Marija Vulesica

Aleksandar Licht and Hinko Gottlieb in Gestapo Prisons in 1941

Experiences and Reflections

Abstract

This article examines the arrests and imprisonments of Aleksandar Licht (1884–1948) and Hinko Gottlieb (1886–1948), two leading figures of the Jewish community in Zagreb, in the spring of 1941. Drawing on surviving letters, fragmented archival records, and Gottlieb's autobiographical novel *The Key to the Great Gate*, the article explores both the strategies of Nazi repression and the personal responses of the prisoners. While Licht emphasised dignity and responsibility in his correspondence, Gottlieb transformed trauma into literature through irony and imagination. Their contrasting testimonies shed light on Gestapo practices in southeastern Europe and highlight the need for further research on this underexplored region.

In the early morning of 12 April 1941, the Gestapo in Zagreb took into custody a number of prominent Croatian-Jewish individuals for interrogation. Some of them were allowed to return home after a few hours, but only to be arrested again in the following days, and to be deported to Vienna or Graz. Among the arrested and deported men were Aleksandar Licht (1884–1948) and Hinko Gottlieb (1886–1948). Both were lawyers, leading intellectual figures of the Jewish community, and ardent Zionists. Their arrests were by no means coincidental. Rather, the Gestapo was fully aware of who these men were, the positions they held within Jewish life in the country, and the fact that their detention would deal a significant blow to the Jewish community of Zagreb. As a central instrument of German expansion and occupation in Europe, the Gestapo's offices understood that Jewish communities first had to be "decapitated" and thereby destabilised, in order to be gradually exploited and ultimately destroyed.

Just two days earlier, on 10 April 1941, German troops had entered the Croatian capital, Zagreb, enabling the underground fascist Ustaša[1] organisation to proclaim the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH). At the same time, Vladko Maček (1879–1964), the leader of the strongest Croatian party, the Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka,* HSS), who had refused to collaborate with the Nazis, was being interrogated by the Gestapo.[2]

The next day, on a Friday morning, three Gestapo men entered the premises of the Jewish Community on Palmotićeva Street. They arrested the employees and interrogated the community's secretary, Aleksa Klein (1898–1974). They searched and ransacked the community archives, confiscated the treasury, and sealed the building.

1 Goran Miljan, *Croatia and the Rise of Fascism: The Youth Movement and the Ustasha during WW II* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018).

2 Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution* (Stanford University Press, 2001), 56.

https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0225 | www.vwi.ac.at

On the evening of 12 April 1941, the Gestapo officially dissolved almost all of the Jewish communities, associations, and organisations in the NDH.[3] For Croatian Jewry, a period of systematic disenfranchisement, persecution, and destruction began, initiated by the Gestapo, but carried out largely by the Ustaša and its supporters.[4]

The Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, Secret State Police) – a political police force operating since 1933 whose aim was to investigate and combat all "enemies of the state" (members of the opposition, Jews, homosexuals, and others) – was one of the main pillars of the Nazi apparatus of violence. Incorporated into the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA) in 1939, the Gestapo officially had around 31,000 employees in the Reich and the occupied territories by the end of 1944.[5] However, in the numerous and extremely comprehensive – mostly German-language – accounts of the history of the Gestapo, there is almost no mention of its role, strength, and actions in southeastern Europe or in the NDH. By contrast, Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav historiography offered only fragmentary and scattered accounts of the Gestapo's activities in this region.[6]

The following article focuses on the experiences of Licht and Gottlieb in Gestapo prisons in Vienna and Graz. It addresses a specific period in their lives as well as in the history of the Jewish community in Croatia. The account engages with themes such as humiliation, violence, and the loss of freedom, while also reflecting on survival and resilience. Subsequently, it turns to an analysis of the surviving documentation of their imprisonment and thereby gives insights into the role and perception of the Gestapo already during the war.

About Aleksandar Licht and Hinko Gottlieb

Aleksandar Licht was a lawyer and president of the Zionist Federation of Yugoslavia from 1934. Born in 1884 in a small town in northern Croatia, he became interested in Zionism at a very early age. Licht studied in Zagreb and Vienna; he was a member of the first national Jewish associations in Zagreb and even served as temporary president of the Association of South Slavic Jewish Students *Bar Giora* in Vienna. Together with his brother Hermann, he edited the first Zionist magazine in the South Slavic countries of the Habsburg Monarchy, the *Židovska smotra* (Jewish Review), from 1908. His razor-sharp intellect, his devotion to Zionism, and his rhetorical skills were widely respected and admired. He gave most of his speeches freely, and later the editors of Zionist journals – such as *Židov* (The Jew), published in Zagreb from 1917 – stenographed and published these speeches, making his thoughts

3 Marija Vulesica, "Trying the Impossible: The Zagreb Jewish Community and the Provisioning of Female Camp Inmates, 1941–1942", in *Food, Scarcity and Power in Southeastern Europe During the Second World War*, eds. Paolo Fonzi, Sabine Rutar, and Xavier Bougarel (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024), 115, 118–119.

4 Ivo Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu* (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2001); Ognjen Kraus, ed., *Zna li se 1941–1945: antisemitizam, holokaust, antifašizam* (Zagreb: Židovska općina Zagreb, 1996); Alexander Korb, *Im Schatten des Krieges: Massengewalt der Ustaša gegen Serben, Juden und Roma in Kroatien 1941–1945* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2013).

5 Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Thomas Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien 1938–1945* (Edition Steinbauer, 2018), 29–30.

6 Slavko Odić and Slavko Komarica, *Noć i magla. Gestapo u Jugoslaviji* (Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1977); Radosav R. Tucović, "Policijski represivni aparat nacističke Nemačke i njegovi domaći instrumenti: analiza delatnosti Dragomira Jovanovića i Augusta Majsnera u okupiranoj Srbiji (1941–1944)" (PhD diss., Univerzitet u Beogradu, 2021); Davor Kočović, *Redarstveno – obavještanji sustav Nezavisne Države Hrvatske od 1941. do 1945. godine* (Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009).

and statements accessible to a broad Jewish-Yugoslav public. Licht took an active part in the First World War, later served as a reserve officer in the Yugoslav army, and was a busy lawyer. Despite his health problems, which he paid little attention to, he worked tirelessly to consolidate and develop the Zionist movement in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, where it enjoyed great success. Licht was regarded as an undisputed leader, an "idol of spiritual authority", as the young Zionist Joško Indig remarked in 1941.[7] It is no wonder, then, that as a leader, a political actor, and a prominent Jewish personality, he came into the crosshairs of the Gestapo.

