speaking of which it has to be noted that always two horses with riders presented and illustrated an area of the sky.



The rein
competition
during the
Olympic
Games on a
Lithograph
from 1852
"Olympic
Games at the
October
Festival in
Munich: The
rein
competition"

In this competition always two riders (two cardinal points) rode against one another and tried in the moment of passing to reach for the other competitor's reins, who tried to prevent this. In the case of success horse and man were taken aside as defeated ones, if the attempt was unsuccessful it had to be repeated. Finally followed a race in which the riders rode "to a target in a stretched gallop and back again in the

**Jousting
 competition
 during the
 Olympic
 Games on a
 Lithograph
 from 1852
 Olympic
 Games at the
 October
 Festival in
 Munich: The
 javelin**



same way." After the third test the jury "passed judgement on the horse's prize worthiness". The owner of the winning horse received 24 Guldens and a flag, the sixth follower up and last yet received six Guldens.

Many spectators are said to have opposed to this competition because of the brutal treatment of the horses.

Yet it is remarkable that "Olympic Games" are mentioned on the lithographs from 1852.

1859: The first Olympics in Athens

Evangelos ZAPPAS a wealthy Greek merchant living in Romania was greatly influenced by Soutos' idea and offered the Greek state a fully equipped foundation in 1856. The Olympic Games were to be revived with this money. There was much correspondence between the consul in Bucharest and the foreign ministry in Athens. Minister Alexandras RANGAVIS convinced ZAPPAS to set up an industrial and agricultural exhibition into the centre of the festival additionally to the sports competitions. ZAPPAS was prepared to finance an appropriate exhibition hall for this.

The event was to be held every four years in October (first to last Sunday) with horse races on the second and "gymnic Agons" on the third Sunday of this month. Medals and diplomas were to be handed out in addition to money prizes, 100 drachmas for the winner of sports competitions, and 50 for the runner up. Negotiations with Zappas were successfully brought to an end mid 1858, so that King OTTO could order the organisation of Olympics in a Royal decree on August 19, 1858. The first Olympics were supposed to take place in October 1859.

Due to problems in the preparations the festive opening of the first Olympics in presence of the King and his family didn't take place until October 18. The horse races took place on November 2. There was a race for amateurs and one for

"professionals". The amateur winner received two pistols worth 500 drachmas, the professional 300 drachmas. Officers also took part in the amateur's race. The King personally presented the prizes. The sports competitions were staged in the Ludwigsplatz (Ludwig's square) on November 15. The press wrote about following competitions: stadion race (prize: twig of an olive tree and 50 drachmas), Diaulos (prize: an olive branch and 100 drachmas), Dolichos covering the distance of seven stadion (prize: an olive branch and 280 drachmas), single long jump (prize: an olive branch and 100 drachmas, 50 for the runner up), long jump over a trench (prize: an olive branch and 100 drachmas, 50 for the runner up), Askoliasmos (prize: a pipe of wine for the first and second), discus throw in height (prize: an olive branch and 100 drachmas), javelin (prize: an olive branch and 50 drachmas), mast climbing (prize was attached to the top of the mast). Minister RANGAVIS, German gymnastics teacher PAGON, S. SPILIOTAKIS, F. BULANSER and A. LANDERER belonged to the jury. Except for PAGON, who was responsible for the organisation, all others were also members of the jury for the competitions within the industrial and agricultural exhibition.

Although 12.000 spectators had gathered the event was criticised as a failure by the press: wrong choice of time, insufficient place for the competition, low number of competitors, weak performance, deficiency in organisation. 70 years later the Greek German gymnastics teacher Ioannis CHRYSSAFIS accused the organisers of having "excavated" antique competitions instead of having considered folk exercises popular in Greece at that time like stone hurling and wrestling.

The second Olympics weren't held until 1870, also under the reign of King GEORG I., the third 1875 and the fourth and final 1888/89. PHOKIANOS was the organiser responsible.

