



# **Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening**

*Julia F. Irwin*

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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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