Just like Hinko Gottlieb. Born in 1886 to a baker in northern Croatia, he became a Zionist at an early age, studied law in Zagreb and Vienna, and took part in the First World War. After the war, he opened a law firm in Bjelovar, where he also served as president of the Jewish community and the local Zionist association. In 1929, he moved to Zagreb with his wife Ruža Gottlieb (1891–1974), née Löwenstein, and their two small children. Gottlieb was never particularly interested in law, a friend and companion recalled after the Holocaust, but he loved writing. Gottlieb wrote and published from an early age, mainly in the Zionist journals *Židovska smotra, Židov,* and in the cultural journal *Omanut* (Hebrew for "art"), which he founded in 1936 and edited successfully until 1941. In *Omanut*, he published poems, short stories, and political essays. In his works, Gottlieb dealt with the political developments and ideas of his time, including Nazism, antisemitism, the persecution of European Jews, as well as the various Jewish responses to these threats and challenges. His political satire column in *Židov* in the 1930s served especially as a literary testimony to his political views and perspectives, as well as a sharp analysis of contemporary events and societal peculiarities.[8] He was well known in the Yugoslav Jewish world as a satirist, critic, and political poet. As such, he was arrested by the Gestapo in April 1941.

The Key to the Great Gate: A Question of Sources

For this article, I have analysed numerous letters by and about Aleksandar Licht. From prison in Graz, he wrote at least eight letters and postcards to his family. At least one of these letters was sixteen pages long. However, none of these letters have been preserved for posterity: it is questionable whether they still exist in any form. So how did I get hold of the letters, and how do I know about the letters if they are not available for research?

In 1958, Jakir Eventov was working on a biographical essay about Licht to mark the tenth anniversary of his death. In preparation for this work, Licht's daughter Tamar (1926–?) lent Eventov letters written by her father for the former to read. Eventov, however, had passages from the personal letters printed and published in part. The essay in question was published in 1958 in Belgrade's *Jevrejski almanah*,[9] but without the extracts from the letters Licht had written while in Gestapo custody. The version with the Gestapo letters is now part of the personal papers of Aleksandar Licht and is kept at the Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP)

7 Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP), Eventov Collection, B-244.

8 Marija Vulesica, "Vom vergeblichen und vergänglichen Leben. Es sei denn, andere schreiben darüber. Was Hinko Gottlieb über Lavoslav Schick (und sich selbst) 1934 schrieb", *Aschkenas* 33, no. 2 (2023): 301–312, https://doi.org/10.1515/asch-2023-2015.

9 Jakir Eventov, "Nostalgije Evropljanina. Uz desetogodišnjicu smrti Aleksandra Lichta", *Jevrejski almanah (1957–1958)*: 197–204.

in Jerusalem.[10] Tamar Licht was furious about the printed parts of her father's private letters.[11] She took the letters back and, presumably, never allowed them out of her hands again. Despite an intensive search, I was unable to find out what had become of her estate.

According to the law in the NDH, non-Jewish lawyers had to take over and dissolve the law firms of their former Jewish colleagues. Fedor Vuković took over Licht's law firm and, unlike almost all of the other Jewish law firms in Zagreb, ensured that the files, documents, and letters were not destroyed. In the mid–1950s, Vuković gave these documents to the Zagreb City Archives. There the materials were sorted and indexed, and the finding aid was completed in 1961. This finding aid shows that, among the documents taken over in 1941, there were several letters from Graz. This means that, in 1961, the letters were still in Zagreb. However, when I began to examine the papers, I realised that the letters were missing. An intensive search began, I had numerous conversations with the archive's staff, and they did some internal research. The trail led nowhere. Nobody knew who had stolen the letters and when. But I have an idea: Licht's wife Erna, and Tamar Licht, had found out about the letters. I know for a fact that Licht's friends and companions in Israel had learned that Licht's papers had survived in Zagreb and had been given to the Zagreb City Archives. Tamar and Erna Licht used their connections and contacts to obtain the letters. It is very likely that they had not even received the letters in August and September 1941, otherwise why would they be part of the Chancery estate? Fedor Vuković had received them and put them aside. When Tamar and Erna Licht heard about the letters, they wanted them. An understandable desire. I have no proof of this theory, but it is the only one that seems plausible to me. There was no official user of this archival collection before me. Aleksandar Licht's papers lay untouched in the Zagreb City Archives for more than fifty years. Thus, the letters disappeared because someone secretly stole them. So, I used the finding aid and the quoted and printed fragments of Licht's letters from Graz as sources for reconstructing this episode in his life. I also analysed dozens of other letters that Licht wrote to friends and acquaintances after his release, and in which he sometimes mentioned his imprisonment in Zagreb and Graz.

There is no evidence that Hinko Gottlieb ever wrote, sent, or received letters from Vienna. He did, however, leave behind a very different testimony to his imprisonment and his encounter with the Gestapo: a novel. After his release from prison, he returned to Zagreb in August 1941. At that time, his younger son Daniel (1921–1941) had already been murdered. Hinko Gottlieb's former apartment, which had also housed his office and the editorial office of *Omanut,* had been occupied by the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (Reichsleiter Rosenberg Task Force, ERR). His books, his files, the magazine's archives, manuscripts and letters – everything was lost. When Gottlieb returned to Zagreb, his wife Ruža was living in an alternative apartment and his older son Vladimir (Vlado, 1919–1944) had already fled to the Italian occupied zone in Croatia. In February 1942 at the latest, Hinko Gottlieb and his wife left Zagreb and also fled to the Italian-occupied zone, to Kraljevica. There they were able to move freely for a while, but in the autumn of 1942 the Italian occupation authorities decided to concentrate all the Jews in that zone in several camps. In Kraljevica, the Porto Ré internment camp was established. About 1,150 Jews lived there in numerous barracks, segregated by men and women. Although the Italian military

10 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-18-III.
11 Ibid.

