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**Cover Image**

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**Stone, Dan, *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History*; London; Pelican, 2024; paperback, pp.li + 401, 3 b/w illustrations, 6 maps; RRP £12.99; ISBN: 9780241508749.**

*Even if we admit that every generation has the right to write its own history, we admit no more than that it has the right to rearrange the facts in accordance with its own perspective; we don't admit the right to touch the factual matter itself (297).*

In this timely contribution to the field, Dan Stone attempts to settle multiple popular misconceptions about the Holocaust and World War II in Europe. While the historiography of the Holocaust is vast, the Professor of Modern History and Director of the Holocaust Research Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London, provides a valuable contribution to the field with *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History*. His purpose is to provide a critical assessment of the genocide that challenges conventional understandings of the mechanisms of the mass killings, the extent of collaboration throughout Europe, and its place in current political, social, and ideological contexts.

This work builds upon his previous publications, most notably his 2015 book, *The Liberation of the Camps: The End of the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, which discusses the complex experiences of survivors in the aftermath of World War II. *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History* is structured into eight chapters, with figures and maps throughout. Chapters one through four analyse the racial ideologies and legal measures implemented by the Nazi regime that paved the way for the Holocaust. Chapter five explores the breadth of European collaboration, while chapter six focuses on the machinery of mass murder. Leaving the reader at a chilling end, chapters seven and eight delve into the harrowing experiences that Jewish people faced at liberation, as well as examining the impact of survivor testimony and the political dynamics that shape Holocaust memory throughout Europe. Aptly titled an 'unfinished history', Stone has produced an academically rigorous yet easily accessible document that unsettles any notion of the past being fixed or complete.

One simple interpretation of the term 'unfinished history' in relation to the Holocaust is that crucial aspects of the genocide are inadequately understood. The idea that the Holocaust was an 'industrial genocide' – that is, a large-scale extermination undertaken through modern technological methods and bureaucratic organisation – is just one of these misunderstood postulations. While extermination camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau have become the dominant symbol of the genocide, Stone emphasises the decentralised and often chaotic nature of the killings. He highlights the 'Holocaust by bullets' and introduces the audience to the little known, widespread massacres carried out by the *Einstazgruppen* across Eastern Europe, in which Jews were murdered in their own towns and villages, often with direct participation or tacit approval of local populations (108). Chapter five's eye-opening analysis of the conditions in Transnistria, where in the winter of 1941–42, thousands of Jews were abandoned in pigsties and either froze to death or suffered inescapable epidemics,

further challenges the conventional portrayal of the Holocaust as being carried out entirely within extermination camps.

Another central argument of Stone's analysis is his exploration of collaboration and complicity across Europe in the murder of some six million Jewish people. Although the Holocaust originated in Germany from Nazi ideology, it was ultimately a European project. In the book's fifth chapter, 'A Continent-wide Crime', Stone makes it abundantly clear that the Holocaust unfolded as it did largely due to the involvement of local collaborators – including Bulgarian police who deported Macedonian Jews to Treblinka, Croatia's management of its own extermination camp at Jasenovac, and collaboration within France, the Slovak Republic, and Hungary. Moreover, Stone provides evidence for the Holocaust to be viewed as a global history. The experiences of Jews in the colonial administrations of North Africa and in exile communities from Mauritius to Bolivia and the Philippines complicate the idea that non-German actors were merely passive bystanders, and instead highlight the active participation of numerous European and international societies in the genocide.

Australia cannot consider its hands clean of this global history. During World War II, Australia's restrictive immigration laws prevented thousands of refugees, mostly Jewish, from seeking asylum. Those who did manage to escape Europe to Australia did so on ships such as the HMT *Dunera* in 1940; however, Jewish refugees were forced to share facilities with Nazi sympathisers and Italian fascists – a decision formally sanctioned by both the British and Australian governments. Furthermore, the conditions were appalling – both on the ship and in Australia's internment camps. Cyril Pearl's 1983 publication, *The Dunera Scandal: Deported by Mistake*, describes the journey of the HMT *Dunera* and the severe conditions at the Hay internment camp in New South Wales, further demonstrating the Holocaust's broader entanglement with national histories on a global scale.

