

and consistent philandering. He successfully saved lives without hesitation but struggled to save his marriages. In the eyes of faithful Mormon historians, and especially those of his children, the opportunity to memorialize Max Reschke for his admirable heroism may have been offset by the task of explaining his failure to adhere to church moral standards. It was, perhaps, too great a burden.

Erich Krause: An Unwelcomed Mormon Memory Beacon

When *Wall Street Journal* journalist Frederick Kempe decided in the 1990s to write a book about contemporary Germany's "inherited guilt" for the sins of Nazism, he thought he would rely on contacts he established during years of reporting from central Europe. Kempe, a lapsed Mormon whose German father arrived in Utah early enough to fight for the United States Army in the Second World War, was confident that he would be able to conduct his research as a detached, dispassionate observer. Instead, an old trunk that contained family journals became the first step on an investigative trail that led to a startling realization. If guilt for the crimes of Hitler were a heritable commodity, Kempe himself would be subject to such an unsettling bequest of culpability.

By sleuthing in the close-knit German community that settled in the Mormon Culture Region before and after the Third Reich, Kempe discovered that a distant relative he had never met, the German Mormon who married his great aunt, had been an especially cruel and sadistic Nazi torturer and murderer. Through research conducted in the archives of the Federal Republic's prosecutor, and in the recently opened archives of the East German secret police, the reporter learned the ghastly details of his distant relative's offenses. He also discovered that the LDS Church, through its American mission president sent to reestablish Zion's authority in Germany after the war, loaned bail money and pleaded for the accused's pre-trial release when West German prosecutors charged the perpetrator with crimes against humanity.

Erich Krause murdered dozens and tortured hundreds as the brown-shirted commandant of a "wild" concentration camp in Berlin during the early days of the regime. Then, as a military policeman in the eastern theatre during the war, he sent correspondence home stamped with the

postmarks of a town known to have housed a prominent Jewish ghetto that served as a way station for the Final Solution's gas chambers and crematoria. Having joined the Mormon Church in 1923 and the SA in 1928, Krause validated, in an extreme way, the concept that one could strive to serve both the Mormon Church and Nazi Party.

Krause also personified the German expatriate community's worst nightmare, even though he never immigrated to Utah. At crowded family reunions up and down the Wasatch Front in the latter half of the twentieth century, many spoke in whispers—in German and in German-accented English—about *their* special relative. That person could have been someone who performed small acts of kindness for beleaguered Jews. Conversely, the subject of those hushed tones could have been a relative who embraced Nazism a bit more enthusiastically than society can now comfortably forgive—considering how the war turned out. Few families could claim a hero as admirable as Max Reschke or a villain as evil as Erich Krause. The collective memory of the ghastly excesses of Nazi Germany, however, is contained not only on the European side of the Atlantic. It also is not limited to Germans who lived through the war and migrated afterward. As journalist Frederick Kempe discovered, those nightmares of memory can haunt the descendants of émigrés who left Germany before Hitler took power. Kempe's father arrived in time to fight for his new country in the war; his mother was born in the United States, but the great uncle left behind was the murderous Nazi.

When Erich Krause leapt out of the pages of Kempe's book in 1999, his unwelcomed arrival in Utah created a belated victim of Hitler's treachery. Inge, Erich Krause's daughter, knew the Second World War only from history books and the infrequent comments of her forward-looking parents. She was born in Germany in 1956. At seventeen, she realized the dream of many faithful LDS girls who were not fortunate enough to have been reared in the Mormon Culture Region. She immigrated to the United States in order to attend college in Utah, where she aspired to attain an education and find an "R.M."—a returned missionary to take her to the Holy Temple. Life's reality mitigated her dreams by the end of the twentieth century. Her celestial marriage had ended in earthly divorce. That had been her greatest sorrow, until that sickening, turn-of-the-century phone call from a half-brother with news of a new book that had just hit the shelves. It turned her life upside down.³⁰

It was *Vati!* The loving father who had never spanked her, the hardest working genealogical researcher in her postwar German church congregation, and the man who fervently preached Joseph Smith's restored gospel from the podium during Sunday services—had suddenly become a monster. Inge's four siblings by her father's third marriage, solemnized in a 1955 civil ceremony and posthumously sealed in the Holy Temple, also took the news with difficulty. For one, it was an emotional shock that aggravated an already existing physical ailment. How does one deal with the news of a loving and ostensibly godly parent's hidden treachery, the cold-blooded killings and torture of human beings before he bequeathed life to his offspring?