guarded the camp, the internees largely organised themselves. Hinko Gottlieb and his family were in the camp from November 1942. As a nationally known and respected poet and intellectual, the internees elected him as one of their representatives. From then on, he organised camp life, corresponded with the Jewish community in Zagreb, negotiated with the Italian military, and took on spiritual activities, as there was no rabbi in the camp. He enriched the cultural life of the camp: he composed poems that were read on Saturdays, wrote a play performed on Purim in 1943, and completed a novel recounting his experiences in Gestapo custody. The first manuscript was lost in the chaos of war in 1944. In March 1945, Hinko and Ruža Gottlieb arrived in Palestine, having lost their elder son Vlado the previous year in a motorcycle accident in southern Italy. Soon after his arrival, Hinko Gottlieb began to reconstruct the novel. *The Key to the Great Gate* was published in English in New York in 1947, the Croatian original (*Ključ od velikih vrata*) in Zagreb in 2021, and the German version, which Gottlieb produced himself, was published in Leipzig in 2023.[12]

The Arrest of Aleksandar Licht and Hinko Gottlieb in April 1941

In early 1939, the German consulate in Zagreb sent lists of members of the Zagreb Bnei Brit Lodge to the Foreign Office in Berlin. The names, occupations, and home addresses of eighty-six Zagreb Jews were included in those lists.[13] Thus, when the Germans entered Zagreb in April 1941, they already possessed personal data on many Zagreb Jews. In turn, the Vienna Gestapo headquarters (*Leitstelle*) established in March 1938, kept a close eye on events in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It paid particular attention to any links with Communists, or to the illegal trade in baptismal certificates.[14] Furthermore, it was well aware of the escape routes into Yugoslavia, and its agents were often personally involved in smuggling activities.[15] After the coup d'état on 27 March 1941, when Serbian generals staged a coup in response to Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact, Gestapo agents were already sitting in local cafés and restaurants, spying on the population and preparing their first actions.[16]

The first actions were directed against members of the opposition, prominent intellectuals, the Jewish community as such, and leading figures in Jewish life. Hinko Gottlieb was probably arrested on 13 April 1941, on Easter Sunday. However, the exact time of his arrest and the exact course of his transport to Vienna cannot be reconstructed; the necessary documents are simply missing. For example, the daily reports that the Vienna Leitstelle conscientiously sent to the RSHA every two or three days from September 1938 contain no information at all about the arrests of Jews in Zagreb, Belgrade, or Sarajevo.[17] Did the Gestapo men consider the arrests in

12 Hinko Gottlieb, The Key to the Great Gate (Simon & Schuster, 1947); Marija Vulesica, ed., *Hinko Gottlieb. Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor* (Hentrich & Hentrich, 2023).

13 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA AA), RAV Zagreb 68/2, 2.

14 "Tagesrapport Nr. 13 vom 25. und 26. Oktober 1938", *Tagesrapporte der Gestapoleitstelle Wien 1938–1945*, De Gruyter Brill, accessed 21 February 2025, https://www.degruyterbrill.com/database/TRAP/entry/TRAP-381013/html.

15 Walter Brunner, *Josef Schleich. "Judenschlepper" aus Graz 1938–1941. Eine Dokumentation* (LIT Verlag, 2017).

16 Zdenko Levental, *Auf glühendem Boden. Ein jüdisches Überlebensschicksal in Jugoslawien 1941–1947. Mit einer Dokumentation* (Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 1994), 26.

17 In the daily reports, the headquarters recorded all important events, such as arrests or the confiscation of newspapers. Boeckl-Klamper, et. al, *Gestapo-Leistelle Wien*, 156.

those cities to be irrelevant, or was the local staff not yet adequately equipped? Still today, there are no answers to these questions.

In the novel *The Key to the Great Gate*, the narrator, who is almost identical to the author Hinko Gottlieb, states that he was arrested on 11 April, Easter Sunday. In 1941, however, Easter Sunday was on April 13. I assume that Gottlieb vividly remembered the Easter Sunday, the highest Catholic holiday, on which he was thrown into prison. The date on which that Easter Sunday fell had slipped his mind or was retrospectively irrelevant.[18] In the same section of the novel, the narrator explains that he was detained in cell number 9, where he was shaken by a violent fever.[19] How many days did Gottlieb spend at the Zagreb police station? Was he interrogated? If so, by whom? By the Ustaša, or by Gestapo agents? The events between 13 April and 9 May 1941 remain a mystery in the case of Hinko Gottlieb. On 9 May, however, he was already in Gestapo custody in Vienna, in the police prison on Elisabethpromenade.[20]

Aleksandar Licht was first taken for interrogation by the Gestapo on 16 April 1941. With his "head held high", a "calm spirit", and "a bitter sense of humour", he allowed the Gestapo men to take him away at night. This is how Joško Indig, a young Zionist and supporter of Licht, described Licht's attitude during his arrest.[21] News of Licht's arrest spread like wildfire in Zagreb. Licht was a man known for his critical and resolute stance against Nazi policies and antisemitism in Europe. He had always propagated a self-confident fight against all forms of anti-Jewish policies and called on Yugoslav Jews to preserve and defend their dignity and rights.[22] At the moment of his greatest test, when the feared Gestapo took him away, he tried to preserve his dignity and send a message to his followers. Presumably. Neither Indig nor any of Licht's other political associates were present at the arrest. But Licht's wife Erna Licht (1897–1970) and their fourteen-year-old daughter Tamar were. They informed the community and their friends who were still free.