Munich October Festival and Olympics - a critical comparison

After the description above no doubt remains about the existence of a close connection between the October Festival in Munich and the Olympics in Athens.

Both events were festivals intending to foster a national spirit in a young state.

Both events consisted of a sports festival with horse races as well as folk and gymnastic competitions and exhibitions in the fields of agriculture, handicraft and industry.

In both cases there was state and private

(ZAPPAS) or semi-private (Landwirtschaftlicher Verein) support.

The King and/or his family supported the festivals, was present and personally awarded the prizes.

The winners were awarded money prizes and medals.

October was the chosen month in Munich and in Athens - here it was at least the planned time. Are the Olympics in Athens a successor, or a copy of the Munich October Festival or do they originate in ZAPPAS' idea due to SOUTSOS' demands and Kolletis' memorandum? Not only the chronology but also many facts point at the first version. The Munich October Festival was compared to Olympic Games as early as in the 20s. King LUDWIG and his family were convinced Philhellenes. Munich advanced to become "Isar-Athens". Bavaria (Munich) was the capital of Philhellenism in Europe. A lot of Bavarians fought on the Greek side in the liberation war. The Greek representatives who came to escort King OTTO, saw Olympic Games in the Munich October Festival. Bavarian civil servants tried to reconstruct Greece as a new state taking Bavaria as a model. King OTTO celebrated his arrival in the new capital Athens with a sports festival. Due to KOLETTIS' memorandum he signed a decree in February 1837 to found a committee to enhance the national industry, agriculture and cattle breeding and in August 1858 the decree to revive Olympics.

On the Greek side only SOUTSOS' demands, Kolettis' memorandum and ZAPPAS' ideas remain. We do not know what influenced SOUTSOS. Only his knowledge of antiquity? Or did he know of the Bavarian national festival and see a possibility to revive the antique festival due to the upcoming political connections between Bavaria and Greece? The merchant ZAPPAS must also have known of the Bavarian connections. This is even more evident when it comes to his partner in negotiations RANGAVIS, who as a student had lived with THIERSCH in Munich and had come to know the Munich October Festival, and who was able to transfer the possibilities and advantages of the Munich exhibition to Athens in his work as a Greek state servant. It was he, who convinced Zappas of adjusting the Olympics' programme according to the Munich October Festival.

