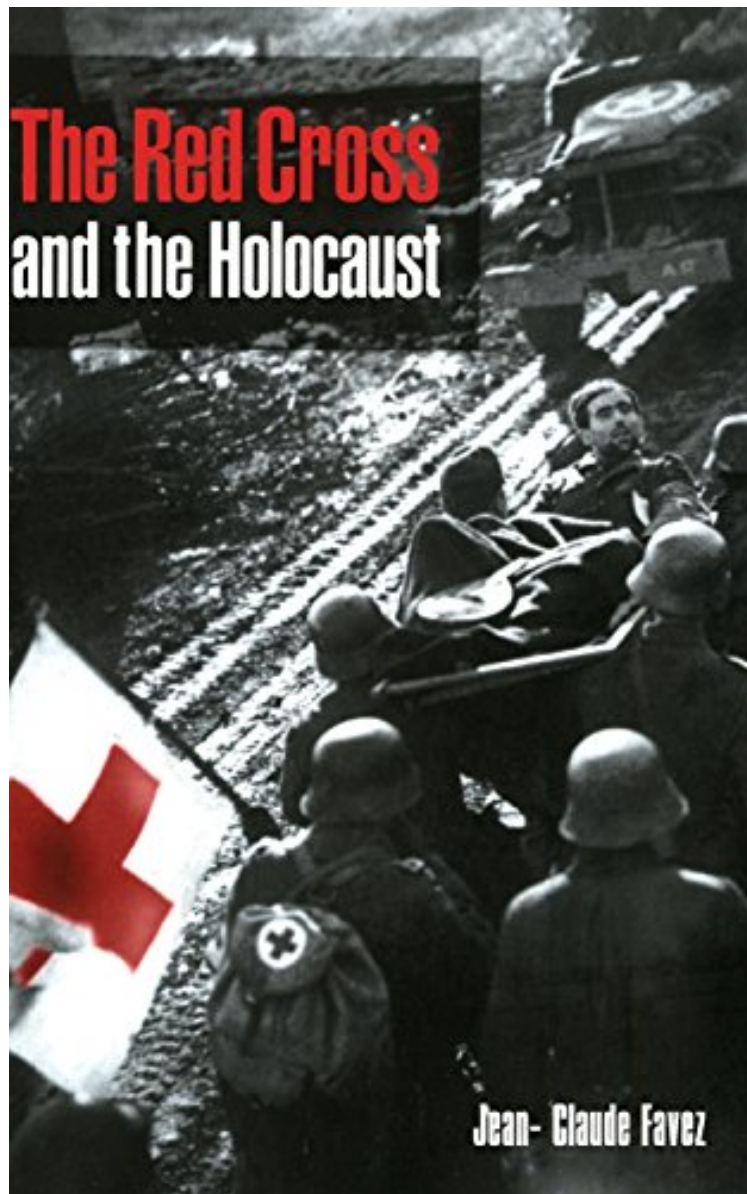


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## The Red Cross and the Holocaust

*Jean-Claude Favez*

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#1995350 in Books Cambridge University Press 1999-11-13 Original language: French PDF # 1 8.98 x .87 x 5.981, 1.70 #File Name: 052141587X388 pages | File size: 55.Mb

**Jean-Claude Favez : The Red Cross and the Holocaust** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Red Cross and the Holocaust:

The Red Cross and the Holocaust presents a new assessment of the role of the world's most famous charity in World

War II. Was the Red Cross aware of the appalling sufferings of the victims of the concentration camps? How much did its International Committee know about the deportation and extermination of the Jews in Europe? Did it try to protect the persecuted Jews? In what ways could it have helped them, given the neutrality that was the basis of its foundation? These questions have remained unanswered for more than fifty years and have sparked bitter debates. Jean-Claude Favez here presents a fundamental reappraisal, informed by unrivaled access to the archives of the Red Cross. This magisterial work includes a chronology, indices, biographical notes, and a statement by the charity's current leaders: anyone interested in the complexity and tragedy of the Holocaust will find this compelling reading.