Aleksandar Licht was released the same day after an initial interrogation. What did he experience and on what terms was he sent home? All we know is that he stayed in Zagreb for another week. Licht was still practicing as a lawyer, and he may have been looking after his office, clients, and ongoing legal cases. Perhaps he discussed escape plans with his wife, perhaps he sought contact with friends and comrades. He certainly found out about the larger children's transport led by Joško Indig and directed by Recha Freier (1892–1984), as he would soon ask his daughter to join this transport. Whatever he did, it is not known what happened to him and his family in the days after 16 April. However, a week later, on 23 April 1941, he was again taken from his home by the Gestapo. Licht spent the next eight days in the Zagreb police detention centre on Petrinjska Street. About three years later, in April 1944, Licht wrote to an old acquaintance from Zagreb, Wilhelm Glück, whom he reproached for not having visited him in the Zagreb prison: any others who cared about Licht's well-being had done so.[23] Thus, it was possible to receive visitors. We know from other stories and recollections that it was usually the wives who were allowed to bring food, fresh laundry, or bed linen to the prison on a regular basis. Erna Licht

18 Gottlieb, *The Key to the Great Gate*, 68; Gottlieb, *Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*, 62.
19 Gottlieb, *The Key to the Great Gate*, 68; Gottlieb, *Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*, 62.
20 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-24.
21 Klaus Voigt, ed, *Joškos Kinder. Flucht und Alija durch Europa 1940–1943: Josef Indigs Bericht* (Arsenal, 2006), 39.
22 Marija Vulesica, "What Will Become of the German Jews? National Socialism, Flight, and Resistance in the Intellectual Debate of Yugoslav Zionists in the 1930s", in *Catastrophe and Utopia: Jewish Intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Ferenc Laczó and Joachim von Puttkammer (De Gruyter, 2018), 60–62.
23 CAHJP, Eventov Collection A-18-III.

certainly took care of her husband for a few days before he was transferred to the "District Court, Cell 2, State Police" in Graz on 30 April 1941.[24]

At the end of April and the beginning of May 1941, the Gestapo transferred many prominent Yugoslav Jews to Graz or Vienna. Their exact number is not known, not least because the documents of the Vienna Gestapo were destroyed shortly before the end of the war or were lost shortly afterwards. In the stories of the Yugoslav Jewish survivors, it was estimated that there were forty who were transferred. There were probably fewer than forty, as many remained in Croatian prisons and were deported from there to the newly established camps, where their traces were lost. Some were believed to be in Gestapo custody, such as the well-known Zagreb lawyer and Zionist Lavoslav Schick (1881–1941), although he was in fact hospitalised for several weeks due to illness.[25] At the end of April 1941, as the newly formed Ustaša police arrested almost all Zagreb lawyers, the first transports were simultaneously sent to Vienna and Graz. Many of the arrested lawyers feared the Gestapo more than the Ustaša and were initially glad to be allowed to stay in Croatia.[26] In addition to Licht and Gottlieb, the Gestapo also deported Friedrich Pops (1874–1948) to Graz. Pops was a lawyer, president of the Ashkenazi Community in Belgrade, and president of the Yugoslav Association of Jewish Religious Communities. The chief rabbi of Sarajevo, Moric Levy, and the chief rabbi of Belgrade, Ignjat Šlang (1873–1942), were also taken away. The arrest of Jewish leaders caused horror, confusion, and fear among members of the communities. Joško Indig recalled in 1945 how upset and unsettled they were when they heard of the first arrests:

> Then Hinko Gottlieb, our poet, the angry poet of anti-fascist poems, was arrested. All the leaders of Zionism expected the same fate for themselves. We trembled for our teacher Alexander (!) Licht, the long-time leader of the Zionist movement in Yugoslavia. He led generations to their goal in a firm and impartial manner. He did not allow the Zionist ethos to be weakened. (…) When Alexander Licht was also arrested, we cried. He had the poison on him. We had begged him not to take it. He owed it to us to stay alive. And then, at the right moment, when the Gestapo got him out of bed, his proud and calm spirit awoke and he followed them with his head held high and a bitter sense of humour.[27]

It is difficult to say whether Aleksandar Licht, who certainly had no illusions about his fate, was actually carrying poison – possibly he was. (Jewish) self-determination and autonomy were the political values and goals he had repeatedly propagated in recent years. Why should he not decide for himself when he was going to die, if he was going to die? Licht did not take the poison. He faced the Gestapo, interrogation, and imprisonment.

24 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-18-II.

25 Marija Vulesica, "Being a Jew in Zagreb: Life and Death of Lavoslav Schick", in *Local Dimensions of the Second World War in Southeastern Europe,* eds. Xavier Bougarel, Hannes Grandits, and Marija Vulesica (Routledge, 2019), 220–221.

26 Edo Neufeld, "Persecution of Jewish Lawyers in the Independent State of Croatia", in We Survived … : Yugoslav Jews on the Holocaust 3 (*Jevrejski istorijksi muzej, 2009*), 169–170.

27 Voigt, *Joškos Kinder*, 39.

"They won't do anything else against me here": Aleksandar Licht in the Gestapo Prison in Graz

Hinko Gottlieb spent three months and five days in prison in Vienna. Aleksandar Licht spent five months and eleven days in Graz. They were interrogated and subjected to identification procedures. Licht wrote to his family in September 1941 that the prisoners had been made to understand "roughly and cruelly" that they were Jews.[28] "Identification treatment" meant that their personal details were recorded in the Gestapo's file card system. Furthermore, photographs were taken of the prisoners, often showing signs of violence. The so-called *Photographierschein* (photographic record) showed the prisoner from the front, from one side, and in profile. It also contained the reason for the arrest, the date the photograph was taken, a fingerprint, and the signature of the head of the department.[29] Gottlieb's and Licht's file cards and photographic records have not survived.

The Gestapo in Graz first allowed Licht to write cards, and later multi-page letters, to his family. The precondition was that he wrote in German. Licht tried to describe his situation, his everyday life, and to express his hopes and wishes. On 27 July 1941, he wrote to his wife and daughter that his physical condition was improving and that he was gradually recovering. He had not had any "seizures" in the last few days.[30] Licht had a long history of health problems, including diabetes and a heart condition. Months in prison had clearly worsened his condition, but a description of poor standards and a reference to physical deterioration would not have gotten past the censors. It was appropriate to be cautious and speak of positive, unremarkable things. Like the rays of sunshine which he "bathed in" through the barred window, or the "quiet Sundays", or a pigeon that had flown into the cell through the barred window. He had greeted the pigeon "joyfully, like a spokesman for peace and your messenger".[31] In prison, it was important to keep calm and not worry his family. It was important to suggest an apparent serenity and normality and to defuse the awkward situation with a little humour and self-irony. For example, when he wrote that he was the first to get up at six in the morning, he added "[u]nbelievable, isn't it?".[32] Licht was known for his unusual schedule and the sleep problems it caused. He had worked late into the night, also walking the streets of Zagreb at night with friends and discussing pressing political issues. He would get up at 11 a.m. at the earliest.[33] Now he was the first in the prison to get up. "Don't be surprised", he explained, "I have to be in bed by 9 p.m."[34] The Gestapo dictated his daily routine. They determined when he woke up, slept, ate, and showered. Was Licht able to sleep at all? Was he able to eat and was he given the food he needed as a diabetic? The "seizures" mentioned above indicate that he had suffered various serious symptoms such as dizziness, unconsciousness, or nausea as a result of malnutrition. His physical and health deterioration was ultimately evident in the fact that he had lost twenty-three kilograms after five months in prison.[35]

28 CAHJP, Eventov Collection A-18/III.
29 Boeckl-Klamper et. al, *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien*, 152–153.
30 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-18/III.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Branka Akerman, Interview 7053, Segment 17-18, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, 1995, accessed 21 February 2025.
34 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-18/III.
35 Ibid.