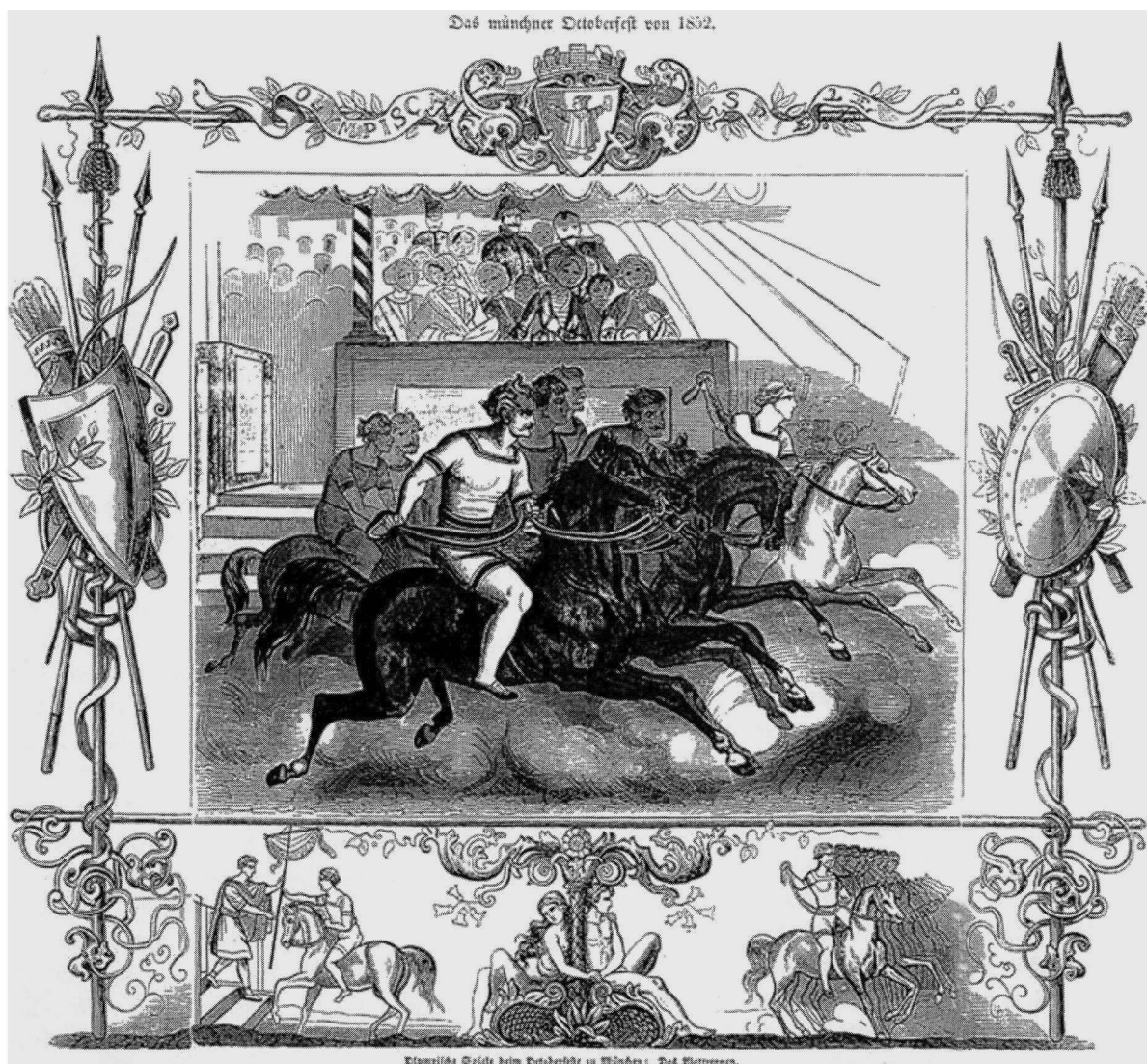
In accordance to the noted sources one can conclude:

The Greek Olympics succeed the Munich October Festival.

1889 ff.: Baron de Coubertin's idea of international Olympic Games

Baron Pierre de COUBERTIN is today commonly seen as the man who restored the Olympic Games. When his *Memoires Olympiques* were published in 1932 - translated into German as *Olympische Erinnerungen* 1936 - they were considered as a reliable basis for Olympic historiography, and often relied on by journalists who usually don't want to spend too much time searching for sources. Only in recent decades have these been examined and compared critically concluding that Baron de COUBERTIN tended to interpret from a single point of view and was always careful to present HIS ideas as the only possible and right ones. He sometimes mentioned predecessors but in a matter of fact way. Some of them he didn't know at all. Although the Olympic Games in France, England and Greece must have been common knowledge to the historian COUBERTIN. From 1889 on he was probably thinking of the idea to suggest Olympic Games. First he thought of integrating them in the world exhibition 1900 in Paris. Just like in the Munich October Festival and the Olympics in Athens sports competitions were part of a world exhibition. The October Festival and Olympics were a national, the world exhibition an international event. This was then also valid for the sports competitions. This was the new point in Coubertin's suggestion. That is why the name International Olympic Games! was used for some time. Coubertin's achievements should not be denigrated but it must be emphasised that his greatness is less due to the fact that he suggested International Olympic Games, and rather based on the philosophy that he attached to the competition concepts of peace, understanding among nations, participation of all athletes, all nations, the best, education of youth, fair play, to name just a few.

Finally it must be stated that a connection must be drawn from the Munich October Festival reaching over the Olympics to our modern Olympic Games of today.



"The Munich
October
Festival
1852",
"Olympic
Games at the
Munich
October
Festival: The
race"