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Making The World Safe: The American Red Cross And A Nation's Humanitarian Awakening



Synopsis

In *Making the World Safe*, historian Julia Irwin offers an insightful account of the American Red Cross, from its founding in 1881 by Clara Barton to its rise as the government's official voluntary aid agency. Equally important, Irwin shows that the story of the Red Cross is simultaneously a story of how Americans first began to see foreign aid as a key element in their relations with the world. As the American Century dawned, more and more Americans saw the need to engage in world affairs and to make the world a safer place--not by military action but through humanitarian aid. It was a time perfectly suited for the rise of the ARC. Irwin shows how the early and vigorous support of William H. Taft--who was honorary president of the ARC even as he served as President of the United States--gave the Red Cross invaluable connections with the federal government, eventually making it the official agency to administer aid both at home and abroad. Irwin describes how, during World War I, the ARC grew at an explosive rate and extended its relief work for European civilians into a humanitarian undertaking of massive proportions, an effort that was also a major propaganda coup. Irwin also shows how in the interwar years, the ARC's mission meshed well with presidential diplomatic styles, and how, with the coming of World War II, the ARC once again grew exponentially, becoming a powerful part of government efforts to bring aid to war-torn parts of the world. The belief in the value of foreign aid remains a central pillar of U.S. foreign relations. *Making the World Safe* reveals how this belief took hold in America and the role of the American Red Cross in promoting it.

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Customer Reviews

"Irwin shows that the Red Cross did more than change itself. In effect it used the war and the aftermath in which American power and prestige grew to reshape European society and the global Red Cross movement as a proactive charity...Exhaustive and fresh in its research, and mature in its judgments, the book is notable in part because it fills a major gap in our knowledge...Irwin provides an important contribution to the reinterpretation of the Progressive Era's international engagement and to the study of twentieth-century international organizations."--Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

Julia F. Irwin's *Making the World Safe*, only the second book-length treatment of the American Red Cross (arc), provides a welcome update to the historical record. Irwin makes a convincing case that the story of the arc is inextricable from the story of international relations in the United States: we cannot hope to understand either American interventionism or isolationism by focusing on the political realm alone."--Journal of American History

Irwin has provided a textured and needed perspective on a critical and overlooked piece of the U.S. humanitarian establishment by explaining the years that were a formative forge for the American Red Cross...Rather than a simple institutional history of a crucial actor Irwin has provided us a textured view of a critical agent in the evolution of humanitarianism in the United States that illuminates a diverse set of historical themes."--Diplomatic History

Julia F. Irwin shows that the Red Cross's rapid growth during World War I is a significant event that raises deep questions about the role charities should play in our country's diplomatic efforts...Irwin reminds us that the role Americans play overseas is complex and deeply rooted in our nation's history."--The Weekly Standard

Irwin, in a crisply written and stimulating book, has made a persuasive case that to understand fully the development of international humanitarianism later in the 20th century we must look to the American Red Cross overseas relief work during World War I. Students of American Foreign Relations and humanitarianism alike will be rewarded by reading this book."--Register of the Kentucky Historical Society

Focusing on the American Red Cross, Julia Irwin traces a tradition of international humanitarianism in the United States from the late nineteenth century through World War II. Her work provides a significant building-block in understanding how the ARC assisted the state in waging war and also built capacity for efforts of international civilian relief."--Emily S. Rosenberg, editor of *A World Connecting, 1870-1945*

"In *Making the World Safe*, Julia Irwin offers an impressive history of a new form of American humanitarianism by tracing the rise of the American Red Cross. She convincingly shows how, in close concert with government officials at home and abroad, the

Red Cross both encouraged and channeled a new kind of global humanitarianism. Deeply researched and full of personal stories of Red Cross rank-and-file, Irwin offers an impressive social history of American internationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."--David C. Engerman, Brandeis University"Though focused on the American Red Cross and its international civilian relief efforts in the early twentieth century, this book is about far more than emergency housing, food provisioning, health care, and hygienic education. It is about the growing conviction that the United States people-and increasingly their government-should provide overseas humanitarian assistance for moral and political reasons. Covering a pivotal period in the history of U.S. aid, Irwin shows how an organization founded to assist the wounded became a progressive force for peace as well as an instrument of national policy. This is a book of both contemporary relevance and lasting significance."--Kristin Hoganson, author of *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity*"Making the World Safe uses the untold history of the Red Cross to explore how the generation of Americans who lived through the Great War responded to the global devastation that surrounded them. Written with clarity and a humane sensibility, it is a model of the most exciting new scholarship about America and the world."--Christopher Capozzola, author of *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*"In *Making the World Safe*, Julia Irwin shows the way American civilians facilitated the projection of American global power through Red Cross humanitarian efforts. Fascinating, deeply researched, and effective."--Mary L. Dudziak, author of *War & Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences*"A very moving book about the American Red Cross and the excellent work that they perform."--The Lone Star Book Review

Julia F. Irwin is Associate Professor of History at the University of South Florida.

Julia Irwin has written a fabulous book about the story of the making of American humanitarianism - and she came to UW-Green Bay this week and delivered a wonderful talk that raised good questions about gender and race and how we relate to peoples beyond our borders. If you want to understand America in the World read *Making the World Safe*.

we are the birthplace of Clara Barton, so this is appropriate for our collection it will be great to have here, thanks

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