Throughout August 1941, Licht sent more cards and letters to his wife Erna and daughter Tamar, the contents of which remain unknown. Surprisingly, he wrote another letter home on 19 September 1941, when he already knew that they had fled Zagreb: in other words, when he knew that they would no longer read this letter. He approved of their decision to leave. He asked them – or rather, he asked himself – whether it was right to withdraw from the destiny of his own people. He answered his question by saying that "passive suffering" and enduring "unimaginable pogroms" was of no use to anyone; it would not even "morally" alleviate the suffering of others. Addressing his daughter, he explained that she must now fulfil her duty to humanity and her people. On the run, in exile, "at the crossroads of their lives", they could easily endure the "expulsion" if they knew that they would still be of use to the (Jewish) "community". He asked her to join "Josel" in Ljubljana and that she, Tamar, should help him look after the children.[36] "Josel" was Joško Indig. Tamar and Erna Licht joined Indig and "his" children in Lesno Brdo on 16 September 1941. Licht had apparently not yet heard of their arrival there, only of their departure from Zagreb.

Having given them and himself courage and confidence, he recorded the situation in the cell in a few words. "Hypersensitivity, vanity and psychosis" were noticeable among his "fellow prisoners". Some tried to cheer each other up with humour, but only "the grotesqueness of this attempt" was funny, Licht judged. Others, he explained, were more concerned with their money transactions than with the death sentences they had received.[37] What Licht described was the fact that people dealt with imprisonment, violence, and disenfranchisement in very different ways. Some developed mental disorders and abnormalities. Others tried to cope with reality by maintaining an inner distance, while still others repressed their situation. He himself suffered physically, but mentally he bore the responsibility he believed he still had as the leader of the Yugoslav Zionists. It kept him alive. He appealed to himself and his family to remember their duties and obligations to the community and to continue to work for it.

At the end of September 1941, Licht wrote another letter to his wife and daughter, although he must have known by then that they were in Lesno Brdo. In late September or early October 1941, Joško Indig in Graz received a letter from Licht. Indig had asked the Delegation for the Assistance of Jewish Emigrants (*Delegazione per l'assistenza degli emigranti ebrei*, DELASEM) for help and support for the Licht family, which was indeed granted.[38] In his letter of 25 September 1941 to his wife and daughter, Licht expressed the hope that he would soon be released. "They will do nothing more against me here", he explained. During the identification procedure he had been treated badly as a Jew, but beyond that he had greeted some of the policemen he met there like "old acquaintances": "I also meet people among them."[39] Of inestimable importance for the survival of the spirit was the experience, the realisation that there were "people" in the ranks of the police. Those who knew how to value themselves also respected the human dignity of their neighbours, Licht deduced.[40]

Goals and fond memories were also important for enduring imprisonment. One goal that Licht had was to be reunited with his family. He wanted to see them again, to visit Ruben's grave – his son Ruben had died in 1933 at the age of eleven – and to play *Mensch ärgere dich nicht* (Ludo) "in a good mood" again. Memories of Sunday

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, B-244.
39 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-18/III.
40 Ibid.

walks, trips to the Plitvice Lakes, good food in good restaurants, and evenings dancing with his wife kept his mind and spirit together.

According to Jakir Eventov's account, written in 1958, Licht was interrogated several times over the course of several months. At one point, he was asked whether he had actually led the Zionists in Yugoslavia for more than twenty years. He replied, no. Not twenty years, but forty. When asked who had written against the Führer in *Židov*, Licht replied, "I did". He had done so because he loved his people and wanted to defend them.[41] It is impossible to verify whether he had said these sentences in that same way. In his correspondence after his release and after the war, Licht never described or portrayed himself as self-praising or particularly courageous. Perhaps he was recounting his experiences during the interrogations in personal encounters, which in turn – like everything he wrote and said – were later stylised and disseminated within the former Yugoslav Jewish community. However, there seems to be no doubt that he was a strong and proud character and a steadfast man.

In October 1941, he was declared unfit for the concentration camp and his release was ordered. He arrived at Lesno Brdo on 14 October 1941. According to Eventov's report, the Gestapo personally took him to the Slovenian border, from where he made his way to Ljubljana and joined his family a short time later. Licht himself, however, wrote to his friend and former colleague Ivo Politeo in Zagreb in August 1946 that, after his release from Gestapo custody, he had spent about ten days in Graz, waiting to be transported to Ljubljana.[42]

Was he really able to stay in Graz for ten days? What networks must have been at work in the background to enable him to find his way around a strange city? There is some evidence that the decisive help came from DELASEM and Richard Lichtheim (1885–1963), the representative of the World Zionist Organisation at the League of Nations in Geneva. Aleksandar Licht was no stranger to them. On the contrary. As president of the Yugoslav Zionist Federation for many years, he had been in contact with the leaders of the Zionist movement in Europe for years. Naturally, they tried to help him. And when he was actually released from Gestapo custody, ways and means were found to get him to safety. Joško Indig had already informed Lichtheim at the beginning of September 1941 that Licht was in the "sanatorium" in Graz.[43] Of course, due to censorship, he was not allowed to speak of Gestapo detention, but used the cover term "sanatorium". It can therefore be assumed that both Lichtheim and the DELASEM representatives provided contacts and funds to help Aleksandar Licht.