An 'unfinished history' can, too, be interpreted in relation to the complex processes of memorialisation of the Holocaust. Chapter eight of *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History* explores the contentious topic of Holocaust memory in depth; however, this theme is expertly woven through the pages of the entire monograph. Stone's analysis points to the fact that many post-communist Eastern European countries have been slow to acknowledge their level of complicity in the genocide. For example, he sheds light on the case of two Polish historians who were taken to court in 2021 after writing about a Polish man who betrayed scores of Jews to the Germans. This was based on the 2018 law which made it a criminal offence to accuse Poles of being complicit in the Nazi murder of the Jews. The after-effects of these, and other actions, 'are felt to this day in the spheres of politics and culture in many, often unexpected ways' (267).

Moreover, Stone challenges readers to view the Holocaust not as a concluded historical event, but as an ideological precursor to current global issues, including incidents such as the 6 January 2021 riot at the US Capitol. Here, radicals were seen wearing t-shirts marked with a logo for 'Camp Auschwitz' on the front, and the word 'Staff' on the back (266). Further contributing to the poignant topic today, Stone addresses the sensitive debates surrounding Holocaust memory in the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He highlights the British government's 2020 mandate that universities should adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, explaining how in its eleven

examples of antisemitism, seven concern or make reference to Israel (265). The language of the definition is vague and open to interpretation, inviting a conflation of criticisms of Israel with antisemitism. Stone worries that the adaptation of this definition by universities may be leveraged for outing pro-Palestinian scholars and silencing anti-Zionist voices (266). With the rise of conflict in the Middle East, particularly in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and an increase of antisemitism on university campuses globally, institutions in Australia and the world over have adopted definitions of antisemitism that align with the IHRA. This is a move that has received both praise and criticism, reflecting the ongoing debate about balancing the fight against antisemitism with protecting free speech and academic freedom.

The book's main strength is its ability to synthesise a vast amount of historical research and present it in a clear manner that is fit for all audiences, from the general reader to scholars alike. Unlike some traditional accounts of the Holocaust by scholars such as Raul Hilberg and Christopher Browning, whose significant contributions emphasise the evolution of Nazi Jewish policy and established frameworks of victimhood, Stone interrogates the persistent ambiguities of the genocide. His prose is engaging and thought-provoking, and provides a perspective that challenges the reader to think beyond established narratives and consider the Holocaust's broader implications. However, this exact approach is what some readers may find unsettling. His insistence on confronting uncomfortable truths – such as widespread European complicity and the distortion of Holocaust memory – may provoke resistance among those who prefer more familiar narratives of the Holocaust as a unique and isolated atrocity. Nonetheless, this willingness to challenge established perspectives is precisely what makes the book so valuable.

To finish this review of *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History*, it is fitting to return to the opening quote from the political philosopher Hannah Arendt, also found in Stone's conclusion. Arendt asserts that while each generation may reinterpret history through its own lens, the facts themselves remain unassailable. Stone's work embodies this very principle: he does not seek to rewrite the history of the Holocaust, but rather to challenge the selective ways in which it has been remembered and misrepresented. By highlighting overlooked facts and dismantling myths, Stone rearranges the historical narrative – not to distort the truth, but to restore the complexities that have been smoothed over by time and political convenience. This approach underscores Arendt's warning: the right to reinterpret history must never become a licence to alter the truth.

In an era marked by rising right-wing rhetoric, resurgent antisemitism, and the weaponisation of history for political gain, Stone's contribution confirms that while perspectives may evolve, the truth will endure. This book serves as a powerful reminder that history is never truly finished – that the past continues to shape the present, and that understanding the Holocaust remains crucial for addressing the challenges of our own time.

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