

Kriegsfreiwillige Reichstagsabgeordnete Überlegungen zum historischen Realitätsgehalt des „Augusterlebnisses“ 1914

Benjamin HASSELHORN*

Abstract: *Reichtags Deputies as War Volunteers. Considerations upon the Historical Reality of the “August Experience” 1914.* In the last years, many historians have doubted the existence of the so-called “august experience” (Augusterlebnis) at the beginning of World War One in Germany. The following paper questions that view, because the usually given arguments are based on a lack of research, on an overinterpretation of the sources and on a misinterpretation of the actual meaning of the “Augusterlebnis”. This paper tries to show that the “Augusterlebnis” did not necessarily include war enthusiasm, but consisted of the widespread sense of national unity and was expressed in a defensive patriotism and the strong commitment to defending the own country in a critical situation. In order to analyse how widespread this form of the “Augusterlebnis” really was, some provisional results are presented regarding those volunteers that were members of the German Reichstag as deputies for the social democrats and for the catholic “Zentrum”. These results suggest to do more research on the topic, so that there can be a more established judgment about the phenomenon “Augusterlebnis”.

Keywords: *August experience, war volunteers, war enthusiasm, German Reichstag*

* Dr., Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten in Sachsen-Anhalt, Berlin (benjamin.hasselhorn@gmx.de).