From Publishers Weekly The Red Cross's failure to fight the Holocaust has long been known. What's new in this dry but worthy addition to Holocaust literature by a French academic who had unrestricted access to the organizations archives is the author's nuanced argument about why that failure took place, along with his documentation. The failure, Favez argues, stemmed not, as has been alleged, from anti-Semitism among the group's top officers, but from their refusal to violate their group's founding principles of neutrality--they were determined not to appear to favor the cause of the Allies over that of the Axis. Furthermore, the Red Cross's mandate extends to prisoners of war; the Jews, as civilian prisoners, did not fit into the organization's categories even if they were treated much more harshly than POWs. Indeed, since the Jews had no state, their situation was worse: there was no individual national Red Cross fighting for their protection and no place to repatriate them to. And when the Red Cross did try to gain access to the camps to check on the inmates' status, the Nazis and their collaborators, with a couple of exceptions, refused to let them enter. Finally, says Favez, Red Cross delegates and staff never shook off the "habit of caution." Going country by country, relying on extensive archival material, Favez notes how the group's desire to maintain balance, borne out of its neutral, Swiss orientation and the habit of reticence among most of its leaders, was no match for the Nazis. The whitewashed description of Theresienstadt, written after a Red Cross delegate was allowed to visit there in 1944, is only the most egregious example. Favez, like his subject, is balanced: he dutifully lists the number of aid packages sent to concentration camp inmates and requests made to visit the camps. He also demonstrates that a few courageous people in a few countries, particularly Hungary, where mass deportations of Jews did not occur until late in the war, were able to achieve some results. As is clear from this account, however, even these results were meager. (Jan.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Favez, former Rector of the University of Geneva, was the first researcher to have unrestricted access to the files of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). His book, first published in French in 1988 (and very capably translated and edited in this slightly abridged edition), shows that the ICRC, which historically dealt with injured soldiers and prisoners of war, was cautious and reticent in responding to the unique horrors that European Jewry faced as civilian internees of a totalitarian state. Quoting from archival materials, Favez illustrates how the ICRC felt itself powerless, not wanting to jeopardize its appearance as a neutral intermediary and moral guarantor in order to maintain its access to POWs. He includes an appendix with ten of the documents. Favez provides a remarkably balanced portrait, detailing successful operations of the ICRC while criticizing the overall response. This breakthrough volume belongs in all European history and diplomatic collections. -John A. Drobnicki, York Coll., Jamaica, NY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA valuable and thorough documentation of how little the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) could and did do for the Holocaust's six million Jews. The massive archival work here by Favez, former Rector of the University of Geneva, was first published in French in 1989. The author and the Red Cross significantly share a Swiss background, as the anxious sham (recently exposed in the banking investigation) of Swiss neutrality in the war is blamed for making the Swiss and the ICRC "helplessly isolated," cowed, and introverted. Reports indicate that ICRC delegates knew by 1941 that the mass murders of Jews dwarfed the previous Armenian genocide. While the Red Cross had early access to the horrific reports of Nazi doings, they cooperated with the German Red Cross, headed by the SS's chief medical officer, when inspecting the showcase camp (complete with flowers, an orchestra, and prepped inmates) at Theresienstadt. Favez acknowledges that the elsewhere courageous ICRC was distracted by the demands of POWs and civilian internees: "Both the Germans and the British refused to consider interned Jews as civilian internees." The Red Cross was legally handcuffed. One memo states: "The Jews were not a state, so they had no place in existing international humanitarian law," leaving the ICRC, as one of its officials admitted, impotent, horror-struck bystanders." While the prestige of the Red Cross fell sharply, Favez marshals equally damning evidence against the Allies. The research leading to his highly critical conclusion is framed by an extensive scholarly apparatus whose even-handedness gives his allegations even graver weight. Some artists have depicted Jewish Holocaust victims as crucified by Christian civilization. This pivotal study, while stating the ICRC's limitations, may paint that cross red. (1 map) -- Copyright 1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.