In the many letters which Licht wrote to friends and former companions between October 1941 and his death in June 1948, he mentioned his Gestapo detention only two or three times. Personal notes – such as diaries or memoirs – have not survived, if they were written at all. The way he dealt with his imprisonment was therefore quiet, personal, and private. In contrast to Hinko Gottlieb.

41 Ibid.
42 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-18.
43 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, B-244.

"For how would man know what freedom is if there were no prisons?": Hinko Gottlieb in the Gestapo Prison in Vienna

After his arrest in mid-April 1941, Hinko Gottlieb spent an unspecified amount of time in the Zagreb prison before being transferred to Vienna on 9 May 1941. According to a certificate he received from the Gestapo office in Vienna, he was released on 14 August 1941.[44] *Tagesrapport* no. 6 of 13–14 August 1941 reported to Berlin that there were 853 "protective custody prisoners" in the prison, "6 people are leaving".[45] Gottlieb was one of those who left. What memories would remain with him, what did he need and want to process? The subject does not appear in the letters he wrote after 1941. Only two or three recollections and comments can be found in his notes written in 1948. Instead, he chose to write literature.

The Key to the Great Gate is a work of fiction that mixes space and time, the laws of nature, and phantasy. At the same time, it is an autobiographical account of imprisonment, persecution, and disfranchisement. Only about a year after his release, Gottlieb reflected on the Gestapo as an apparatus, on the behaviour of prisoners, on the humanity and inhumanity of the guards, and on forms of (Jewish) resistance. The characters and the setting were based on real experiences, as were their wishes and desires. Gottlieb certainly put down on paper the thoughts, feelings, and reflections that came to him during and after his imprisonment. He gave an insight into everyday life in prison. He spoke of the almost unbearable confinement of the cell, of hunger, and of people's ability to adapt. On some days, life was more bearable, the guards were friendlier, and there was at least the theoretical possibility of getting food and laundry from outside.

Three Jewish prisoners were dwelling in cell number 84 when physicist Dov Tarnopolski was brought in on a Monday in July 1941. The novel's four main characters – the chief rabbi of Thessaloniki, the Viennese lawyer Dr Strauss, Dov Tarnopolski from Warsaw, and the first-person narrator from Zagreb – are based on real people. The chief rabbi of Thessaloniki, Zvi Koretz, was arrested in Athens in April 1941 and interned in the Gestapo prison in Vienna.[46] An entry in Gottlieb's diary on 16 August 1948 reveals that he had indeed shared a cell with the "chief rabbi" in Vienna.[47] In the same entry, entitled "Reminiscence", a Doctor Kraus is also remembered. While transcribing the diary entries, Ruža Gottlieb added that Doctor Kraus had found his way into the novel as Doctor Strauss.[48] Hinko Gottlieb's close friend Cvi Rotem stated in a biographical essay on Gottlieb that he had found a list of names in Gottlieb's documents that included a certain Juda Tarnopolsky. Personalities and encounters that had obviously impressed, moved, repelled, and at the same time inspired Gottlieb. Four Jewish men from four parts of Europe share the same fate and they have to get along with each other in a cell that is far too small. They are suspicious and insecure, but at the same time curious and dependent on each other.

> The arrival of a new prisoner at first always produces an atmosphere of cool reserve in a cell. (…) You cannot know whether or not the police have stuck in a spy to ferret out your past and report every word to the Gestapo. And if

44 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-24.

45 "Tagesrapport Nr. 6 vom 13. und 14. August 1941", *Tagesrapporte der Gestapoleitstelle Wien 1938–1945*, De Gruyter Brill, accessed 21 February 2025, https://www.degruyterbrill.com/database/TRAP/entry/TRAP-410806/html.

46 Rena Molho, *Der Holocaust der griechischen Juden. Studien zur Geschichte und Erinnerung* (Dietz, 2016), 51.

47 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-24.

48 Ibid.

> he is not a spy, then he may be a dangerous criminal who will steal your soap and marmalade while you are sleeping. You want to come to know the man first. Perhaps he seems a harmless tattler, but you have to be very careful indeed before such a man. Prisoners, however, seldom hold to such rules longer than ten minutes before they let down all barriers and are free and relaxed. In our case the ice was broken in the first moment by the newcomer himself.[49]

Dov Tarnopolski breaks the ice by first offering them cigarettes. He shouts at the guard on duty to kiss his ass, which provokes outrage and admiration from the three prisoners. Then he pulls out the finest food from his pocket – rye bread and foie gras, a chocolate cake, and coffee liqueur. In the bleak and dangerous situation in which the Jewish prisoners find themselves, one of them manages to defy the laws of nature and the system. The chocolate cake is delicious, as is the coffee liqueur. But Tarnopolski can conjure up and offer even more. A piano, a radio, and a trip to Warsaw. He soon demonstrates that he has absolute power and that he could free the Jews from their prisons. Because he has a *Key*. A Key that opens the Great Gate. There is much discussion about this Key and the prisoners challenge each other with philosophical questions and reflections.

Here Gottlieb explored the fragile, yet inherently solid, world of the prisoners. For all their caution and fear, they had no choice but to talk to each other often and frequently. Day in, day out, they were left to their own devices, alone and isolated from the world. Daily and nightly conversations – about their backgrounds, families, occupations, fears, and desires – were the only things they were allowed to do in the Gestapo cell. In his diary entry of August 1948, Gottlieb recalled an event in the summer of 1941 that was so inconspicuous and insignificant on the one hand, but so meaningful and substantial on the other. According to this entry, he, the chief rabbi and Dr Kraus (Dr Strauss) sat in cell 84 for two months without leaving it once. Then, one morning, Kraus was taken away by the Gestapo. Gottlieb and the chief rabbi were already worried when he finally returned in the afternoon, "joyfully excited". Only after some time did Kraus manage to recount coherently what he had experienced. He was taken to the Gestapo headquarters on Morzinplatz, to the former Hotel Metropole, where he was made to wait in the corridor "on a padded bench". After a while he noticed that there was a toilet opposite. He hesitated for a long time before entering. He chose a stall and closed the door behind him. He found a "clean seat", an "immaculate flush", a water bowl with a mirror and a towel. "Lost in a dream and oblivious", he indulged in the pleasure of finally being able to close a door after many months, to have a private life and to maintain a "level of culture" that suited him. Even if only for a few minutes.[50] In Gestapo custody there was no privacy, there were no mirrors and no clean toilets. Kraus had felt like a human being for the first time in months, which had literally driven him into ecstasy. Gottlieb remembered this event because it was so simple, so commonplace, and yet so revealing. Everything was taken from the prisoners; the forms of humiliation were almost limitless. A prisoner's joy at being able to close a door and make a choice of his own illustrated once again how fragile and yet resilient everyone's humanity was. Gottlieb's "Reminiscence" of Kraus and the toilet also reveal that he spent two months in a cell without knowing why. Without investigation, without charge, and without defence. And that as a lawyer. In April 1948, he wrote in his diary, in German:

49 Gottlieb, *The Key to the Grat Gate*, 6; Gottlieb, *Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*, 13.
50 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-24.

