A Humanitarian Conscience: British Pacifists in Second World War China

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What does it mean to talk about a humanitarian conscience? The paper focuses on a group of British pacifist who conscientiously objected to military service and ended up working in Second World War China for the Friends Ambulance Unit. These people would go onto have a significant role in the history of British humanitarianism. The paper treats conscience as a historically embedded cultural category rather than a transcendent principle or experience, and asks how forms of conviction, hesitation and self-sacrifice have shaped the direction of humanitarian action.

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