Inge sought redemption by making a pilgrimage to a huge, multi-story, red-brick building on General-Pape-Strasse in Berlin's Tempelhof district.³¹ Here, in the basement of a former police barracks, her father had directed a chamber of horrors that terrorized more than two thousand of the Nazi regime's alleged political opponents, mostly Communists and Social Democrats, between March and December 1933.³² Inge found the structure locked, and only a small plaque noted its nefarious past. As she walked around the periphery, she may have conjured up images described in the state prosecutor's investigation. Erich Krause, holding the rank of SA *Obertruppenführer* and wearing a brown shirt with "red collar patches and two stars with a braid," reserved some of the worst treacherous excesses for himself. He beat prisoners with a rubber truncheon and an iron bar. He sliced open the soles of their feet and packed pepper into the wounds. He made other barefooted prisoners run outside on gravel. He gave one man a rope and told him to hang himself; presumably weary of the torture, the emotionally drained prisoner went into the lavatory and complied. Krause exercised prisoners to the point of exhaustion and extreme thirst, and then made them drink a concoction of wastewater and human feces. He told one prisoner that he was free to go, and then had him shot as an escapee on his way out. He staged "sporting nights," when his drunken SA companions made prisoners run a gauntlet of clubs and batons. A number of prisoners died of gunshot wounds, which he never inflicted in front of others—but he made other prisoners fall to their hands and knees and lick up the spilled blood with their tongues.³³

On that walk around this citadel of horror, Inge may have recalled the language of postcards Krause dispatched to his second wife and her

half-brothers when he was a staff sergeant in the military police. After the book came out, Inge's half-brother, Fridtjof, sent copies of those cards. Many of them contained admonitions to remain true to the family's Mormon faith, and for the children to take their Sunday school lessons seriously. The first *Feldpost* cards arrived from Poland, where Krause's MP unit had followed behind the September 1939 invasion. He also dispatched cards from France, Yugoslavia, and the Ukraine, as the *Wehrmacht* advanced relentlessly. Then the postmarks became more disturbing. In 1944 a card arrived from Lodz, the site of Poland's second-largest Jewish community after Warsaw. It was also the location of a ghetto from which Jews were dispatched to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. As Fridtjof Krause said of his father: "One only chose the most trusted of Nazis to break up the ghettos."

Erich Krause returned to German society in 1949 after his release from Soviet postwar confinement. Soon after his arrival in Berlin, he began having violent family arguments that resulted in frequent beatings of his second wife and children. After a brush with East German authorities, he fled to West Berlin. In October 1950, one of his Pape Street victims recognized him and filed a report with the authorities. In December, West Berlin police arrested him, after which he spent a year in "investigative custody." After his release, his second marriage dissolved, but he was soon back in prison. In 1952 the Berlin State Court "charged him with murder, crimes against humanity, and applying torture and violence to gain confessions."³⁴

Author Frederick Kempe consulted the recently released Stasi archives, as well as the records of the state court transcripts. Among the pages of revolting testimony against Erich Krause, the journalist found a sworn statement from Krause's first wife, Käthe Elsa Antonie Ziburski. Theirs was a marriage made in hell and destroyed on the altar of anti-Semitism. They met at the gravesite of the infamous brown-shirted martyr, Horst Wessel, where Erich was stationed as an SA honor guard. She had gone to the memorial to pay her respects to Hitler's most revered thug, accompanied by another storm trooper. Krause wooed her away, married her, impregnated her, and then later divorced her because his genealogical research revealed she had a Jewish ancestor.³⁵

Another surprise stood out among the pages of vile evidence. The president of the Mormons' East German Mission, Walter Stover, attested

to Krause's character in an effort to win his freedom. Stover, a native German, had joined the LDS Church in 1923, the same year in which Erich Krause converted. Stover moved to Utah in 1926, where he became a bedroom furniture manufacturer and advanced to the clerical rank of high priest—an ordination not normally performed in the German mission field. He also became a naturalized American citizen. Stover returned to Germany as a mission president in 1946 and served until 1951.³⁶ Early in Krause's confinement, Stover asked the court to release the accused to the custody of his family and offered the LDS Church as guarantor. Stover paid two thousand marks from church funds as bail.