> seven years have passed since the Gestapo arrested me in Zagreb and deported me to Germany. I thought this was the peak of all the misfortune that could happen to me. I thought so because I was still a lawyer, because I had studied constitutional law, because I still believed in something like an idea of the law that must ultimately prevail always and everywhere. In reality, however, the law is an ingenious means of bourgeoising people. It acts as an anaesthetic when people are to be forced into the short Procrustean bed of the state. I said "the peak of all misfortune", although the popular conception of misfortune is downhill.[51]

The law had failed him, but not his intellect, his humour or his imagination.

The metaphor of the Key, the great Gate, and the prisoners' (fictional) conversations about the liberation of all Jews from their camps also reflected Gottlieb's Zionist attitude. Even in prison, he remained true to his conviction that European Jews would succeed in liberating themselves. It would be nothing short of a miracle, but it was possible. Gottlieb referred to his political ideals in the novel, but at the same time he used his imagination, "the secondary organ of the mind",[52] to enable the spirit to escape. When the body was in prison, the mind was free to do as it pleased. Eat chocolate cake, listen to the BBC, or escape the cell altogether. Imagination, fantastic stories and daydreams were essential to psychologically survive Gestapo imprisonment. Aleksandar Licht had dismissed them as "psychoses" or "grotesques". The witty Gottlieb apparently indulged in them often. As a survivor, he used his imagination to deal with the traumas he had suffered.

Another trauma was the experience of torture and violence. As a grown man, father, intellectual, and lawyer, Gottlieb had had to endure interrogations and beatings. But the shame was greater than the pain.

> The whip hissed through the air.
>
> So he was going to beat me. His blow seared my upper arm. Once, twice, three times. "You don't want to talk? You don't want to? I'll teach you to talk. Here! That's for you!" He spoke in the quiet business tone of a man who is not supposed to grow excited when at work.
>
> It didn't hurt. I never felt physical pain when I was beaten and tortured. At times like that I only had a highly subjective feeling of shame and fear that my torture would seep through, become public. I didn't feel any pain; nothing hurt me, nothing at all.[53]

The Croatian and German originals of this passage contain the subordinate clause "und meine Söhne schmerzen" (and hurt my sons), which follows "become public". Gottlieb removed the insertion about the sons in the version published in 1947. Both sons were dead by then. Gottlieb never got over their deaths, as several diary entries from 1948 show. He did, however, try to come to terms with the violence and torture, the humiliation and degradation it entailed, by speaking openly about it. Gottlieb's novel is a mixture of autobiographical experience, stories and accounts he heard from others, and his ability to think ahead and imagine very well what went on in a Gestapo cell and what went on in a Jewish person at that time. Some of this novel is fiction and fantasy, but some is an expression of his thoughts, observations, and insights. For example, on the nature and purpose of prisons.

51 CAHJP, Eventov Collection, A-24.
52 Gottlieb, *The Key to the Great Gate*, 171; Gottlieb, *Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*, 143.
53 Gottlieb, *The Key to the Great Gate*, 49–50; Gottlieb, *Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*, 47–48.

> For prisons are eternal. They are found in the Bible, Hammurabi's Code, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Cretan excavations. Peoples come and perish. Empires, cultures, and gods disappear – but prisons remain. They will still exist when the last pyramid is buried by the desert sands. As long as a new cosmic catastrophe does not blow our planet into the dark and timeless depth of the universe, there will be prisons on earth. And probably that is all to the good. For how would man know what freedom is if there were no prisons?[54]

Irony and satire, perhaps even cynicism, helped, if not to understand, then at least to come to terms with the enormity of the deprivation of freedom and rights. Gottlieb survived imprisonment and injustice because he did not allow himself to lose his critical eye. His analysis of the Gestapo is at least as accurate as it is fundamental. He processed his experiences by studying, training, and sharpening his mind and intellect on the German occupiers and the Gestapo.

> The mammoth Gestapo organization, which many thought saw everything and knew everything, was, as a matter of fact, only a large terrorist machine. Invested with extensive powers and devoid of responsibility, it lived off its own bad reputation. Wherever the German Army advanced, a pack of Gestapo agents, informers, provocateurs, and confidants followed. They robbed thousands of peaceful citizens of their freedom, carried them to concentration camps and prisons, and at the same time confiscated money and furnishings, papers, books, and documents. (…) It was intended only to create an atmosphere of horror, fear, and insecurity by means of the most brutal terror. In this way internal resistance was discouraged. In most cases those carried away were not even questioned, but for months were left in ignorance about their eventual fate. If they were questioned, the cross-examination had no particular object and was fundamentally nothing but awkward groping.[55]

Conclusion

This article has traced the arrests and imprisonments of Aleksandar Licht and Hinko Gottlieb in the spring and summer of 1941, situating their experiences within the wider context of Gestapo activity in Zagreb, Graz, and Vienna. By reconstructing their trajectories through scattered documentation, literary testimonies, and fragmented archival traces, it has been possible to illuminate both the strategies of Nazi repression and the personal responses of two leading figures of the Croatian Jewish community.

Aleksandar Licht, writing from prison, sought to maintain dignity, self-discipline, and responsibility as a leader. His letters reflect a careful balancing act between censorship, family encouragement, and political conviction. Hinko Gottlieb, by contrast, transformed his prison experiences into literature, using imagination, irony, and satire to confront humiliation, violence, and loss. While Licht's legacy lies primarily in the silence and discretion with which he later treated his imprisonment, Gottlieb's contribution endures in his fictionalised yet deeply autobiographical account, *The Key to the Great Gate*. Together, their testimonies expand our understanding of the multifaceted strategies of survival under Gestapo custody.

