because of the—hitherto impossible—participation of three Holocaust survivors from Israel: Ruth Bondy, Otto (Ota) B. Kraus, and his wife Dita Kraus. During the “Velvet Revolution” in late 1989, Kárný declared this symposium his “greatest success.” By that he meant that at last in 1989 the Terezín Memorial organized a public and international event that openly dealt with the history of the ghetto and, thus, the Holocaust.

Conclusion

In this study, I demonstrated the possibilities of Holocaust research in state-socialist Czechoslovakia. It is evident that it would be erroneous to speak about a taboo, or a successful suppression of the memory and the historiography of the Holocaust, during this period. This reading would miss the nuances of the situation in Czechoslovakia and, in particular, would oversee the Marxist contribution to the historiography of Nazi Germany’s anti-Jewish persecutions. The example of Miroslav Kárný demonstrates that no clear political instruction on how to deal with Holocaust memory and historiography existed, and that developments were sometimes contradictory. Kárný was able to spend twenty years under state socialism doing research on the persecution and the murder of Czech Jews and publish his results in periodicals and books that were all censored. He was expelled from the Communist Party but received public funding for his research, could travel to the West, and was allowed to establish an international network of Holocaust scholars and survivors. He was barred from any journalistic work, but was nevertheless able to publish in the media. He was not able to publish his work in the journal of the Terezín Memorial, but was able to publish in a journal in Litoměřice, only a few kilometers from Terezín.

This case study may help us critically examine a history that is usually understood as a dichotomy between state and society, official and unofficial spheres,


114 Miroslav Kárný to Livia Rothkirchen, December 12, 1989, ITI, Correspondence Miroslav Kárný, folder R-[Y] (unsorted).
oppressors and oppressed. It leads us back to the previously mentioned reflections of dissidents, such as Milan Šimečka, Jan Křen, Tomáš Pěkný, and others, who criticized not only the state and state-sanctioned antisemitism, but also social phenomena, such as Czech and Slovak nationalism, antisemitism, and the indifference towards the Jewish fellow citizens and their history—including the Holocaust.