Said Stover in his letter to the authorities: "Herr Krause is personally known to me as a member of our church. I am convinced that he will keep himself available to the court at any time and hasn't any intention to suppress evidence or leave Berlin." Stover continued his plea by citing Krause's six years in military service and five in Russian postwar confinement, which he termed "enough punishment for any man."³⁷

Despite the seriousness of the charges against Krause, and the violent nature of his relationship with his family, the Mormon community in Berlin stood behind one of its own. According to Inge, who became Krause's first child by his third marriage but knew little about his Nazi background until Frederick Kempe's book, her father became very devout in his faith. When he was in jail, the members of his ward (congregation) would visit him regularly.³⁸ He was a stake genealogy leader and later advanced to the position of stake high councilman, a member of the governing board for a Mormon organization comparable to a diocese.³⁹

Frederick Kempe, paraphrasing one of Krause's sons, summarized how the former storm trooper reconciled his faith in God and his faith in Hitler: "He felt very strongly about the church. Mormonism and National Socialism were his two greatest passions. Both worlds offered a man discipline and a doctrine of absolutes by which to lead his life. One required absolute faith in some superior being, and the other demanded absolute loyalty to a *Führer*."⁴⁰

At the end of his trial, Erich Krause, faithful Mormon and ruthless killer, walked free. Prosecutors produced no eyewitness testimony to his murders. Anyone who had watched him kill seemed, conveniently, to have already died. With regard to the charges of nonlethal assault and torture, numerous witnesses testified to confirm his culpability. However,

his defense team secured an acquittal based upon a five-year statute of limitations that applied to noncapital crimes.

Inge, as a daughter born eleven years after the war ended, never knew the man who appeared in a distant cousin's book, or even the one who emerged from a five-year legal proceeding the year before she was born. Inge saw a different man, one who seemed incapable of violence: "He never laid a hand on me or any of us." She recalled the worst punishment he ever inflicted on her. One evening when she was a young child, she threw a stack of papers out of their apartment's window. A policeman arrived in the middle of the night and instructed her father to clean up the mess. "So, the next day," Inge recalled, "my parents walked me to the police station so that the police could explain to me that it was not correct. That was scary."

On only one occasion during her childhood did the events of the past intrude on Inge: "I remember one time in the seventh grade our school was getting ready to go to a concentration camp to clean it up. It was going to be a field trip and I wanted to go. There was this terror on his face. I was not allowed to go. Just seeing his whole countenance change to absolute terror, I couldn't stand seeing that and respected it. Whatever that meant [at the time], I had no idea."⁴¹

During his lifetime, Erich Krause never gave his daughter an explanation. On one occasion when Inge was still an adolescent, she asked her father about his previous life. He refused to discuss it. "There will be a time," he promised. That time never came. The brutal Nazi killer turned placid family man died in August 1983, without ever having alluded to shocking news that his children would later learn from the pages of an unwelcomed book. If indeed he was sincere when he became religiously observant later in life, part of his reluctance may have had its roots in Mormon theology. In the LDS concept of redemption, premeditated murder cannot receive godly forgiveness while the perpetrator is still living. Heavenly Father can only grant that absolution in the afterlife, and presumably only if the sinner showed genuine repentance during his lifetime. Erich Krause could never promise his daughter that she would reap one of the unique benefits of Mormonism: a heavenly afterlife in which families are together forever.

Today, Inge clings to a single account of her father's life, one that gives her hope that they will meet again. It is based on information she

learned by happenstance. In a chance encounter with one of her father's old friends after the publication of Frederick Kempe's book, Inge learned of a postwar conversation that occurred on a Berlin streetcar. A group of Krause's old friends recognized him: disheveled, unshaven, and wearing a dirty winter coat. They shouted: "Erich! Erich! Erich!" He hung his head and tried to ignore them; he wanted to cut all ties with his past. Finally, after their persistent beckoning, he reluctantly conversed. Erich Krause—storm trooper, killer, sadist, ghetto liquidator, loving father, and repentant Mormon—told his old companions, "I have served the wrong master."⁴²

Horst Reschke, in contrast to Inge, had no doubt about his father's status in the afterlife. Eight years after Max Reschke's excommunication, the courageous lifesaver and serial philanderer was "re-baptized." That restored his Mormon Church membership. Several years later, after having moved with his third wife and the rest of his children to Utah, the family entered the Holy Temple to be sealed "for time and all eternity." That is the LDS ceremony that binds husbands to wives and children to parents on earth and in heaven. The son who so carefully controlled the memory of his father's exploits in this life was content to have his father's heroism recognized in another.