54 Gottieb, *The Key to the Great Gate*, 56; Gottlieb, *Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*, 52.
55 Gottlieb, *The Key to the Great Gate*, 57; Gottlieb, *Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*, 52–53.

Beyond their individual stories, this article underscores the need to integrate southeastern Europe more firmly into the historiography of the Gestapo. Existing scholarship has devoted considerable attention to the Gestapo's organisation and practices in Germany and western Europe, but the apparatus in Zagreb, Belgrade, or Sarajevo has remained largely understudied. The arrests of prominent Jewish leaders in April 1941 demonstrate the calculated attempts of the Gestapo to destabilise communities through the removal of their intellectual and spiritual authorities. At the same time, the fragmentary sources – vanished letters, confiscated archives, lost testimonies – reveal how much remains unknown and perhaps irretrievable.

In sum, the cases of Aleksandar Licht and Hinko Gottlieb offer a window into both the mechanisms of Nazi terror and the resilience of Jewish responses in southeastern Europe. Their voices – one restrained and pragmatic, the other imaginative and literary – remind us that the experience of persecution was never uniform, but rather shaped by individual temperament, circumstance, and the means of expression available. The present reconstruction is therefore not only an addition to the history of the Gestapo but also a contribution to the cultural and intellectual history of the former Yugoslav Jewry.

References

Boeckl-Klamper, Elisabeth, Thomas Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer. *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien 1938–1945*. Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2018.

Brunner, Walter. *Josef Schleich. "Judenschlepper" aus Graz 1938–1941. Eine Dokumentation*. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2017.

Eventov, Jakir. "Nostalgije Evropljanina. Uz desetogodišnjicu smrti Aleksandra Lichta". *Jevrejski almanah* (1957–1958): 197–204.

Goldstein, Ivo. *Holokaust u Zagrebu*. Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2001.

Gottlieb, Hinko. *The Key to the Great Gate*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1947.

Korb, Alexander. *Im Schatten des Krieges. Massengewalt der Ustaša gegen Serben, Juden und Roma in Kroatien 1941–1945*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2013.

Kočović, Davor. *Redarstveno-obavještanji sustav Nezavisne Države Hrvatske od 1941. do 1945. godine*. Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2009.

Kraus, Ognjen, ed. *Zna li se 1941–1945: antisemitizam, holokaust, antifašizam*. Zagreb: Židovska općina Zagreb, 1996.

Levental, Zdenko. *Auf glühendem Boden. Ein jüdisches Überlebensschicksal in Jugoslawien 1941–1947. Mit einer Dokumentation*. Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 1994.

Miljan, Goran. *Croatia and the Rise of Fascism: The Youth Movement and the Ustasha during WWII*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018.

Molho, Rena. *Der Holocaust der griechischen Juden. Studien zur Geschichte und Erinnerung*. Bonn: Dietz, 2016.

Neufeld, Edo. "Persecution of Jewish Lawyers in the Independent State of Croatia." In *We Survived … : Yugoslav Jews on the Holocaust* 3, 169–170. Belgrade: Jevrejski istorijski muzej, 2009.

Odić, Slavko, and Slavko Komarica. *Noć i magla. Gestapo u Jugoslaviji*. Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1977.

Tomasevich, Jozo. *War and Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Tucović, Radosav R. "Policijski represivni aparat nacističke Nemačke i njegovi domaći instrumenti: analiza delatnosti Dragomira Jovanovića i Augusta Majsnera u okupiranoj Srbiji (1941–1944)". PhD dissertation, Univerzitet u Beogradu, 2021.

Voigt, Klaus, ed. *Joškos Kinder. Flucht und Alija durch Europa 1940–1943: Josef Indigs Bericht*. Berlin: Arsenal, 2006.

Vulesica, Marija. *Hinko Gottlieb. Der Schlüssel zum großen Tor*. Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2023.

Vulesica, Marija. "Being a Jew in Zagreb: Life and Death of Lavoslav Schick". In *Local Dimensions of the Second World War in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Xavier Bougarel, Hannes Grandits, and Marija Vulesica, 220–221. London: Routledge, 2019.

Vulesica, Marija. "Trying the Impossible: The Zagreb Jewish Community and the Provisioning of Female Camp Inmates, 1941–1942". In *Food, Scarcity and Power in Southeastern Europe during the Second World War*, edited by Paolo Fonzi, Sabine Rutar, and Xavier Bougarel. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024.

Vulesica, Marija. "Vom vergeblichen und vergänglichen Leben. Es sei denn, andere schreiben darüber. Was Hinko Gottlieb über Lavoslav Schick (und sich selbst) 1934 schrieb". *Aschkenas* 33, no. 2 (2023): 301–312.

Archives

Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP).

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA).

"Tagesrapporte der Gestapoleitstelle Wien 1938–1945". De Gruyter Brill. https://www.degruyterbrill.com/database/TRAP/entry/TRAP-381013/html.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).#

Dr Marija Vulesica is a historian and Alfred Landecker Lecturer at Humboldt University of Berlin, specialising in antisemitism, Zionism, and the Holocaust with a particular focus on Southeast Europe. Her current research explores the history of the Holocaust in the Independent State of Croatia through a biographical lens. She received her PhD from the Technische Universität Berlin in 2011 with a dissertation on the emergence of political antisemitism in the Habsburg Crown Lands of Croatia and Slavonia. Her latest book, "From Zagreb to Palestine: Yugoslav Zionist Aid Networks for European Jews, 1933–1941", was published in November 2025.
Email: marija.vulesica@hu-berlin.de

Quotation: Marija Vulesica, Aleksandar Licht and Hinko Gottlieb in Gestapo Prisons in 1941. Experiences and Reflections, in S:I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation. 12 (2025) 4, 97–113.

https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0425/art_mvul01

S:I.M.O.N.– Shoah: Intervention. Methods. DocumentatiON. is the semi-annual open access e-journal of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) in English and German.

ISSN 2408-9192 | 12 (2025) 4| https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0425