

There'll Come a Day!



By Pat Frank

DR. HEINRICH GERHARDT sat down to breakfast punctually at 8:15, tipped up his tomato juice, and laid the morning paper on his right knee. "More planes for England," he remarked. "It is a good thing. It will keep that maniac on the other side."

"Shhh!" warned Elsa, his wife.

"Why should I shhh?" inquired Dr. Gerhardt. "Are we not Americans?"

Then he fell silent, for Otto marched into the dining room, swung up his right arm stiffly, and said, "Heil Hitler! Morning, Ma, Pop."

"Otto, please don't do that," begged Mrs. Gerhardt. "You know how it annoys your father."

Otto jumped to his feet, pumped his arm up and down like a semaphore on the loose, and shouted, "Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!"

"There'll come a day," said Dr. Gerhardt grimly, his neat, gray-sprinkled beard quivering. This was all he said, because in the person of Otto, who had just turned eleven and joined the Hitler Jugend, the long arm of the Reich extended to West 85th Street, and into the Gerhardt household.

"In the Fatherland," Otto asserted, reaching for the toast, "Pop would be shot."

Dr. Gerhardt closed his eyes and held on to the edge of the table.

"He would be shot," continued Otto, spreading the toast with fat gobs of marmalade, "for calling the Fuehrer a maniac, among other things."

Dr. Gerhardt pretended not to listen, and stared down at his newspaper. Otto put down the toast, peered shrewdly at his father, smiled, and said in a different voice, "Pop, can I have two dollars?"

"What for?" Dr. Gerhardt asked.

"For the Winter Relief. My leader says each of us should bring two dollars for the Winter Relief."

"No!" Dr. Gerhardt said. "In that little bund of yours it is something new each week. Here is where we make our money, and here we should spend it!"

"Is that what I should tell my leader?" Otto asked.

"I don't care what—" Dr. Gerhardt began.

"And should I tell him," Otto interrupted, "how you listen to all the verboten broadcasts? How you use your short-wave set to sit up all night listening to the lies from London?"

"In my own home!" Dr. Gerhardt groaned.

"If I tell my leader, no doubt he will tell von Bitten, because my leader works at the consulate, too."

The title of von Bitten was only vice-consul, but he was a Gauleiter in the party, and he had visited Dr. Gerhardt before, and of him Dr. Gerhardt was afraid. "Here, take the two dollars and get out," he surrendered. "You only want it for candy anyway. You begin to resemble Goering."

When he was gone, Dr. Gerhardt fired his pipe, and relaxed, but Elsa began to cry. "Heinrich," she said, daubing at her eyes with a napkin, "let us get out of this neighborhood. Ever since he joined that secret Hitler Jugend he has been unbearable."

"Twelve years," Dr. Gerhardt said, "I have been building a practice."

"We can start again. We can go to another city. Perhaps a small city where there are no organizations."

"No," Dr. Gerhardt decided. "This thing will not go on forever."

IT WAS a slack day at the office, with no patients until 11, when Herr Krause came in for his anemia

shot. Herr Krause had lived on 85th Street since 1912, and they were of a mind, but what they had to discuss they discussed in the inner office. Miss Flette, the doctor's attendant, was not to be trusted.

It was early afternoon when there came to Dr. Gerhardt's office Hans von Bitten, tall, hard and lean, and self-assured as a baron in his own castle. "Come in! Come in!" said Dr. Gerhardt, trying to smile but feeling numb with apprehension.

"Thank you," said von Bitten, and brusquely pulled up a chair to Dr. Gerhardt's desk. "I am not here for any treatment. This is an official call."

"Yes?" When von Bitten was in the office, it was hard to convince oneself that this was New York.

"We have been getting more complaints about you, Gerhardt. You forget that you are a German."

The fear had not gone from Dr. Gerhardt, but he said simply, "No, I am an American."

Von Bitten shrugged. "All those of German blood are Germans. Your politics do not concern us. We can take care of that in time. But what is of immediate concern is that you have a large practice here, from others of German blood, and yet you have contributed nothing to the Reich. You have bought no savings certificates but invested in American bonds."

"How do you know what bonds I buy?"

"I know your income," von Bitten said, "to the penny, and I know what you do with it."

Dr. Gerhardt rose from his chair. "I will do what I please," he said. "You can do nothing to me. I have no more relatives left in Germany."

"That I know, too," von Bitten said, ruffling the physician's appointment book. "But remember that your patients, they have relatives in the Reich."

Dr. Gerhardt was silent, because he knew of the boycotts, and what they could do to a man. He knew that a decision must be made. It was something he would have to discuss with Elsa.

"I expect to hear from you," said von Bitten. "Doubtless you will change your mind."

IT WAS dark when Dr. Gerhardt returned to his narrow, brownstone front, and he was tired, so that his hand held to the iron rail as he forced his shoes up the steps. It weighs a man to have a good practice, and an interesting one, wiped away so.

Elsa met him at the doorway, and he kissed her. He could not tell her immediately. He would wait until after dinner. He made his way to his tiny library, and turned on the radio. The light glowed warm and comfortable before him, and he flicked the short-wave dial as expertly as he used his scalpel.

Usually the European short-wave stations came in fine at this hour, but it was several minutes, this night, before he tuned in a clear channel. He heard marching music, and then the announcer said in clipped Oxford English, "In a moment we will have an important news bulletin."

Dr. Gerhardt heard the shuffle of feet behind him, and turned, and it was Otto, his legs planted wide and his hands on his hips. On his chest was pinned a medal Dr. Gerhardt recognized. It was his old Iron Cross, awarded in 1915.

"Heil Hitler!" Otto screeched. "So you are listening to the lying English broadcasts again! This time I will certainly tell the leader."

Dr. Gerhardt didn't answer. "Attention!" the radio said. "Here is a bulletin from Washington. The American government has ordered all German consuls and their staffs to leave the United States!"

"Lies!" Otto shouted, hopping up and down with rage. "All lies! Do you believe those lying English?"

"That," said Dr. Gerhardt slowly, enjoying every syllable, "was not London. That was Haw Haw, in Berlin!"

He moved with amazing speed across the room, and grabbed Otto by an ear. "Elsa!" he shouted upstairs. "Elsa, fetch me my razor strap!"