

# Review of: "The soft power of neutrality Dutch humanitarianism in World War I, 1914-1918"

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This was an interesting article which contributes to our understanding of humanitarian activities during WW1, and links these to the wider context of a nation's policy of neutrality. The article is on the whole well structured (although, see below, there were some statements in the conclusion that would have been better in the introductory paragraphs) and contains good case studies. For improvement I would suggest the following areas:

At the beginning, for better context I would like to see a good definition of the meaning of humanitarianism during wartime. I would also, for better context, like to have seen a discussion of the Dutch government's policy of neutrality, when and how this policy arose and how government intended to realise this policy. Throughout there is a greater need for insights into how the Dutch government/MPs were responding to pressures on the country's neutrality. What was the 'humanitarian tradition' in Holland? What was the Dutch government's involvement the holidays for German children etc. Even if these holidays were organised privately or by the churches, the government must have played some role in facilitating the entry of thousands of foreign children, for example providing visas, overseeing registration of names etc.

There needs to be better referencing throughout, as sometimes it is not clear where the information is from; the earlier paragraphs, particularly would benefit from more references, particularly paragraphs 1 – 8 but also further into the article. Especially need source/references on the stricter government security after illegal aliens began entering the country. Also sources needed for the Government's concern about Russians arriving post-1917.

Some unanswered questions/more information needed, for example: why was Allied support for the Dutch as a low ebb in 1919? What were these 'private committees' who organised transport etc for internees? Were they civil society committees from groups already in existence or did they form ad hoc once their need was established? What were the arrangements with international humanitarian organisations, for example the Quakers, which set up and ran several internment camps in neutral countries, including the Netherlands?

It would have been interesting to see more discussion of the humanitarianism-neutrality-peace-making nexus. There is a brief mention of the Dutch government's attempts at organising a post-war peace conference, but it would have been interesting too, to see a discussion of the Hague International Congress of Women, 1915, a women's pacifist conference, to which the Dutch government must have given its blessing.

I would have liked to see more analysis/discussion of the links between humanitarianism and the survival of the Netherlands as a small state. Some of the statements in the conclusion would have been better placed in the introduction,

to provide context before the discussion of the case studies.